



Illustration: solvejg\_art for OVD-Info

17.01.2024

## Repression in Russia in 2023. OVD-Info overview

Russian version

### INTRODUCTION

In contrast to its forerunner, 2023 didn't grab headlines with massive protests or numerous arrests. However, it would be a mistake to interpret this as the cessation of dissent or a lack of other crackdowns. Instead, what we have witnessed is a continuation of the patterns from 2022: targeted criminal cases, more stringent laws, and the introduction of new repressive measures. This approach effectively keeps society on edge, fostering self-censorship and sparing the regime from the need for large-scale persecution.

Nevertheless, Russian civil society, both inside the country and beyond, remains resilient, displaying solidarity and a commitment to human rights.

Those who dissent persist in their opposition to war and repressive tactics, engaging in pickets, organising letter

campaigns, and participating in other forms of resistance, including direct actions such as arson.

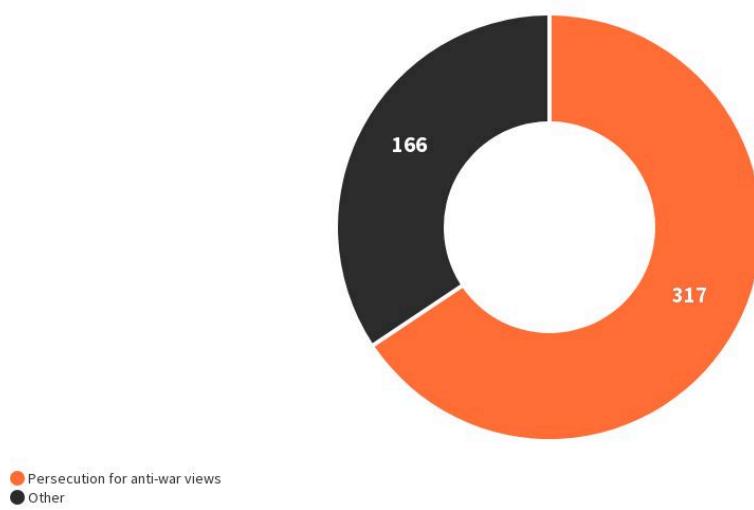
The state, on its part, continues its crackdowns, targeting ordinary citizens expressing their opinions and representatives of various political, social, and religious groups.

We will delve into the causes and repercussions of all this in the following sections.

## PERSECUTION FOR ANTI-WAR VIEWS

Similar to the previous year, the majority of acts of repression involve persecution for expressing anti-war sentiments in various forms: statements, slogans, leaflets, and public actions.

Most politically charged criminal cases revolve around cracking down on those who express anti-war sentiments

