

Protests in Russia: ‘Pension Putin off!’



MOSCOW, RUSSIA – SEPTEMBER 9, 2018: People take part in an unauthorized rally against the Russian pension reform in Petrovka Street. Mikhail Pochuyev/TASS

Unauthorized protests against raising the retirement age took place in dozens of Russian cities on September 9, the day of local elections. As a result, more than 1,000 persons, including minors and journalists, were detained.

‘Putin Is Thief!’ and ‘Pension Putin Off!’ were chanted in more than 30 Russian cities – from Vladivostok to Kaliningrad. The State Duma adopted in the first reading a bill to raise the retirement age to 65 years for men and 63 years for women, which is approved by president **Vladimir Putin**. However, many Russians are violently opposed to the reform.

“Why should he take my money away? I paid pension taxes, so did other people. And he has slipped his hand into our pockets!” a Moscow protester said.

According to the Russian authorities, the pension fund is short of money due to the aging of the population and the rapid increase in the number of pensioners. But many citizens have a different explanation.

“The public funds have been actually stolen. And so they are trying try to get into our pockets. Why do they keep their hands off the oligarchs? Why should ordinary people suffer?” a resident of Tomsk wondered.

In Tomsk, three hundred people took to the streets to protest in the rain. Two dozen persons were detained by the local police.

“We were just crossing the road when about twenty policemen went for us. My brother managed to get me out,” a protester said.

There are many detainees in Moscow, Yekaterinburg, Omsk, Krasnodar, Tver. According to media reports, nearly 500 persons, including a Belsat TV contributor, were taken in detention in St. Petersburg, where about 5,000 showed up at the protest rally. But they were blocked by the riot police.

*“They got tough with the people. They did not care whether they grabbed a minor, a bystander or a press card holder. When detaining (if one can call it detention at all), they just grabbed me and threw him into the bus,” **Roman Perl**, our correspondent in St. Petersburg, said.*

Local elections were held in 80 regions of Russia on Sunday. In particular, Moscow elected the mayor. Opposition leader **Alexei Navalny**, who is currently in custody for organizing a rally in January, called on the compatriots to protest against the reform.

- Good tsar neutralizes protests: Putin pushes for relaxing pension reform

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