

Anna Chagina / Photo: Anna Chagina's social media

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ARTICLES

“I sang as the intruders raided my home”: an anti-war musician sentenced

Since February 24th, 2022, more than 750 people were made **defendants in criminal proceedings because of their anti-war views. Among them is Anna Chagina, a musician from the Siberian city of Tomsk. For two reposts about the war, the prosecution called to fine her 200,000 rubles (~2,000 US\$) and on 7 August, Anna **was fined** 100,000 rubles (~1,000\$ USD) and forbidden from publishing anything on the Internet for two years. This is her story.**

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

Anna Chagina graduated from a musical school and made a living teaching «free-play» improvisation on the violin for the last few years. She found most of her students through the Russian social network «VKontakte» and kept in touch with many people on that platform. In September 2022, **her profile** was blocked by request from the Prosecutor General's Office. As Anna herself **noted**, this had a major impact on her source of income.

«The block happened right after I posted [a link to] a stream of an opposition conference. With a VPN, my profile remained visible and accessible, but without a VPN, it showed up as blocked. Even still, all services remained [available] and people could write to me, and I to them. I decided that I would continue using „VKontakte“ in this format, » the woman recalls.

«At the same time, since April, I began noticing someone following me. This is one of the ways of putting psychological pressure on a person. If you suspect that you're being followed, it's most likely that that is the case. I read posts from OVD-Info about how to behave during raids and harassment, but I had the feeling that I wouldn't need that [information]. This is another example of how hard it is to grasp what is happening: you don't want to believe what is happening until the last moment.»

At the end of November 2022, police came up with a search warrant regarding a criminal case on a repeat offense

of «discrediting [the army].» Anna already had an administrative offense for «discrediting the army» (article 20.3.3 of the Code of Administrative Offences) — in the spring of 2023, she had gone out with a poster which had a quote from the Gospel: «Blessed are the peacemakers.»



Detention of Anna Chagina at an anti-war rally in Tomsk, 6 March 2022 /
Photo: Anton Kharin, tomskie.ru

«It's completely unclear how one could find „discreditation“ in that quote, but the courts decided otherwise. This was the period when across all of Russia, people were being charged under article 20.3.3 of the Code of Administrative Offenses for anything at all; a terrible practice was developed,» explained Konstantin Muhametkalieyev, a lawyer representing Chagina's interests.

The night before the search, the woman was celebrating her birthday with her family and friends. «I shared my plans to leave with my friends. My guests went home; I spent the night mostly awake because my daughter had a fever and at 6:30 a.m., „they“ came and said, „Happy birthday, Anna Sergeivna!“» Chagina describes. «Along with a Spetsnaz guy and FSB guys, a court-appointed lawyer was brought in. The

first thing she did was ask me not to resist. While these intruders were raiding my home, I was singing. I felt that it was necessary to break the mold: these people should understand that they are invading the life of another person. I sang the Christmas song „A bright star burns in the sky,“ and there was a ringing silence in the apartment.“

The pretext for a criminal case ended up being two reposts: Anna shared posts from the Tomsk philosopher Nikolai Karpitskiy. He was the head of the Antifascist Committee in Tomsk. Karpitskiy now lives in Ukraine and talks about his own experience and observations.

Mr. Muhametkalieyev, lawyer, suggests that after the civil case for «discrediting [the army]» (article 20.3.3 of the Code of Administrative Offences), Chagina's social media pages were «purposely monitored.» Supposedly a random person who is friends with a current FSB officer found the reposts. After he told his friend, a criminal case was brought against Chagina.

After the search, the woman and her daughter were taken to the Investigative Committee for questioning. «I refused to give a statement. My daughter, with pneumonia and a fever, sat for the whole time during my interrogation and for some time after that too when I was taken to the detention center. This was an absolute torture for her and a way to put pressure on me, » recalls Anna.

The next day, Chagina was issued restrictive measures and prohibited from certain actions, specifically, she was not allowed to use mail and the Internet, leave her house from 22:00 to 6:00, and not allowed to attend large events. Later, the court extended these restrictions twice.

«I didn't have Internet access for more than six months. Because of this, it became much harder to communicate. I found news stories through various ways and it was always an adventure, » says the woman. «I started noticing that

I needed to feel included [in something larger than myself]. This helps you feel less alone and instead gives you the opportunity to get in touch with the illusion of strength and greatness. At some point, I suddenly felt that I was almost ready to believe in this version of the world that's being shown on Russian T.V. This was a really unpleasant moment. Each day, we each have to choose what is more important: either a relaxed sense of complacency or self-awareness.»

In June of 2022, the prosecution **sought** a fine of 200,000 rubles (~2,000\$ USD). On August 7th, the court **fined** her for 100,000 rubles (~1,000\$ USD), forbade her from managing websites and sharing information on the Internet, and she was released on personal recognizance.

ЧТО Я МОГУ С ЭТИМ СДЕЛАТЬ?

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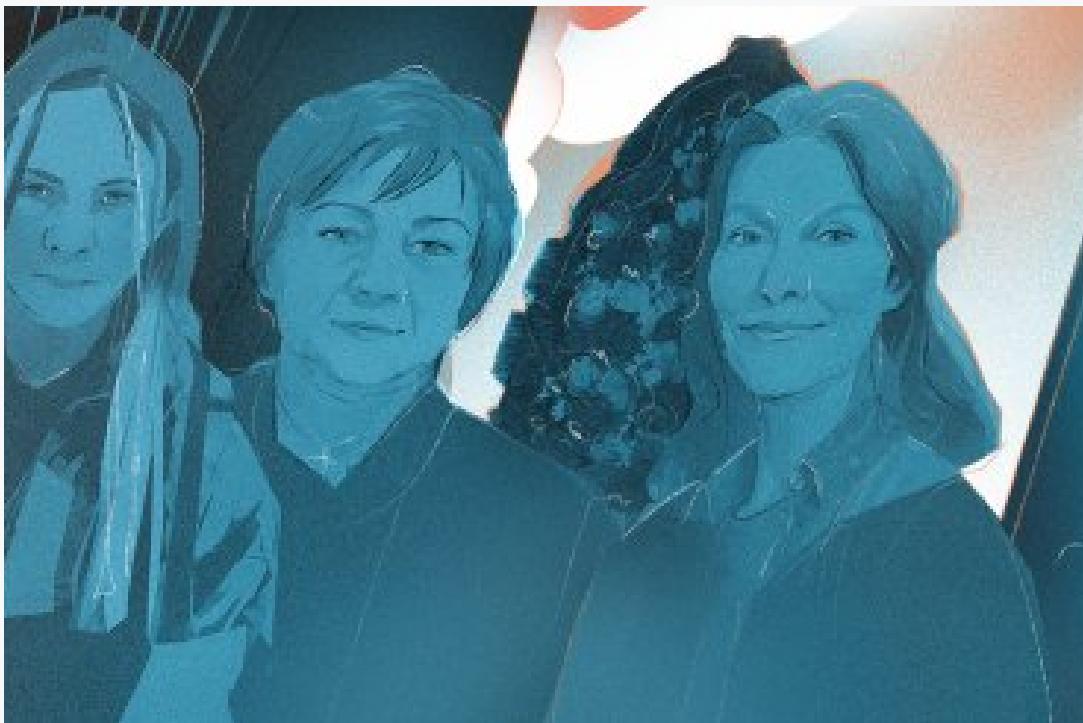
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