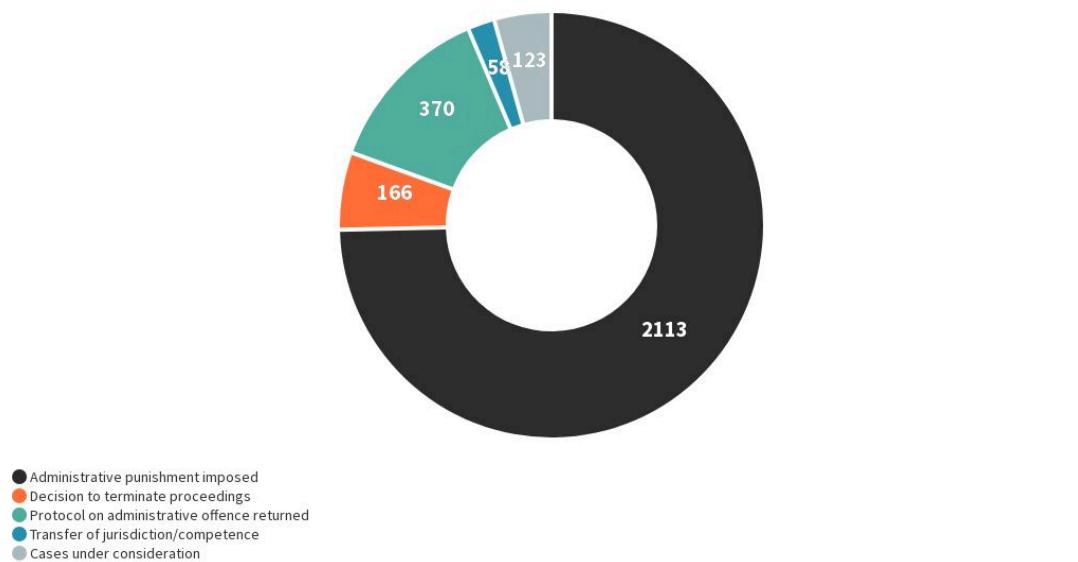


Data [OVD-Info](#) • As of 15 December 2023

# ADMINISTRATIVE CASES

We are aware of 2,830 cases under Article 20.3.3 that reached the courts this year. Out of these, 2,707 cases have been adjudicated in court. The outcomes of court rulings were as follows:

Outcomes of court rulings under Article 20.3.3



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The largest number of cases for discrediting the army, 372 in all, were initiated in annexed Crimea. The distribution of the number of initiated cases among administrative regions was as follows:



The total number of initiated cases is lower than in 2022. This can be partially explained by the widespread application of Article 20.3.3 against those detained at demonstrations. Compiling reports against an entire police wagon of people is considerably simpler than scrutinising social media comments, gathering identity evidence and conducting person-specific searches. Another factor may be the work of censorship and the gradual decline in the number of social media posts or other public statements, although we cannot verify the latter.

In 2023, OVD-Info lawyers participated in 1,509 administrative cases and visited 281 police departments.

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## CRIMINAL CASES

The number of defendants in «anti-war» criminal cases has risen. These cases encompass persecution for different forms of expressing one's anti-war position. As of 19 December 2022, our records contained cases against 378 people in 69 regions of Russia. However, by 18 December 2023, the

number of defendants increased to 794 defendants in 78 regions. In 2023, an additional 423 people were added to the list of those persecuted for their anti-war positions.

Among the new defendants are, for example, participants of the «Vesna» (Spring) anti-war and democracy movement. In June 2023, security forces **initiated** a second criminal case against members of the Vesna movement, basing the charges on social network posts written in 2022. This new Vesna case involves six defendants: activists from St. Petersburg Evgeniy Zateev and Valentin Khoroshenin, member of the St. Petersburg regional council of the Yabloko Party Vasily Neustroev, activist from Tver (a city northwest of Moscow), Yan Ksenzhepol'skiy, and former Vesna participants Pavel Sinelnikov and Anna Arkhipova. They were all detained after **massive searches** in St. Petersburg and Tver on June 6 and transported to Moscow, where they are currently being held in a pre-trial detention centre. Notably, Neustroev has had no affiliation with Vesna for the last few years. Later, at least 14 more individuals, allegedly associated with Vesna, were **placed** on the wanted list. Additionally, in September, 21 new people were **added** to the Rosfinmonitoring register of «extremists and terrorists». All these individuals are defendants in the new Vesna case.

«Vesna» defendants held in the pre-trial detention centre repeatedly reported being pressured. For example, Valentin Khoroshenin was **threatened**, Yan Ksenzhepol'skiy was **pressured** into writing and signing a letter under dictation, saying he was going to cooperate with security forces, and was later **denied** food and clothing parcels for weeks.

