

Russians Set Fire to At Least 4 Polling Stations on First Day of Election

March 15, 2024



An elderly woman seen setting fire to a voting booth in Moscow. **screen grab / Telegram**

At least four people in regions across Russia carried out arson attacks at polling places on Friday as the first day of voting in the March 15-17 presidential election got underway.

In Moscow, an elderly woman was [detained](#) for setting fire to a voting booth, according to the independent news outlet Sota.

A video published on social media [showed](#) police officers detaining the woman as she appeared to film the blaze on her phone.

Moscow's Central Investigative Committee later said it had [launched](#) a criminal investigation into the arson.

Election officials [told](#) the state-run news agency RIA Novosti that no ballots had been damaged in the attack and that poll workers continued their work after the incident.

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In St. Petersburg, a young woman threw a Molotov cocktail at a polling station and was immediately [detained](#) by police, according to the local news outlet Fontanka.

Meanwhile, in northern Russia's Khanty-Mansi autonomous district, the news outlet Neft [reported](#) that a woman tried to set fire to a ballot box with what appeared to be a Molotov cocktail.

A similar attack was later [reported](#) in the Moscow region.

The arson attacks were reported on the same day as a spate of incidents involving voters spilling green dye into ballot boxes in regions across the country.

Officials said at least 13 people have been detained for vandalism at polling stations.

Election chief Ella Pamfilova claimed that those arrested in the dye-spilling incidents said they had been promised money and were unaware of criminal punishment for their actions.

Authorities did not say if the protests were directed against Putin, and state-media reports said voting would continue as normal despite the incidents.

AFP contributed reporting.

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