The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Dual Russian-Irish Citizen Detained in Chelyabinsk for 'Anti-Russian' Messages on Phone, Reports Say

January 20, 2026

Dmitry Simbayev. **@agents_media**

A Russian man who holds Irish citizenship has been held in pre-trial detention in the Ural Mountains city of Chelyabinsk on charges including "justifying" terrorism since August 2025, Irish media reported this week.

Dmitry Simbayev, who has lived and worked in County Galway in western Ireland for more than two decades, was traveling with his Russian passport to Chelyabinsk when local law enforcement authorities detained him on Aug. 14, his wife Daria Petrenko told The Irish Times.

Patrenko, a Ukrainian from the city of Kharkiv, said her husband was charged with "justifying" terrorism, calling for "extremist" activities and "vigilantism involving the use of violence."

The civil rights group OVD-Info said the third "vigilantism" accusation may have been a misinterpretation of a different charge — failing to inform the Russian authorities of having obtained dual citizenship, which carries a maximum fine of 200,000 rubles ($2,570) and 4 years of community service.

Petrenko said Russian police searched her husband's luggage and took his mobile phone when he arrived at the airport in Chelyabinsk. She said police told Simbaev they were detaining him because of "anti-Russian" content on his phone.

She believes the content relates to messages she sent him in 2024 in which she expressed anger at Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Related article: Sochi Court Jails American Who Brought Rifle Into Russia on His Yacht

Ireland's Department of Foreign Affairs said it was "aware of the case and is providing consular assistance" but declined to comment on Simbayev's detention, The Irish Times reported.

Authorities in Russia have not publicly commented on his arrest.

The Irish Times and the public broadcaster RTE said Simbayev's possession of a Russian passport makes intervention by Irish officials more difficult.

Petrenko accused Russian law enforcement authorities of denying her husband calls or visits to his parents for the duration of his arrest.

"He has not been allowed to see his parents, not once in four months. Only the lawyer has contact with my husband, maybe once a week. I get very little information," she told The Irish Times.

Since the invasion of Ukraine, Russian police have detained multiple people on various charges after searching their personal electronic devices at border crossings for content critical of the Russian government or any information suggesting support for Ukraine.

Russian-American Ksenia Karelina was arrested in January 2024 while visiting her family in the city of Yekaterinburg and later sentenced to 12 years in prison for treason after being found to have donated around $50 to a Ukrainian charity.

Karelina was released in a prisoner exchange between the U.S. and Russia last year.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2026/01/20/dual-russian-irish-citizen-detained-in-chelyabinsk-for-anti-russian-messages-on-phone-reports-say-a91726