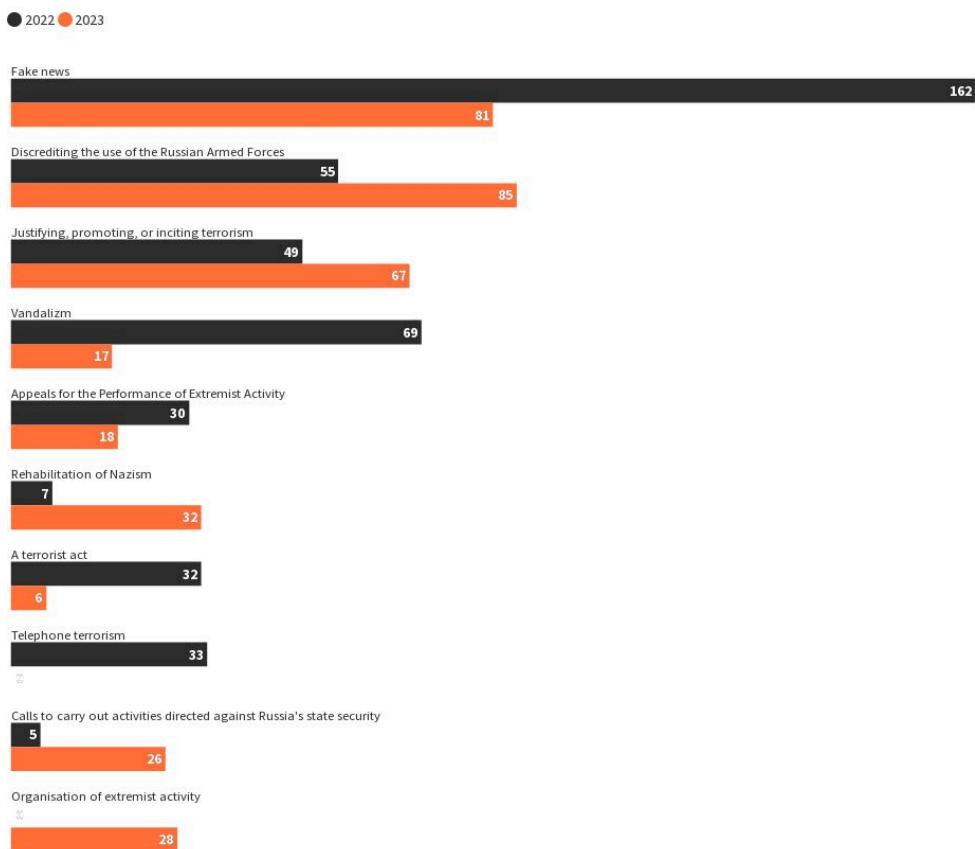
Moreover, the authorities opened a second criminal case in at least two instances for those already serving sentences in anti-war cases. A justification of terrorism case was **opened** against former Moscow city councillor Alexei Gorinov, and a case concerning non-dangerous harm to a detention

facility staff member was **initiated** against journalist Maria Ponomarenko.

Due to the absence of widespread protest actions, law enforcement officers have relied less on Article 318, pertaining to the use of violence against authority figures. Conversely, there has been an uptick in the number of cases falling under Article 280.3 concerning the discreditation of the Russian military, which can be largely attributed to the increased enforcement of fines for a comparable administrative offence under Article 20.3.3. Cases under the first part of Article 280.3 of the Criminal Code are initiated if an individual has received at least one effective penalty under Article 20.3.3 of the Administrative Offences Code.

Authorities have treated comments expressing approval of **arson** against military recruitment offices and **comparing** Russian servicemembers to orcs and fascists as justification of terrorism, increasingly citing Article 205.2. It is probable that after the justification of extremism law comes into effect, Article 280 of the Criminal Code will be even more actively employed against online postings. This encompasses positive remarks about Alexei Navalny, his Anti-Corruption Foundation (FBK), LGBTQ individuals, or the Vesna Movement—all of which are recognized as extremist in Russia.

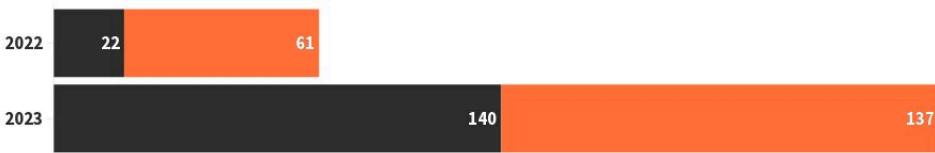
## Top 10 articles that defendants in anti-war cases get charged with - 2023 VS 2022



Data [OVD-Info](#) • As of 14 December 2023

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In 2023 we also saw an increase in the number of prison sentences handed down to individuals involved in anti-war cases.



● Prison term ● Other

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We consider real prison terms to be: imprisonment in a colony-settlement; imprisonment in a general regime colony (including in absentia); imprisonment in a maximum security colony; compulsory treatment. Other types of punishment include: fine; restriction of freedom; suspended imprisonment; forced labor; correctional labor, including probation; compulsory work.

