

Russian Police Raid Opposition Politicians' Homes, Detain Activist

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Former Russian State Duma deputy Ilya Ponomarev. **Serg Glovn via ZUMA Wire / TASS**

Russian police staged new raids in the homes of local politicians over alleged ties to a pro-Ukraine former lawmaker accused of spreading “fake news” about the invasion of Ukraine, state media [reported](#) early Thursday.

The raids mark at least the fourth wave of mass searches linked to Ilya Ponomarev since Russian authorities ordered the vocal war critic's arrest in absentia last summer.

One of the individuals targeted, Moscow State University (MSU) professor and independent activist Mikhail Lobanov, was [detained](#) following the raids.

He was later [released](#) from the Investigative Committee after being questioned as a witness in the case against Ponomarev.

"This morning, Moscow police arrested Mikhail Lobanov, an independent left-wing politician and union activist. He was taken in an unknown direction. Mikhail staunchly opposes the

invasion of Ukraine and fights for labor and ecological rights," Lobanov's Twitter account [said](#).

"Despite no connection existing between them, the police are attempting to link Mikhail with Ilya Ponomarev."

Video footage published by the state-run RIA Novosti news agency had shown masked agents prying open Lobanov's front door and shoving his head on the floor during the raids.

The raids took place in at least five Russian regions, RIA Novosti said, citing an unnamed source in the security agencies.

The source named Lobanov and former Moscow municipal deputy Galina Filchenko, a member of the pro-democratic party Yabloko, as the targets.

Media outlets with purported links to Russia's law enforcement agencies also [identified](#) fellow Yabloko member Nodari Khananashvili as having been raided.

The independent police-monitoring website OVD-Info [said](#) police also searched the home of Alexander Kalinin, the chief editor of the St. Petersburg-based publication Ladoga.

Lobanov ran as a candidate for the Communist Party in Russia's 2021 parliamentary elections.

He was last [targeted](#) in a wave of police raids in December 2022 and sentenced to 15 days in jail on misdemeanor charges of disobeying police orders.

Ponomarev, a former deputy in the lower house of parliament, the State Duma, has been living in exile in Kyiv since 2016 and denies any links to the targets of Thursday's raids.

He was the only Duma member to vote against Russia's annexation of Crimea from Ukraine in 2014.

He faces up to 10 years in prison on accusations of spreading "fake news" about the Russian army.

On Thursday, Ponomarev's Congress of People's Deputies, a Poland-based body of former Russian lawmakers in exile, was [included](#) in the Russian Justice Ministry's register of "undesirable" organizations.

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