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‘Why Is Your ‘Reality’ Different From Ours?’ – Viewers Challenge Putin at Press Conference

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Vladimir Putin during an annual national live televised question-and-answer session and press conference at Gostiny Dvor. **Alexander Kazakov / Russian Presidential Press and Information Office / TASS**

Several audience-submitted questions at President Vladimir Putin’s end-of-year press conference Thursday were unexpectedly critical of the president and the current state of affairs in Russia.

The conference and public call-in, Putin's first since the invasion of Ukraine, has been filled with questions from the public sent via text message, along with questions from journalists inside the venue and across Russia and occupied Ukraine.

One viewer-submitted question, seen here displayed on a large video screen, asked Putin simply: "Tell us, when will our lives get better?"

Another question for Putin said: "Why is your 'reality' different from our lived reality?"

One viewer asked: "Hello, How can one move to the Russia that they talk about on Channel One?" — an apparent reference to Russian state TV propaganda.

“We gave gas to China, we gave gas to Europe, but when will there be gas in Khakassia?” another viewer messaged, referring to the Siberian republic of Khakassia.

It was not clear if Putin saw any of the messages, which were displayed on a large video screen inside the venue.

Ahead of the press conference, the state-run Channel One broadcaster ran a segment filmed inside the venue that showed a correspondent standing in front of a screen showing audience-submitted questions, the investigative news website IStories reported on Wednesday.

One question said: “When will the mobilized [soldiers] be released? Why should 300,000 people serve for the whole country?”

Another question said: "When will the war end? When will there be peace over our heads? When will peace negotiations begin?"

On Thursday, some journalists also spotted that Putin appeared with a yellow folder on a blue background — the blue-and-yellow colors of the Ukrainian national flag.

Some observers, including independent journalist Farida Rustamova and analyst Mark Galeotti, speculated that the provocative questions may have been purposely displayed to boost media coverage of the event.

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