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Sentences handed down for online posts have become harsher. In 2022, most cases did not involve imprisonment,

but by 2023, the distribution was roughly 50/50. The length of the sentences also increased. While in 2022 the average sentence length relating to cases concerning online posts was **34** months, in 2023 it reached **65** months.

The average sentence for anti-war cases in general has also **increased**: in 2022 it was 36 months of incarceration, and in 2023 it was 77 months. Various factors contribute to this. The main ones, in our view, are that a large number of cases filed in 2022 have reached sentencing, and that some cases have resulted in long sentences. For example, in cases of terrorist attacks and sabotage, which we include in the overall statistics, the penalties in such cases are harsh to begin with, and sentencing in such cases has become more frequent, which has affected the terms in general. Examples of this include the 19 years' term of incarceration for **Roman Nasryev** and **Alexei Nuriev**, or 25 years for **Vladimir Kara-Murza**.

Prison terms for "anti-war cases" in 2023



Data [OVD-Info](#) • As of 14 December 2023

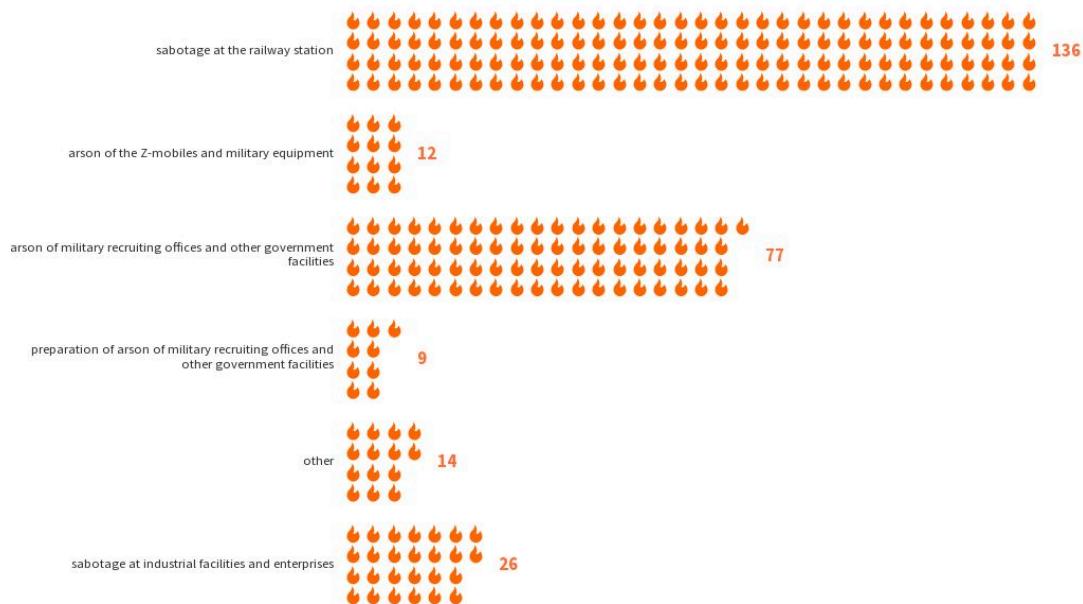
## Arson prosecutions

The increase in the average length of sentences can also be attributed to the fact that, compared to the previous year, the number of direct actions, such as arson attacks on military recruitment offices, administrative buildings and relay cabinets on railroads, has increased.

At the beginning of the war, such arson attacks were mostly qualified under Article 167 of the Criminal Code (willful destruction of property), which carries a relatively low penalty. In 2023, similar actions were more often placed under articles on terrorism or sabotage, the sanctions for which are much harsher.

In total, at least 274 people have been prosecuted for direct actions in 2023, according to [Solidarity Zone](#), in comparison with 117 people in 2022.

Due to direct actions, at least 274 people became defendants in criminal cases



Data [Zona Solidarnosti](#) • As of 21 September 2023

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OVD-Info is aware of 44 sentences handed down to defendants in anti-war cases for arson or attempted arson

or sabotage, 40 of them in 2023, and 30 with actual sentences. One such sentence was passed recently: 17-year-old Yegor Balazeikin **was sentenced** to 6 years in prison for throwing a Molotov cocktail at a military recruitment centre.

