



## RUSSIA REFORM MONITOR

The American Foreign Policy Council's Review of  
Russian Government Actions and U.S. Policy

# Russia Reform Monitor No 2455

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**Related Categories:** Democracy and Governance; Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; Corruption; Global Health; CAMCA; Caucasus; Europe; Russia

### A ROW OVER THE RUSSIAN VACCINE

The Russian government has demanded Slovakia return hundreds of thousands of doses of the Sputnik V vaccine in response to claims from Bratislava that the doses delivered were different from those in the treatment's peer-reviewed study. The Slovakian government has charged that the roughly 200,000 doses sent from Russia had different properties from the treatment covered in health journals as boasting a 91.6% effectiveness rate. Bratislava has also said that it had not received the requisite paperwork from the vaccine's creators indicating that it was safe for use. Slovakia's SUKL state drug agency said that it has not been able to get conclusive evidence of the risks and benefits of Sputnik because of the lack of data available. The jab's developers have vigorously denied these claims, stating that they were "fake news." They also noted that Slovakia's tests of the vaccine took place in an uncertified laboratory, were conducted in violation of the country's contract obligations, and should thus be considered "an act of sabotage." (Bloomberg, April 8, 2021)

### RSF: RUSSIA CREATING INFO "BLACK HOLE" IN NAGORNO-KARABAKH

Press freedom group Reporters Without Borders (RSF) has demanded that Russia stop denying foreign reporters entry into Nagorno-Karabakh, and has appealed the issue to the United Nations and Council of Europe. According to a statement from the Paris-based non-profit, Russian peacekeepers controlling access to Nagorno-Karabakh from Armenia via the Lachin Corridor have denied entry to more than 10 foreign journalists since February, while allowing Russians and Armenians to "just show their passports to enter." Jeanne Cavalier, head of RSF's Eastern Europe and Central Asia desk, warned that the systematic refusal of entry to foreign journalists by Russian soldiers has the potential to lead to a "news and information 'black hole.'" According to the media watchdog, a reporter for French channel M6 and a Canadian freelancer for *The Guardian* and *CNN* were among the journalists denied entry into the territory. ( *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, April 9, 2021)

### RUSSIAN BUSINESSMAN GLUSHKOV STRANGLED, RULES UK CORONER

Prominent Kremlin critic Nikolai Glushkov was strangled to death at his southwest London home by an unidentified person in 2018, a British coroner has ruled. Glushkov had fled Russia after being accused of engaging in fraudulent activities when he was deputy director of state airline Aeroflot, and was granted political asylum in Britain in 2010. He was sentenced to eight years *in absentia* by a Russian court, and had been expected to attend the Commercial Court in London to defend himself on the day he was killed. After years of documentation and collected evidence, the coroner determined that, "Nikolai Glushkov died from an unlawful killing," and that his killer attempted to stage a suicide. No arrests have been made so far, however, and the motive behind the crime has not been established. Glushkov's death came only days after the Novichok poisoning attack on ex-spy Sergei Skripal took place in England. Additionally, Glushkov had been close friends with Boris Berezovsky, a vocal critic of Russian President Vladimir Putin, who was found hanged by a scarf in his bathroom in 2013. (Reuters, April 10, 2021)

### FSB TARGETS PROMINENT RUSSIAN JOURNALIST

Agents from Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) carried out a raid on the apartment of Roman Anin, a prominent investigative journalist and editor-in-chief of the investigative media outlet *Istories*, and brought him in for interrogation. According to many of Anin's colleagues, the journalist has been unable to be reached since the raid. The interrogation appeared to be in relation to questions about a "violation of privacy by abusing his professional functions," his lawyer Anna Stavitskaya has stated. Anin's lawyer and his editorial team suggest that the investigation has something to do with his explosive 2016 investigative report for *Novaya Gazeta*, where he worked at the time, suggesting that Rosneft CEO Igor Sechin had ties to a yacht valued at \$100 million. The publication was found guilty of defamation after Sechin filed a formal complaint regarding the report. *Novaya Gazeta*'s editorial board has said that it believes that, "everything that is happening now with Roman Anin is revenge," and has pledged that "we will by all legal means and publicly protect our friend and colleague." (*Deutsche Welle*, April 10, 2021)

### **THE FIGHT OVER LAKE BAIKAL**

Environmentalists and developers are clashing over the future of Lake Baikal, Russia's largest lake and a major tourist destination in eastern Siberia. The region is home to thousands of plant and animal species, many of which are not found anywhere else in the world. Recent rollbacks on environmental regulations have opened the door for major economic expansion around the lake, which has led to the spread of waste and harmful algae, endangering the fragile ecosystem in the process. The lake is a UNESCO World Heritage site and is revered by the local Buryat minority population. However, tourist accommodations have led to the installation of portable toilets near the sacred Shaman Rock formation and other locations. Conversely, some residents have welcomed the tourists and the accompanying boost to the local economy, which has previously been hampered by underdevelopment and a fishing ban. (CNN, April 10, 2021)

### **NAVALNY TEAM: DISSIDENT THREATENED WITH FORCE-FEEDING**

According to his team, prison administrators are threatening to force-feed jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny if he does not give up the hunger strike he began at the end of March. Navalny has reportedly lost 15 pounds since starting a strike over inadequate medical treatment for serious leg and back pain. Before starting his strike, Navalny had already lost over 17 pounds as a result of alleged sleep deprivation at the hands of his guards. The dissident's team wants him to be evaluated by an independent physician outside the prison, but authorities have refused the request. (Reuters, April 12, 2021)