



Illustration: Asya Sokolova

12.08.2022, 12:24 Novosibirsk Oblast

свой опыт

First police harassed this anti-war activist. Then her own mother tried turning her in

Although mass anti-war protests in Russia have stopped, people still can be detained for anti-war statements. Maria from Novosibirsk has been suspected of distributing posts containing the «Peace to the World» inscription. At first, she had an unidentified call from a man who introduced himself as a district police officer, then she had an argument with her mom who tried to hand her over to the police.

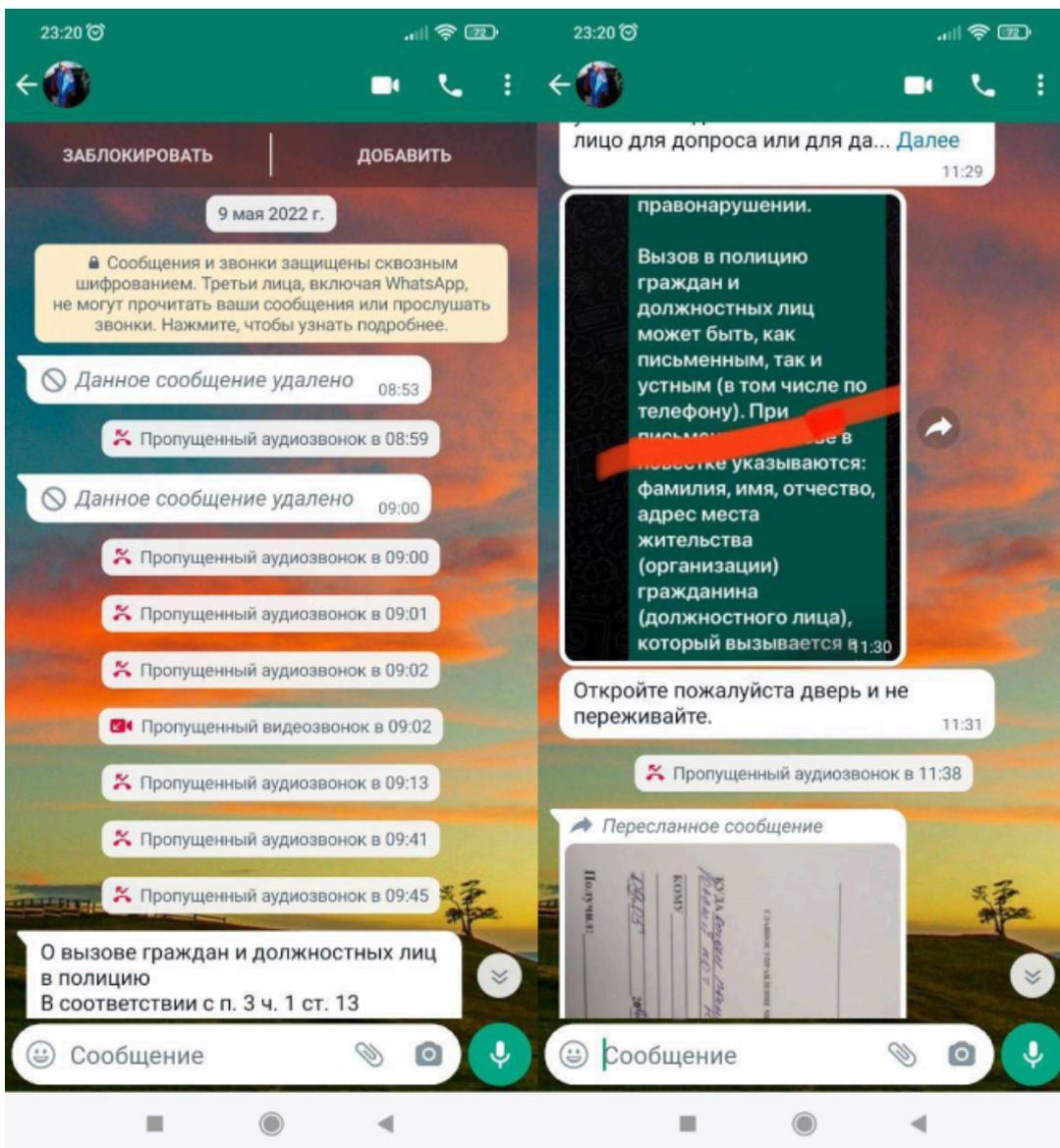
ОБ ЭТОМ НИКТО НЕ УЗНАЕТ

Если об этом никто не напишет. Подпишитесь на регулярные пожертвования ОВД-Инфо, чтобы плохие дела не оставались в тишине.