30 sentences with real terms were handed down to defendants in anti-war cases due to arson or attempted arson of a military recruiting office or sabotage in 2023



Data [Zona Solidarnosti](#) • Data 21 September 2023

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Article 281 of the Criminal Code on sabotage was rarely used until the end of 2022 and the beginning of 2023: one person was convicted under it in 2022. In the first half of 2023, according to the same court statistics, two sentences were passed under Article 281.

According to OVD-Info, at least five defendants in anti-war cases have been charged under the article on sabotage. The use of this article has become much more frequent overall, «Mediazona» **found**, and not always justified. The article was also **made more stringent** at the end of 2022, with penalties now extending to life imprisonment.

## Persecution of Journalists

# 6

Journalist Maria Ponomarenko was sentenced to 6 years in prison for her coverage of the destruction of the Drama Theatre in Mariupol.

By the end of 2023, at least 43 journalists faced criminal prosecution for their anti-war stance. Among them were those who continued their work in Russia despite the imposition of military censorship, including reporters [Maria Ponomarenko](#) and [Roman Ivanov](#) from «RusNews», the chief editor of «Modern Kalmykia» [Valery Badmaev](#), and [Mikhail Afanasyev](#), the editor of a Khakas publication «New Focus». Repression has also affected journalists who have left the country: for instance, in August, blogger Michael Nacke and investigator Ruslan Leviev were [sentenced in absentia](#) to 11 years in prison under the criminal article on «fakes» about the army.

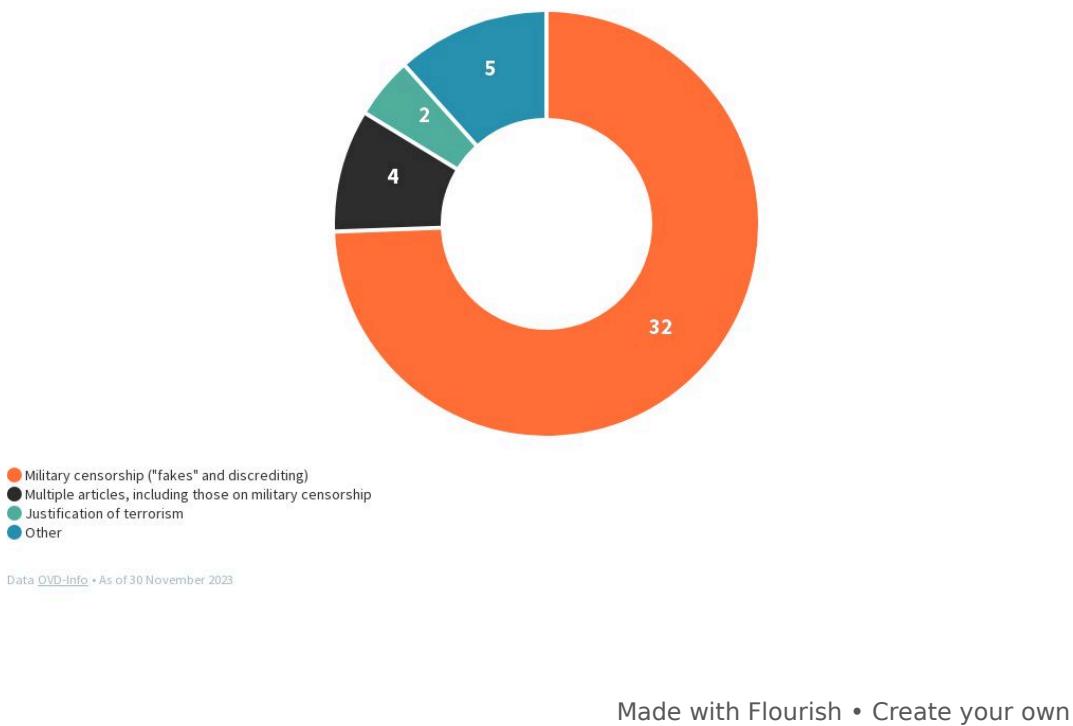
Additionally, Russian law enforcement continues to pursue Ukrainian journalists in absentia. In September, a Moscow court [sentenced](#) Ukrainian TV presenter Maria Efrosinina to 7 years in prison for negative publications about Russian military personnel on her Instagram account.

