

5 People Detained in Moscow After Protesting a Bill on Unsanctioned Rallies

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Police have detained 5 demonstrators who gathered outside the State Duma.

Police have detained half a dozen demonstrators who gathered outside the State Duma to protest a bill that would strengthen the penalties for participating in an unsanctioned rally.

Ahead of the Duma's second reading of the bill on Tuesday, demonstrators gathered outside the legislature, holding signs that read: "The Duma is going insane," and "Jail time for protests," according to photos and videos posted online by Grani.ru and news portal Kasparov.ru — opposition-friendly websites that the Russian government has blocked access to from inside the country.

Showing just where demonstrators think the country is heading, another sign visible at the demonstration quoted lines from the rock song "Titanic" by popular band Nautilus Pompilius, reading: "Nobody wants to think about where the Titanic is sailing."

The sign added in smaller letters: "Idiotic laws, repressions, corruption, the war in Ukraine."

In a video posted online by Grani.ru, uniformed police officers are seen leading participants away from the rally, but keep silent when asked by protesters to identify themselves, or to name their reasons for detaining demonstrators who had agreed to put away their signs.

Five detained protesters said afterwards that officers in the police station had dragged some of them down the stairs, leaving bruising; banned them from using the bathroom; refused to say what they were being accused of; and declined their requests for lawyers, Kasparov.ru reported.

The bill in question, which still needs to pass its third reading in the Duma, would establish felony charges, rather than administrative penalties, for repeated participation in unauthorized rallies, making it a crime punishable by up to five years in prison.

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