

Russian DJ and performer Nina Kraviz banned from three music festivals

David Walsh
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In another deplorable, anti-democratic action by the cultural establishment in the US and Europe, three music festivals have excluded Russian DJ and performer Nina Kraviz from their events this summer. Kraviz has been banned from appearing at the Movement Music Festival in Detroit; the Crave in The Hague, the Netherlands; and PollerWiesen in Dortmund, Germany, on the grounds that she has not been sufficiently vocal about opposing the Putin regime's reactionary invasion of Ukraine.

Kraviz has become the focus of a right-wing campaign stirred up by the media, including *Time* magazine. In mid-May, *Time* published a witch-hunting article essentially singling out the prominent DJ for attack. Referring to the anti-Russian cultural boycott, the piece referred to Kraviz as the "latest artist at the center of this maelstrom." This had something of the character of a self-fulfilling prophecy. By "naming names" in this manner, *Time* was seeking to place Kraviz at the "center of this maelstrom."

The article went on to argue that the DJ and singer was "arguably the most famous Russian pop musician on a global scale: over the last decade, she's built an ardent following with 1.8 million Instagram followers, performed on Coachella's mainstage, and collaborated with the likes of Grimes and St. Vincent. She sits close to the center of the global electronic music world, and was named *Mixmag's* 2017 DJ of the Year."

Time claimed, on the basis of a few memes and online images, that Kraviz has "left a social media trail of support for Russian President Vladimir Putin. After the war began in February, she made one vague post about 'peace' before falling silent on social media for months, which prompted the criticism of those who feel that she should use her platform as one of Russia's foremost cultural exports."

The hypocrisy, or the "lie of the soul," if one prefers, is simply colossal. Where were the similar demands that US performers use their "platforms" to denounce the destruction of Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria and other countries targeted for America's murderous "liberating" efforts?

In fact, the various festival organizers, no doubt under pressure from governments at different levels and Ukrainian nationalist forces, are allowing themselves to become instruments for the whipping up of anti-Russian chauvinism and hatred, poisoning the political and cultural atmosphere and facilitating the war drive of the Biden administration and the other Western governments.

None of the three festivals provided an honest account of the decision to exclude Kraviz, or even "gave explicit reasoning for this decision," as *Mixmag*, the British electronic dance and clubbing magazine, pointed out. *Mixmag* noted that "PollerWiesen said, 'this decision was made by us following a process of open dialogue with all parties involved.'"

"Similarly, The Crave wrote: 'After long and intensive discussions both internally and externally we have decided that Nina Kraviz will not play The Crave Festival 2022.' Movement Detroit, where Kraviz was listed as one of the big names to expect, tweeted: 'Nina Kraviz is unable to play Movement this year.'"

Earlier in May, the Rotterdam-based company Clone Distribution severed its ties with Kraviz's label Trip Recordings, citing "different views on ethical and moral matters."

Clone's statement in regard to Kraviz exemplifies the anti-Russian hysteria that has overtaken significant sections of the affluent petty-bourgeoisie. It combines exaggerations about the impact of the Russian invasion and absolution of the US and NATO with anti-

communism and a generally authoritarian outlook. The statement reads, in part: “In the past, even after the annexation of the Crimea, Nina Kraviz has put forward several outings which can be taken as pro-Putin. Moreover she has clearly been flirting with CCCP/USSR-sentiments on several occasions, while the USSR was a regime that has stood for the oppression of minorities, has marginalised the LGBTQ+ communities, a regime which murdered millions of people!”

The statement goes on to smear Kraviz as someone who has been able to “continue her lifestyle and her life as a performing artist as if nothing is happening, while the looting, the raping, the murdering and the destruction of a country by her countrymen continues.” Clone keeps repeating phrases about Kraviz’s “right” to keep silent or hold any views she might choose before making clear it intends to punish her for exercising those rights.

The Movement Music Festival came under the direct pressure from a group calling itself “Ukrainians of Metro Detroit,” which organized a petition on Change.org. The petition demands that Kraviz “speak out for the victims of this war given your platform and millions of fans. Silence only breeds more injustice.” Otherwise, the group threatens, “we ask Movement and the City of Detroit to consider whether your past pro-Putin views reflect the values of our community, and re-evaluate their invitation to welcome you to the City.” They clearly followed through on their threats.

Kraviz has replied to the complaints, writing on Instagram, “As a person, musician and artist I’m deeply moved by what’s happening in the world. It’s appalling what my country’s relations with Ukraine have become. I am against all forms of violence. I am praying for peace. It pains me to see innocent people die.”

She went on, “I am a musician and was never involved in supporting the politicians or political parties, and I am not planning to do it in the future. I don’t understand politics or the social processes it creates. So I don’t think it is right to talk about what’s happening on social media. In my opinion, it might increase the degree of all-consuming hatred, and does not assist in understanding.”

Kraviz is still scheduled to perform at the CORE Festival in Belgium May 27-28 and Junction 2 in

London June 18-19.

Responses on social media have been generally hostile to the actions taken against Kraviz. Comments posted on a local Detroit television station’s Facebook page included the following:

“Forcing an artist to announce their political position during a war when their homeland has been throwing vocal opponents and their family members in jail is cruel and unfair. This action does nothing for the support of Ukraine.”

“Stop punishing citizens for government actions.”

“Music and sports are the only segments which connect people around the world. Leave them alone.”

“Surely, crushing people that have absolutely nothing to do with the Russian/Ukrainian war will show Putin.”

“She’s an artist, not a defense strategist... C’mon guys, she’s not invading anything but nightclubs.”

“That’s not right, she shouldn’t have to share her political views and definitely should not have to swear she supports someone else’s.”

“What does a Russian dj in America have anything to do with Russia and Ukraine? This is a stupid bully tactic. She’s not in Russia. She is not invading Ukraine. She is playing music for crying out loud.”

“Disgusting. Make her risk her life over what... a proxy war that’s just getting people killed for profit?”

“I wonder how the US would react if Russia started building bases and storing nukes near our borders?”

“Anti-Russian hysterics.”

“Put all these Ruskis in internment camps, that’ll fix Putin.”



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