
US CONDEMNS RUSSIA FOR PROTEST ARRESTS, SAYS PEOPLE DESERVE 'TRANSPARENT AND ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNANCE'

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The White House has said Russia's arrest of protesters is undemocratic.

Press secretary Sean Spicer said the U.S. is monitoring the situation.

Almost 1,400 people, including opposition leader Alexei Navalny, were arrested following anti-government protests.

The White House has denounced the Russian government for its handling of a series of country-wide protests which resulted in the arrest of more than a thousand people, including President Vladimir Putin's leading opponent.

White House press secretary Sean Spicer said on Monday that the arrests were an affront to "core democratic values" and said that the Russian people deserved a government that supports open ideas and "transparent and accountable governance."

"The United States strongly condemns the detention of hundreds of peaceful protesters throughout Russia," Spicer told reporters.

"Detaining peaceful protesters and journalists is an affront to core democratic values," he continued.

"The United States will monitor the situation and we will call on the government of Russia to immediately release all peaceful protesters.

"The Russian people, like people everywhere, deserve a government that supports an open marketplace of ideas, transparent and accountable governance, equal treatment under the law and the ability to exercise their right without fear or retribution."

Nearly 1,400 people were arrested in Moscow and St Petersburg on Monday after taking to the streets in anti-government rallies held across the country.

According to OVD, an independent group monitoring arrests, 825 people were detained in the capital and a further 548 were held in St Petersburg.

The majority of demonstrators were said to be young – those who were born or grew up during Putin's 17-year rule – although older protesters were also among those detained, according to witnesses. Among them was opposition leader Alexei Navalny, who organised the protests. He was detained in his home prior to the scheduled march in Moscow and was later arrested and sentenced to a 30-day prison sentence.

The planned protests, which coincided with Russia Day, a national holiday, were arranged by

Navalny as part of on-going rallies against the Russian government over corruption allegations.

Though the demonstrations were initially permitted by the authorities, Navalny later said he would relocate some of the marches amid claims that the government had attempted to undermine them by pressuring companies into not providing sound equipment.

The General Prosecutor's Office said prior to the marches that the new locations would be unlawful and added that it would take measures to prevent disorder.

The White House's comments come as the U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said on Monday that he saw no indication that Russia wanted a positive relationship with the U.S., adding that it has chosen a "strategic partner."

Later Tuesday, U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions is to give evidence to the Senate intelligence committee amid an on-going investigation into the Trump administration's ties with Russia.

Kaynak/Source: