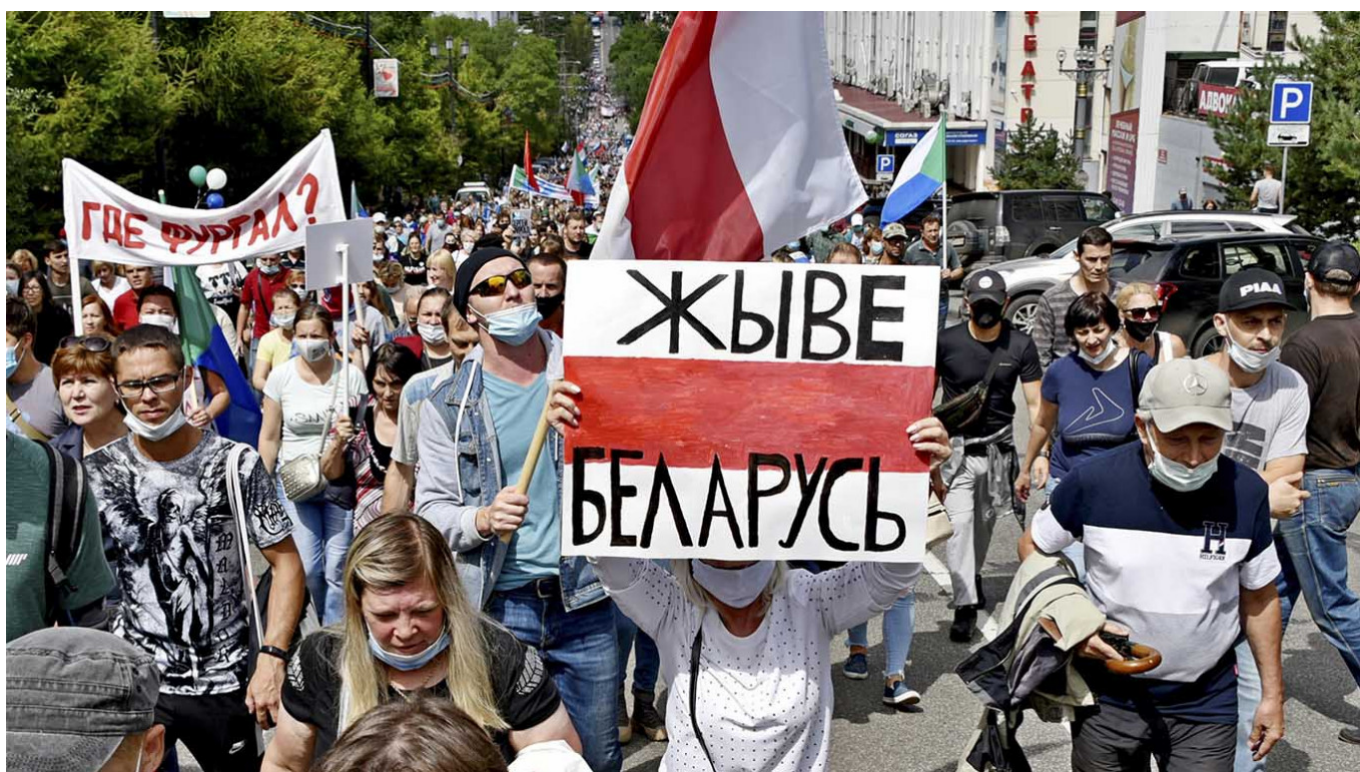


News From Russia: What You Missed Over the Weekend

August 17, 2020



Khabarovsk, Russia **Igor Volkov / AP / TASS**

Brotherly help

President Vladimir Putin has expressed Russia's "readiness to provide the needed assistance" including "if necessary" through a military alliance between six ex-Soviet states in a call with Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko.

Lukashenko rejected calls to step down in a defiant speech to supporters Sunday. Shortly later, more than 100,000 Belarusian opposition supporters gathered for the largest protest rally in the country's recent history in Minsk and other cities.

First batch

Russia said Saturday that it has [produced](#) the first batch of its coronavirus vaccine, named Sputnik V, days after President Vladimir Putin announced it had been first in the world to approve a vaccine.

Russia has said that industrial production is expected from September and that it plans to manufacture 5 million doses per month by December or January.

Sixth week of protests

Mass protests in the Khabarovsk region of Russia's Far East sparked by the arrest of its popular governor continued for the 36th consecutive day.

The Kremlin has meanwhile ordered Russian news outlets to double the number of stories undermining ex-Governor Sergei Furgal, the Financial Times [reported](#), in an attempt to manipulate public opinion and silence dissent.

Saving the mountain

Around 50 environmental activists were [detained](#) and a protest camp [dismantled](#) following violent clashes with authorities and chemical workers over an industrial plant built at a natural landmark in central Russia.

Embed:

В Башкирии около Куштау сотрудники ЧОП «Башкирской содовой компании» и ОМОН прорвали оборону защитников горы. Фото: Руслан Валиев pic.twitter.com/kqr9SA8yTE

— МБХ Медиа (@MBKhMedia) [August 15, 2020](#)

Security officials reportedly used stun grenades and pepper spray at the clashes, which took place amid the second week of protests in the republic of Bashkortostan. Residents seek to protect the Kushtau shihan (hill), considered sacred in the local community, from the Bashkir Soda Company's plans to convert it for limestone production.

Rainbow over the Kremlin

Performance artist and former mayor Alexander Donskoy flew an LGBT flag hoisted by "hundreds" of balloons over the Kremlin.

Embed:

ЛГБТ активисты запустили шарики с радужным флагом над Красной площадью. Видео: Twitter | [@t1f pic.twitter.com/xuibIKODbj](https://t1f pic.twitter.com/xuibIKODbj)

— МБХ Медиа (@MBKhMedia) [August 15, 2020](#)

The performance was a response to Russian officials' criticism of foreign embassies flying the LGBT flag in Moscow, the openly gay former mayor of Arkhangelsk [told](#) the independent Novaya Gazeta newspaper.

AFP contributed reporting to this article.

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