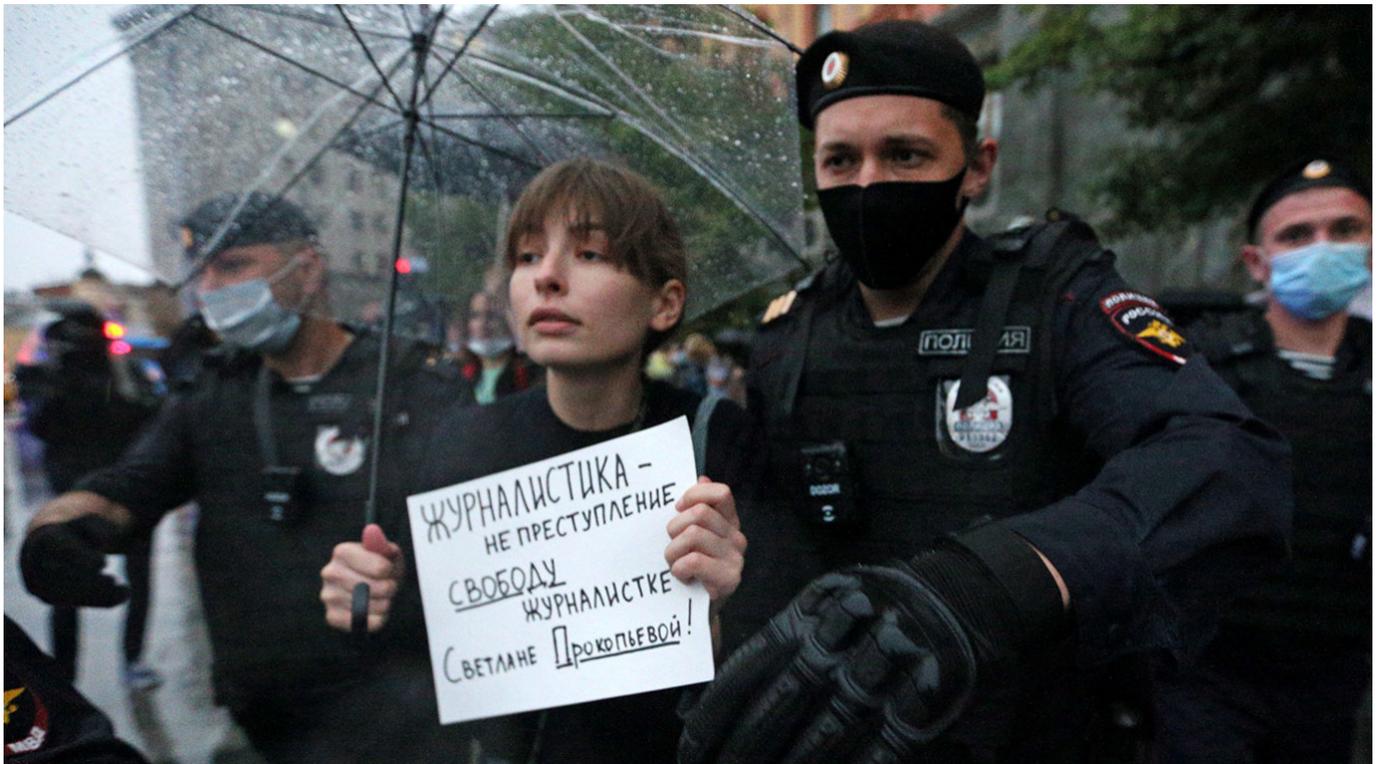


U.S., Allies Chastise Russia on Media Freedom

By [AFP](#)

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A solo protest in support of journalist Svetlana Prokopyeva outside the offices of Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) in Lubyanskaya Square. The sign reads: "Journalism is not a crime. Freedom to journalist Svetlana Prokopyeva". **Gavriil Grigorov / TASS**

The United States and its allies on Thursday urged Russia to protect media freedom, condemning what they called a crackdown on independent outlets.

In a joint statement, the United States and 17 other nations including France, Germany, and Britain said that Russia's strenuous new requirements on media to label themselves as "foreign agents," with fines if not, marked an "unambiguous effort to suppress Russians' access to independent reporting."

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They said that Russia appeared intent on closing the presence in the country of U.S. government-backed Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty following the closure of independent outlets.

The outlets also criticized Russia for detaining journalists who covered protests for imprisoned opposition activist Alexei Navalny as well as over alleged abuse of a Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty reporter in Russian-annexed Crimea.

"We urge the Russian Federation to comply with its international human rights commitments and obligations and to respect and ensure media freedom and safety of journalists," the statement said.

"We call on the Russian government to cease its repression of independent voices, end the politically motivated proceedings against journalists and media organizations and release all those who have been unjustly detained," it said.

The Western powers also pointed to Russia's expulsion of a BBC reporter, Sarah Rainsford, in what the British public broadcaster called an assault on media freedom.

Russia denied the allegation and said it acted against her in response to Britain denying accreditation to an unnamed Russian reporter.

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