**>18**

journalists have faced criminal prosecution for their personal social media posts

Most journalists facing persecution due to their anti-war views have been criminally charged under the articles about «fakes» about the Russian army or the repeated discrediting of the military. However, members of the media are also charged with other articles, including defamation and justification of terrorism. As part of the persecution of the Spring movement, at least two journalists, [Ekaterina Goncharova](#) and [Angelina Roshchupko](#), are implicated in cases related to their involvement in a non-profit organisation that allegedly infringes on citizens' rights. The chief editor of «Skat MEDIA», Lev Gyammer, has also been [declared wanted](#) in connection with one of the Vesna cases.

Under which articles are journalists persecuted in the "anti-war case"?



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## «Carousel arrests» and Anatoly Berezikov's death

During the year, numerous cases of violations of the rights of persons involved in anti-war cases became known in Russia: use of violence and torture, non-admission of lawyers, unjustified censorship of letters, and bullying, among others.

The police continue to actively restrict the communication of convicted and accused persons with the outside world. Complaints that officials do not allow them to receive or send letters came from many convicted persons, including Vladimir Kara-Murza, Yegor Balazeykin, **Dmitry Ivanov** and **Maria Ponomarenko**.

Pressure from the security forces also took place in court proceedings: for example, the wife of the persecuted Evgeny Zateyev was **subjected to force** at the hearing and the artist Sasha Skochilenko was tortured with starvation. Prison authorities refused to **provide** the food Skochilenko urgently

needed, conducted numerous searches in her cell, confiscated her medicine and did not provide her with enough water.

The authorities refuse to investigate torture and violence. Prisoners **Dmitry Ivanov** and **Igor Paskar**, **Ruslan Ushakov** and **Artem Begoyan**, **Ilya Baburin** and **Kirill Butylin** have told us about such cases.

**>40**

**cases of police violence.**

On June 14, **it was reported** that activist Anatoly Berezikov had died in the special detention centre in the southern city of Rostov-on-Don. Before that, Anatoly was tortured and subjected to «carousel arrests». (Carousel arrests involve the consecutive detainments of an individual under administrative charges, often followed by a criminal offence accusation.) **According to the «Perviy Otdel/Department One»**, the police wanted to press charges against Berezikov under the article on high treason (art. 275 CC) because of anti-war leaflets.

Igor Baryshnikov is still in grave danger: the 67-year-old has suspected cancer and a cystoma (a catheter in the bladder that passes through the abdominal wall) in his abdomen. The sentence of 7.5 years in prison was **handed down** in July, after which Baryshnikov was remanded in custody. Baryshnikov's health had quickly worsened under arrest; on August 4 he was moved to the infirmary of the Federal Penitentiary Service. Due to the negligence of prisoner escorts, Baryshnikov is now in mortal danger: his lawyer points out that her client's kidneys could fail at any moment.

At the time of the investigation, Baryshnikov was on personal recognisance (ie, recognisance not to flee). During this period, as before, he was caring for his paralysed mother

Eugenia. She **passed away** on August 7, shortly after the **verdict**, and Baryshnikov **was not permitted** to attend the funerals.

