

公益社団法人 日本外国特派員協会

The Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan

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FCCJ: Freedom of Press Statement

The Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan protests Russia's Nov. 11 decision to ban 30 Japanese nationals, including journalists at the country's major newspapers and television stations. Reports say they have been indefinitely barred from entering the country.

The decision, made in response to recent sanctions imposed by Tokyo as part of a broader strategy to punish Moscow for its ongoing war in Ukraine, directly impacts legitimate Japanese news professionals seeking entrance into Russia, not Ukraine. Russia claims the bans are a response to Japan's anti-Russia policy.

On Nov. 12th (Japan time) the Japanese government protested the ban.

The barred list also includes Japanese academics, including specialists on Russia, as well as Japanese Foreign Ministry official Toshihiro Kitamura.

Russia remains a dangerous place for journalists. The Committee to Protect Journalists notes that since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, hundreds of Russian journalists have been forced into exile, where they continue to face transnational legal persecution, and their families have been harassed back home.

Foreign reporting in Russia is severely restricted. Reporters Without Borders warns that any information not validated by the Kremlin may be labelled "false" and prosecuted. In October 2024, a wave of in absentia arrests hit foreign reporters. Among them were British journalist Nick Paton Walsh of the US broadcaster CNN, Simone Traini and Stefania Battistini from Italy's public broadcaster RAI, and Mircea Barbu from Romania's online outlet HotNews.ro, who was also targeted by death threats posted on Russian Telegram channels.

This wave of arrests came following The Wall Street Journal's Evan Gershkovich being detained by Russia's Federal Security Service on charges of espionage in March 2023. It was the first time a journalist working for an American outlet had been arrested on charges of spying in Russia since the Cold War. On July 19, 2024, Gershkovich was sentenced to 16 years in prison but was released on August 1, 2024, as part of a prisoner exchange.

FCCJ Freedom of the Press Committee