Dozens of Moscow Metro Passengers Detained on Russia Flag Day

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Sergei Fadeichev/TASS

Moscow police detained dozens of metro passengers Monday in what appeared to be a raid to prevent mass actions on Russia's National Flag Day, an independent watchdog reported.

The detentions come at a time when anti-war activism has been effectively outlawed under laws passed shortly after Moscow sent troops into neighboring Ukraine.

OVD-Info, a police-monitoring website that runs a legal hotline for those detained, said 33 activists and journalists were apprehended across the Russian capital's metro system.

Some of them were flagged for detention by the Moscow Metro's facial recognition technology, according to the watchdog.

One journalist held in a southern Moscow police station said at one point police sirens went off "once a minute" with the detention of another person.

Three of the detained passengers had previously been charged under Russia's laws against

anti-war speech since the country invaded Ukraine in February, according to OVD-Info.

At least one activist was detained twice in the morning and evening.

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Most of the activists and journalists have been released later without being charged, OVD-Info reported later Monday evening. One was reportedly charged with "discrediting the Russian military" for wearing clothes that said "I'm against war."

Criticizing the war or sharing non-Kremlin-approved information about it are both punishable under new laws passed shortly after the invasion.

More than 15,000 anti-war protesters have been detained across Russia since President Vladimir Putin ordered the invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24.

Prominent Putin critics Ilya Yashin and Vladimir Kara-Murza were placed in pre-trial detention for denouncing Moscow's Ukraine offensive. They are among 212 mostly private citizens facing criminal prosecution for voicing opposition to the war.

Virtually all of Russia's independent media has either been blocked or shut down since February, with many journalists fleeing the country to escape prosecution.

Russian authorities have blocked some 138,000 websites and also outlawed Facebook and Instagram as "extremist" organizations, as well as restricted access to Twitter, since the war began.

The National Flag Day detentions follow similar police actions on Victory Day and [Russia Day](#) in Moscow and around the country in May and June.

National Flag Day has been celebrated every year on Aug. 22 since then-President Boris Yeltsin re-introduced it in 1994.

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