## Extrajudicial pressure

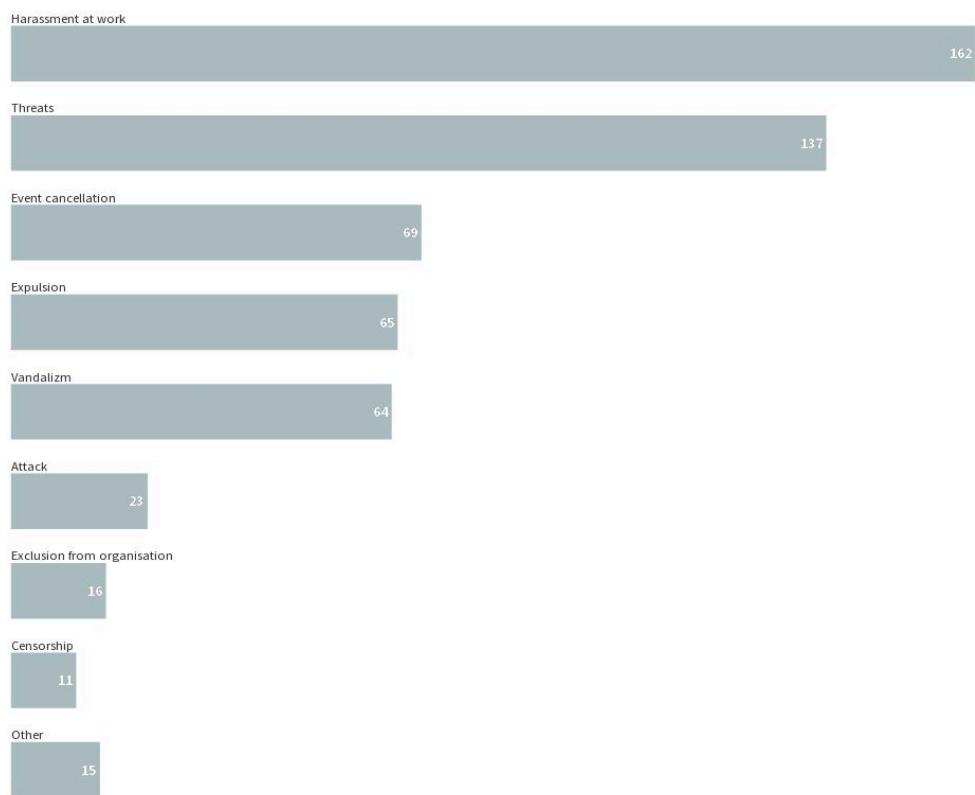
Extra-judicial pressure remains one of the frequent tactics used by the authorities to persecute people with anti-war views. Extra-judicial methods of pressure have long been used as a tool to put excessive pressure on people. They also are part of the expansive discretion granted to law enforcement. The main types of extrajudicial pressure include anonymous threats and attacks; dismissal from work; expulsion from universities or other educational institutions; cancellation of events (concerts, lectures, films); and forced apologies and other forms of demonstrating loyalty. We also place in this category any other methods of pressure that have no legal justification or procedure.

Obviously we do not know about the extent of such cases, because people who have been subjected to this kind of pressure are reluctant to tell human rights defenders or the media. However, there is every reason to believe that there are more cases — and the repressive atmosphere fosters this to a great extent.

This year, there has been a lot of news about **forced apology videos**, a practice that is no longer new and has been picked up by various pro-government Telegram channels. In total, we are familiar with at least 108 cases of forced apologies since the beginning of the war. Most of them are produced in annexed Crimea, thanks to the efforts of the local security forces and their connection with the pro-government blogger Alexander Talipov, who publishes apology videos.

Among other types of extrajudicial pressure this year:

## Extrajudicial pressure on people with an anti-war views



Data [OVD-Info](#) • As of 15 December 2023

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## REPRESSIONS ON LEGISLATIVE LEVEL

This year, like the previous one, was marked by a mass of diverse repressive legislative efforts.

In spring 2023 the notorious law imposing administrative and criminal charges for «discrediting the military» or spreading «fake news» about the Russian army has been **updated to include** volunteer battalions, organisations or individuals assisting in completion of the objectives set for the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, meaning that spreading «fakes» about mercenary groups, such as Wagner PMC, could constitute a punishable offence. In April, a law **was passed** to allow military summonses to be sent out electronically through the public services website Gosuslugi,

a unified registry of citizens eligible for military service was established, and restrictive measures have been put in place concerning people evading conscription, such as a prohibition on operating vehicles and conducting real estate transactions after twice failing to report to a military recruiting office once a summons has been received.

