

After Tillerson Leaves, Putin Orders Sweeping Arrests of Opposition Figures **Opinion**

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In addition to these arrests, there have been a wave of searches of the apartments of opposition figures. Not all have been formally arrested, but some have been detained for some time on increasingly flimsy pretexts. Photo: Ilya Ponomaryev, longtime Russian human rights activist

By Paul Goble for "Window on Eurasia"; April 13 – Last night and this morning after the end of US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson's visit, Vladimir Putin ordered the arrest of nine opposition figures across the country, "from Nakhodka to Samara," Rusmonitor reports (rusmonitor.com/aresty-oppozicii-olga-kurnosova-aresty-oppozicionerov-sankcioniroval-lichno-putin.html). Ilya Ponomaryev, a longtime Russian human rights activist, told the news agency that these arrests were the Kremlin's response to the success of the March 26 actions and that their timing reflected both Putin's statement yesterday after fighting "color revolutions" and his desire not to have them become the subject of US-Russian conversations. Olga Kurnosova, writing in Rusmonitor, says she completely agrees with Ponomaryev that the nine arrests are not only the result of a personal decision by Putin but are worrisome because activists don't have details on where those detained are being kept and fear they may be charged with "an attempted coup" for their organization of the March demonstrations. In addition to these arrests, there have been a wave of searches of the apartments of opposition figures ([http://rusmonitor.com/obyski-u-oppozi ... sty-liderov-protesta.html](http://rusmonitor.com/obyski-u-oppozi...sty-liderov-protesta.html)). Not all have been formally arrested, but some have been detained for some time on increasingly flimsy pretexts. That pattern was highlighted yesterday when the Russian police detained a group of activists for reading aloud on Red Square the Russian Constitution, yet another document for which Putin has routinely shown his contempt (ovdinfo.org/express-news/2017/04/12/na-krasnoy-ploshchadi-nachalis-zaderzhaniya-uchastnikov-cheniya-konstitucii).

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The commentary above is from Paul Goble's "Window on Eurasia" series and appears here with the author's permission. Contact Goble at: paul.goble@gmail.com