ПОДПИСАТЬСЯ

Текст на русском

It all started at the end of April. One day, I received a message written supposedly by our district police officer. Then my mom started calling. She said the officer just looked in and told her and my dad I did «something terrible». The thing is, I am registered at my parents' but we (my husband and I) live in another apartment.



Screenshots of the chat with the district officer / Shared by Maria

I called OVD-Info immediately to ask what should be done if such is the case. They told me I have a right not to call back someone I don't know. That person texted me again, but I didn't respond and thought that would be the end of the story.

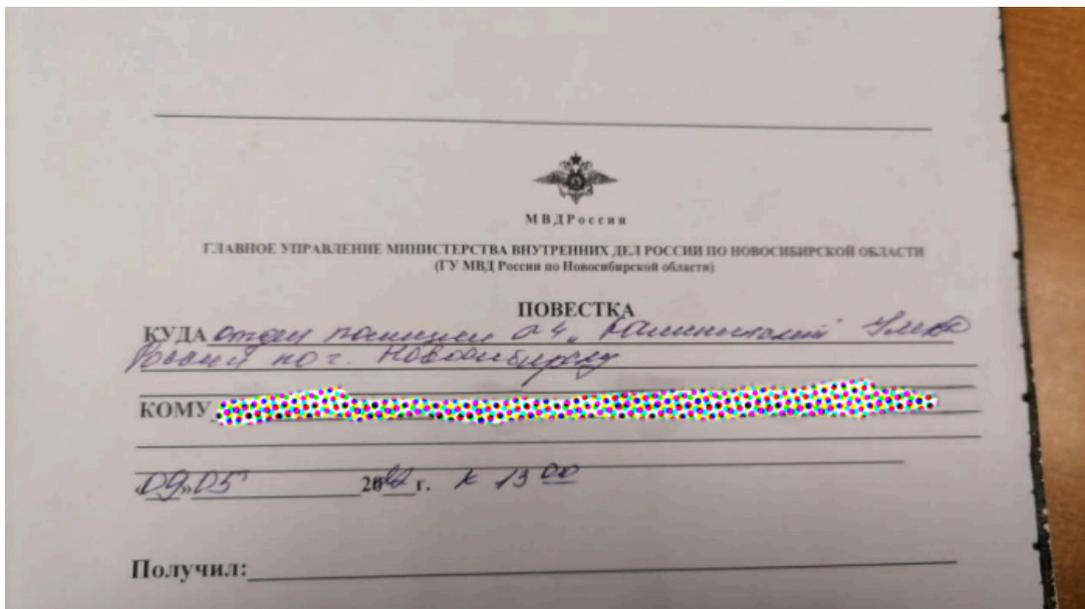
It happened to be just the beginning though. Mom called me again on 9 May, half past seven in the morning, saying the police officers visited them once again. They insisted that I had been taking part in some protests linked to [Alexey] Navalny. I can't tell where they got this information, I was never engaged in protesting.

After that, this so-called officer started calling my husband and asking if he could confirm whether I am his spouse. My husband said yes, we are married. Policemen seemed to ascertain his address and arrived at our place. Standing at the front door, they had been calling both of us for three-four hours straight. All this time I was in touch with the legal staff from OVD-Info. I didn't understand what was going on, what the police wanted to accuse me of, and what I could do.

Five hours later, mom messaged me via WhatsApp: «I'm here, open the door. Nobody's gonna hurt you. It's gonna be alright. You are not guilty». I answered her: «If they have it in for me, they should abide by the law. Let them send me a notification via mail». OVD-Info lawyers told me I have a right to do so.

It is important to understand that all this time the police were not only constantly calling us by phone, but also pounding on our door. When they realised I wouldn't open it, they sent me a photo of the notification via WhatsApp. It seemed to be a quick-and-dirty one: I received the message at 11:20 but it read I should arrive at the police station [#4, Kalininskiy] just a little bit later in the day, by 13:00. As far as I understand, it is unlawful: I should have been warned at least a few days in advance.

