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Which Kremlin Critics Have Fled Russia?

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Left to right: Igor Zhdanov, Fyodor Krasheninnikov, Veronika Nikulshina and Dmitry Gudkov. **TASS / Respective Photographers**

A growing number of Kremlin critics have fled Russia in recent weeks, citing fears of prosecution in the wake of nationwide protests in support of jailed Kremlin opponent Alexei Navalny and ahead of high-stakes parliamentary elections.

While many of those who have left are allies of Navalny, others are longtime opposition politicians or intellectuals not affiliated with Navalny's work.

Critics and rights activists say the Kremlin is carrying out an intensified campaign of pressure against opponents ahead of this September's elections to the State Duma, where the pro-Kremlin United Russia party seeks to hang on to its supermajority.

Here's an overview of prominent critics who have left the country, are planning on leaving or have extended their stays abroad this year:

Pussy Riot members

Several members of the Pussy Riot activist punk group have left the country or voiced their intent to leave in recent days, citing fears of prosecution.

Alexander Sofeyev left Russia on Monday, telling the Open Media news website prior to his departure that he was leaving due to the ongoing political "persecution" of the group's members. He also added that he has not emigrated and plans to return to Russia in the near future.

Fellow Pussy Riot member Veronika Nikulshina had fled Russia just a day earlier, leaving the country directly after being released from two consecutive 15-day jail terms on charges of disobeying police.

Both members reported that they were followed to the airport by police.

Over the weekend, another member, Anna Kuzminykh, said Sunday that she plans to depart Russia after being released from arrest on charges of disobeying police.

Two prominent Pussy Riot members, Maria Alyokhina and Lucy Shtein, have been under house arrest since this winter as they face criminal charges for violating coronavirus restrictions by calling on supporters to protest for Navalny's release.

Fyodor Krasheninnikov

Krasheninnikov, an opposition-leaning columnist for the Vedomosti business daily whose work has been published in The Moscow Times, had fled temporarily to Lithuania last August after being briefly jailed for "disrespecting authorities." He recently announced his plans to extend his stay.

"The initial plan was a short-term departure to wait out increased interest in me from the police. Unfortunately, the situation developing in Russia in recent months hints that it's not worth rushing home," he wrote on Facebook.

Ivan Zhdanov

Zhdanov, the former director of Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation (FBK), fled to Lithuania earlier this year, citing increased pressure on FBK after Navalny was jailed. FBK has since been banned in Russia as an "extremist" organization, putting its members and supporters at risk of jail time.

Russian authorities last month added Zhandov to an international wanted list and are now seeking an Interpol "red notice" on the self-exiled politician. His lawyer Vladimir Voronin said Zhdanov was never informed of the decision.

Dmitry Gudkov

Also in June, opposition politician Dmitry Gudkov announced he had fled to Ukraine, saying he left out of fear of further arrests — both of himself and his family members — after he was detained for alleged property damage. His aunt, Irina Yermilova, had been detained alongside him.

Gudkov wrote on his Telegram channel that sources close to the presidential administration told him that “if I don’t leave the country, the fake criminal case will continue until my arrest.” He left Russia with his brother Vladimir Gudkov and said his wife and children plan to join him soon.

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