

# News From Russia: What You Missed Over the Weekend

August 23, 2021



Police detain a protester holding a poster reading "Freedom to journalism" during solo pickets in Moscow. **Denis Kaminev / AP / TASS**

## Media crackdown

Russia added the independent Dozhd broadcaster and the investigative site Important Stories (iStories) to its registry of “foreign agents” on Friday and an association of freelance journalists “[Fourth Sector](#)” the following day.

On Saturday, police detained at least nine journalists from independent outlets in central Moscow protesting against the government’s crackdown on independent media.

## ‘Clear message’

Britain and the United States sanctioned seven Russian officials Friday on the first anniversary of jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny's near-fatal poisoning, which the West blames on Moscow.

The individuals — all members of Russia's domestic security service the FSB, successor to the KGB — now face asset freezes and travel bans under the sanctions.

### **Sore spot**

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy warned German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Sunday that the soon-to-be completed Nord Stream 2 pipeline carrying Russian gas to Europe was "a dangerous geopolitical weapon."

The comments came as the two leaders met in Kiev for a last time ahead of Merkel leaving office after 16 years in power next month and days after she held final talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow.

### **Friday prayers**

At least 600 mosque-goers were detained for passport checks and biometric data collection in the Moscow region town of Kotelniki, lawyers [told](#) state media late Friday.

Other outlets, citing eyewitnesses and lawyers, said officers interrupted Friday prayers and blocked worshippers inside the mosque, in some cases asking for money in exchange for their release.

### **Asylum swimmer**

A Russian man swam 20 kilometers to Japan from the disputed Kuril Islands to ask for political asylum, state media [reported](#) Sunday following reports in Japanese media that the man had been [detained](#) in Hokkaido.

Authorities in the Yuzhno-Kurilsk municipal administration [said](#) the refugee was a native of the Urals who had received free land on the Kuril island of Kunashir as part of Russia's program to revive its Far East region.

*Includes reporting from AFP.*

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