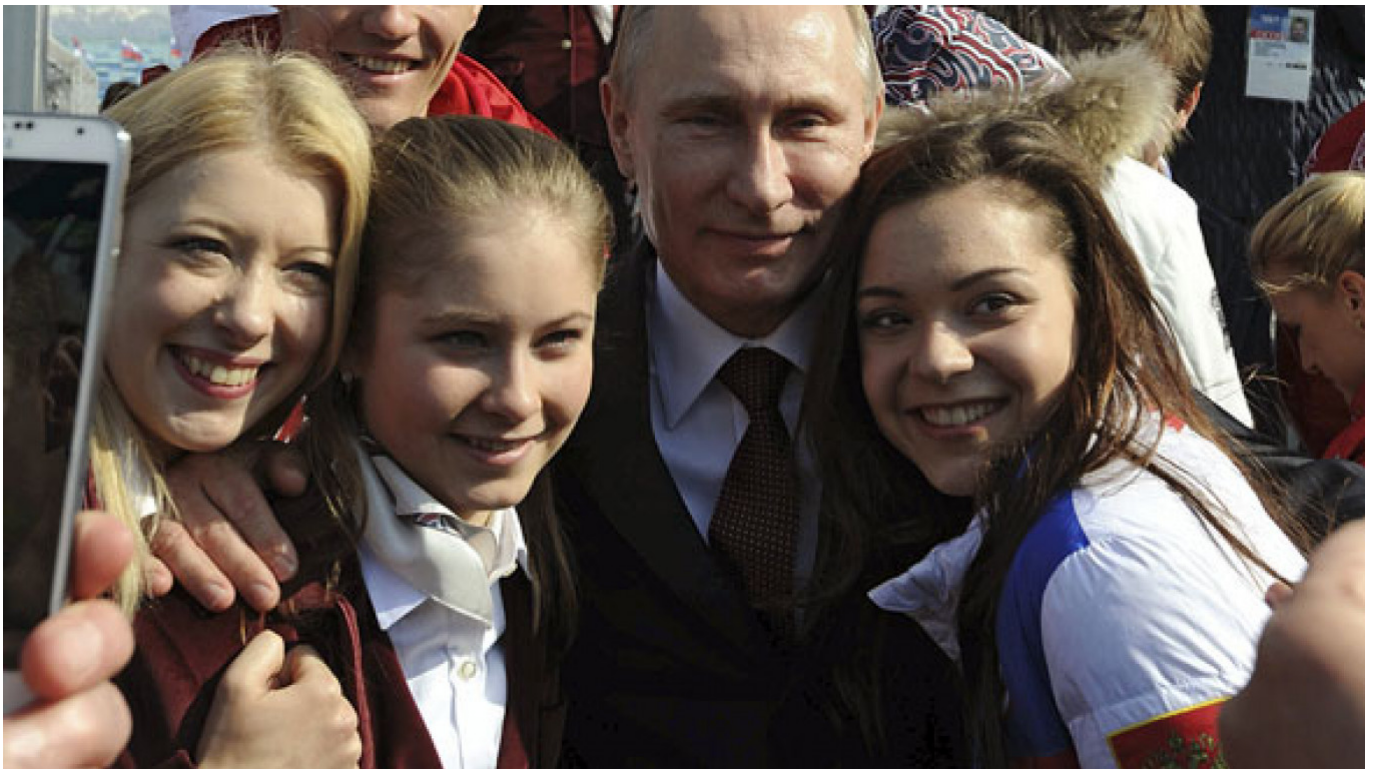


Putin Says Sochi Games Wrongfooted Russia Critics

By [The Moscow Times](#)

February 25, 2014



President Vladimir Putin posing with Olympic medal winning athletes in Sochi after the Games wrapped up. **Mikhail Klimentyev**

The Sochi Olympics "opened Russia's soul" to the world and wrongfooted critics of the host country, President Vladimir Putin said in remarks broadcast Tuesday.

Taking stock after Russia topped the medals table and avoided major security problems at its first post-Soviet Games, Putin said constructive criticism from the International Olympic Committee had helped make Sochi 2014 a success.

But there were other critics whose jabs were motivated by "the competitive struggle in international politics, maybe even geopolitics."

"They used the Olympic project to achieve their own aims in the area of anti-Russian propaganda," he said.

"Because when a strong competitor emerges — in this case Russia — some grow worried, some do not like it, some fear it, not understanding how deeply Russian society has changed," Putin said in a state television interview, strolling in the sun in the Black Sea resort city of Sochi.

The buildup to the Olympics was overshadowed by threats of militant violence, an outcry over a law banning gay "propaganda" among minors, allegations of corruption, complaints about the high cost of traveling to Sochi and tweets about slapdash hotels.

Criticism abated as the Games progressed.

"The Olympics were very important for us, because it seems to me ... that they not only opened Russia's door but opened Russia's soul, the soul of our nation — so that people looked and saw that there is nothing to fear," Putin said.

A Sochi court has convicted two Russian activists of resisting police orders, sentencing one of them to four days in prison and fining the other.

Their lawyer, Alexander Popkov, said by phone Tuesday that civil rights activist David Khakim will be held in jail until Thursday, while environmentalist Olga Noskovets will receive a 1,000-ruble (\$28) fine. The police, who picked up the two activists shortly before the Winter Olympics closing ceremony Sunday, said that Khakim was detained for refusing to show identification to the police.

Rights groups have blamed local authorities for what they describe as a campaign of harassment and intimidation against activists and independent journalists in Sochi who were critical of the preparation for the Winter Games. *(AP)*

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/02/25/putin-says-sochi-games-wrongfooted-russia-critics-a32456>