They didn't stop calling though. The «officer» instantly offered me a ride to the station. Mom had been messaging me as well: «I feel bad, I am stressed out. I have asthma. Let me in». I was worried about her and even asked if it's necessary to call an ambulance, but she kept saying no.



The notification from the chat with the so-called district officer / Shared by Maria

OVD-Info provided me with a lawyer, Elena Chirkina. We decided I should still go to the police station. My husband said he would come with me. Elena told us she would come straight to the station.

After that I told the policemen I would go with them. They left the building, got into the car and said they would be waiting for us. Mom was left alone outside the front door. I looked through the peephole to check they're gone, and opened the door.

Exactly at that moment, the lawyer called me, and despite I went to another room to have a private conversation with her, my mom must have heard my conversation. When I came back, she began to accuse me: «Whom did you call? What are you doing?» She seemed to think that I had joined some kind of political cult and they were instructing me on what I should do and how I should behave.

She snatched the phone out of my hands and said that she would give it to the police so that they would «clean it» and «find out all the necessary information».

Later she said that she didn't really plan to give my phone to the police. But at the time it sounded like a betrayal. I didn't want her to come initially, had asked her to leave. I had been worried and really stressed out but she still had come to my place and had kept begging me to let her in.

I tried to pull the phone out of my mother's hands. She didn't let me do it. We started to fight. [*Maria asked us not to describe the details of the conflict but said her mother hit her on the head — OVD-Info*].

Luckily, I had a spare phone. I called my husband, who had briefly left the apartment, and asked him to come back. In the meantime, I pushed my mother into the exit enclosure and locked her up there. She could neither enter the apartment nor go out.

When my husband arrived, Mom gave my phone to him voluntarily. After that, we all headed to the police station. The police had split up: my husband and I got into one car, and my mother got into the second one. Apparently, she went to the police department voluntarily, no one forced her.

The policeman in our car tried to provoke us. He asked my husband strange questions, asked if he knew «what his wife was doing», called me a criminal. I remember it very badly, I was very tired both physically and mentally.

Mom and the policeman who accompanied her arrived at the police station a little bit earlier. Later, I realised she went there because she was very worried about me as a mother. They didn't interrogate her, she waited in the corridor while the policemen asked me various questions. From that moment on, I didn't see mom again. It's still difficult for me to accept that she betrayed me when I needed her help.

In the police department they asked me if I knew why they brought me there. I said no, I was absolutely honest. They started asking me about some telegram posts I allegedly sent

Policemen were very interested in whether I sent out these posts, if I knew what these images were about, if someone else had access to my computer and phone, and if they could send posts from my profile without my consent. The lawyer from OVD-Info helped me a lot: she said that I could use Article 51 of the Constitution and not answer these questions.

Finally, two administrative protocols were drawn up for me under the second part of Article 4.1 of the Code of Administrative Offences. After that, I was assigned an administrative commission [of our district council], which I had to attend in a few days. At the meeting of the commission, I was told that there were errors in the protocol and my case was sent for a new trial. It turns out that the case is still not closed. I can be called to the police department at any time so they can clarify some additional details.

It definitely adds up to my stress level. I already have been feeling intimidated since April, when that so-called district police officer had started calling me. At first, I was frightened to leave the house. Each time I needed to go out, I waited for the hallway to become completely empty. I sorta developed some kind of paranoia. I even tried not to approach any cameras so that no one from the police could find me.

In May, I calmed down a bit. However, after the visit of the police, the anxiety returned with renewed vigour. For a while, I didn't leave the house at all. Then I realised that the protocols had already been drawn up and I could exhale a little. Still, then I learned that the case was sent for a new trial. Now I live in constant fear again.

Since childhood, I have dreamed of travelling to different countries. Five years ago I wanted to leave Russia to study abroad. Unfortunately, I did not have such opportunities. Since February 24, my desire to leave Russia has only increased. I started saving money to move from here and mentally preparing for it. If only I had a chance, I would have

left the country immediately. In the meantime, we just have to wait for the right moment.

Story was recorded by Karina Merkuryeva

ЧТО Я МОГУ С ЭТИМ СДЕЛАТЬ?

Прочитать, рассказать, поддержать. Подпишитесь на регулярные пожертвования ОВД-Инфо, чтобы как можно больше людей узнали о политических репрессиях в России сегодня.

ПОДДЕРЖАТЬ

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