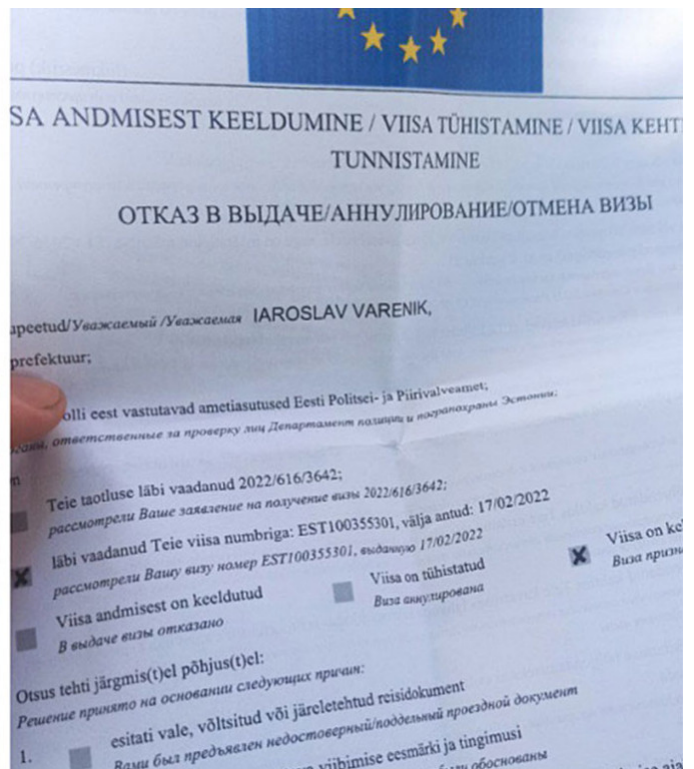


Russian Journalist Says Barred Entry to Estonia

August 15, 2022



Yaroslav Varenik is a journalist with the 29.ru regional outlet in northern Russia. **Yaroslav Varenik / 29.ru**

A Russian journalist [said](#) he was barred entry to Estonia over the weekend after the Baltic country decided to stop allowing in Russian nationals on tourist visas.

The incident came days before Estonia's tourist-visa entry ban is set to take effect this Thursday, a measure imposed amid a wider European debate over shutting out Russian tourists due to the country's continued invasion of Ukraine.

Yaroslav Varenik, a journalist with the 29.ru regional outlet in northern Russia, [told](#) independent Russian news outlets that Estonian border guards canceled his tourist visa after a two-hour interrogation on Sunday.

The guards told him the hostel reservation he was able to book with his Russian bank card — despite Visa and Mastercard blocking Russian card transactions due to sanctions — had been canceled, Varenik told Meduza and Novaya Gazeta's European edition.

“The conditions and purpose of [Varenik’s] stay were not justified,” Meduza and Dozhd [quoted](#) the visa revocation notice they said they had obtained as saying.

When he first arrived at the Russian side of the border, Varenik said he was subjected to seven hours of confrontational questioning and threatened with criminal prosecution for “insulting religious feelings” before being released.

“They asked about my attitude to the war... They read my messages [on] WhatsApp and Telegram,” Varenik told Meduza. “If they didn’t like the answers, they shouted ‘Are you stupid?’”

“The bus [to Estonia] left without me,” Varenik said, recounting his overall nine-hour ordeal on both sides of the border.

Estonia is among a handful of EU member states whose leaders have called for a ban on issuing visas to Russian passport holders in recent days.

Russians are known to have transited through neighboring EU member states like Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Finland to reach other destinations in Europe after the 26-member bloc banned Russian airlines from its airspace over the invasion of Ukraine.

Meduza, Dozhd and Novaya Gazeta Europe all reported that Varenik was a witness in the criminal case against jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny’s disbanded Anti-Corruption Foundation.

Authorities froze Varenik’s bank account in 2019 and summoned him for questioning in 2021 as part of the investigation, they added.

Estonia, a former Soviet republic and current European Union member, suspended issuing tourist visas to Russians in early March over Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2022/08/15/russian-opposition-journalist-says-barred-entry-to-estonia-a78568>