

News From Russia: What You Missed Over the Weekend

July 19, 2021



A volunteer heads to douse a forest fire in Russia's Far East republic of Sakha also known as Yakutia.
Ivan Nikiforov / AP Photo / TASS

Where there's smoke

Heavy smoke from hundreds of wildfires raging across Siberia's republic of Sakha blanketed dozens of cities, including Yakutsk, prompting authorities to issue [stay-at-home](#) orders and [halting](#) operations at the city's airport over the weekend.

The Russian Emergency Situations Ministry said Sunday it had deployed two amphibious aircraft to help tackle the fires, whose smoke [filtered](#) into Alaska and caused hazy skies in Anchorage.

Embed:

Residents of Yakutsk, the world's coldest large city, are asked to stay indoors,

ideally with windows shut, while its blanketed with smoke from wildfires. Russia's coldest & largest region is going through the third month of heatwave & devastating wildfires [#wildfires2021Russia pic.twitter.com/qD3ixcV9CI](#)

— The Siberian Times (@siberian_times) [July 18, 2021](#)

Fear of prosecution

A Russian legal group that recently defended the organizations of Kremlin opponent Alexei Navalny said Sunday it was [disbanding](#) over fears of criminal sanctions.

Team 29 said its website had been blocked after a request from prosecutors, who accuse the group of links with a Czech organization that has been deemed "undesirable."

Fleeing activist

Pussy Riot activist Veronika Nikulshina said Saturday that she [left](#) Russia after multiple arrests and what she called continuing persecution of fellow activists.

Nikulshina was sentenced to 15 days in custody on charges of disobeying police orders earlier this month, immediately after serving a 15-day sentence under the same charges.

Olympic drama

The Russian Rowing Federation [withdrew](#) its men's quadruple sculls team from this week's Tokyo Olympics on Sunday after two members tested positive for meldonium last month.

Meanwhile, two Russian swimmers who were provisionally suspended by the FINA international water sport federation were [cleared](#) to compete.

Covid data

The St. Petersburg Pasteur Institute said Sunday that its preliminary research showed Russia reaching 60% [herd immunity](#) through infection and vaccination. It warned that Covid-19 cases will continue to rise unless that target reaches 90%.

State statistics meanwhile showed Russians' average life expectancy [dropping](#) for the first time since 2003, declining from 73.34 years in 2019 to 71.54 in 2020.

AFP contributed reporting to this article.

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