

'No to War': Thousands Detained in Russian Protests

By [AFP](#)

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Russian policemen detain a protestor during rally against the Russian invasion of Ukraine in St. Petersburg. **EPA / Anatoly Maltsev / TASS**

Russia on Sunday detained more than 2,000 anti-war protesters across the country, an independent monitor said, on the fourth day of President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine that took many Russians by surprise.

OVD-Info, which monitors arrests at protests, said 2,114 protesters had been detained on Sunday.

This brought the total tally of protesters detained since Putin launched the invasion in the early hours of Thursday to 5,250, the monitor said.

Thousands have defied Russia's strict protest laws to stage demonstrations in cities across Russia.

AFP saw around 200 protesters being detained in Russia's second city St. Petersburg on Sunday.

Around 400 people had gathered in the former imperial capital to protest the Kremlin's move on Ukraine.

Many held posters that read "No to war," "Russians go home" and "Peace to Ukraine."

"It is a shame that there are hundreds, maybe thousands, of us and not millions," 35-year-old engineer Vladimir Vilokhonov, who took part in the protest, told AFP.

Another protester, 25-year-old Alyona Stepanova, had come to the protest with a packed bag in case "we get taken away."

"We believe it is our duty to come here," she said.

Riot police tried to deafen their anti-war shouts by blasting out patriotic music.

"I am against war. I was born in 1941 and I know what it means," said Valeria Andreyeva, born in the year Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union.

Putin sent troops over the border after a flurry of Western leaders had for weeks tried to dissuade him from doing so.

Many Russians were shocked by the decision, announced after officials had for months laughed off Western claims that Russia would attack Ukraine.

In Moscow, AFP saw around 50 people detained on the city's Pushkin Square. Some appeared to be passers-by.

The statue of Russia's national poet on the square has long been a favorite protest spot in the capital.

OVD-Info said anti-war protesters came out in 45 cities across Russia Sunday.

Russia has been hit by massive international sanctions since its attack on Ukraine.

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