During the spring legislative session the Russian State Duma passed a [law](#) imposing a life-long sentence for those convicted of treason, and expanded and tightened a number of articles of the Criminal Code. Specifically, the law put in place a wider list of crimes that could constitute an offence punishable by life in prison, such as treason. The minimum sentences under this law, pertaining, for example, to recruitment for or incitement to terrorism, have been noticeably increased, harsher punishments relating to a number of articles covering terrorism and diversion have been assigned, up to 20 years with the convicted being eligible for a prison sentence and seizure of property. In addition, the definition of diversion has been broadened, meaning that arson of military recruiting offices, government facilities and structures of civil infrastructure that can be constituted as an act of diversion would be subject to a significantly more punitive section of the article, 281.2 of the Criminal Code, imposing a potential sentence of up to 20 years. The notion of what constitutes an «attack on the individuals or institutions under international protection» has also been adjusted, such that an article of law punishing such conduct can be applied to the threat of doing so, ie, merely threatening to attack Russian embassies would be punishable in the same way an actual attack.

This same law also introduced a new article, 284.3 of the Criminal Code, which prohibits aiding either the enforcement of decisions by international authorities of which Russia is not a member, or criminal persecution by foreign authorities of officials, soldiers or military volunteers. The intention behind the law is to criminalise reporting war crimes — and

the vague wording of the document makes it possible to convict people based on a variety of actions, even working with the European Court of Human Rights.

In **amendments** to the law on citizenship, the list of criminal charges that can cause an individual to be stripped of their acquired Russian citizenship has been extended. Some notable inclusions are «serious crimes against the state», including discrediting the military (cases under article 280.3 of the Criminal Code) and having a history of repeated administrative offences under Article 212.1 (related to participation in demonstrations).

A law was passed, once again **complicating** the voting process for elections. On the 14th of July Vladimir Putin approved a **law** banning transitioning.



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Following summer recess, and during the fall session of the State Duma, the lawmakers **passed** a law expanding the article of the Code of Administrative Offences on demonstrations and dissemination of extremist materials. Courts will be able to pass sentences for dissemination of materials not included in the registry of extremist materials. Following the passage of this law, a **draft law** on «public justification of extremism» has been introduced (but not yet passed), allowing for a new and effective

instrument of repression, due to its broad interpretation of «extremism» and unlimited interpretation of «justification».

The State Duma also passed a [series of laws](#) making it more difficult for non-government organisations (NGOs) to work in Russia. Currently, NGOs need explicit permission from the Ministry of justice and inclusion in a specialised registry to work in Russia; collaborating with these NGOs could result in both administrative, and criminal liability.

The repressive measures instituted in previous years have intensified pressure on civil society members, exacerbating the marginalisation of persecuted groups. For example, there was a surge in pressure on the queer community, leading to its de facto criminalisation.

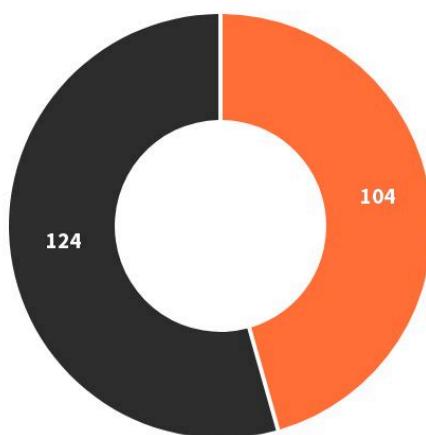
## Pressure on LGBTQ community

**> 200**

Over 200 cases of discrimination against the members of the LGBTQ+ community (individuals and legal entities).

According to [Vyhod \(Coming out\)](#)

Violation of the rights of LGBTQ+ people and organizations that support them



● Violation of the rights of individuals  
● Violation of the rights of media, organizations, and associations

Data LGBTQ+ Group "Vyhod" • As of 30 November 2023

In 2023, Russia once again increased its crackdown on the LGBTQ community. On 30 November, in response to a Ministry of Justice lawsuit, the Supreme Court **branded** the «international LGBT community» an extremist organisation. The decision to ban the non-existent movement became enforceable immediately, with potential liability for violation of the ban after 10 January 2024, when the decision will become legally binding.

Throughout 2023, the government has been using a new expanded article banning «LGBTQ propaganda». Activists and bloggers as well as online movie theatres and streaming platforms have been persecuted under this article. For example, Russian law enforcement found «LGBT propaganda» in films such as «**Blow dry**», „**Briget Jones**“ and «**The Royal Tenenbaums**». In St. Petersburg, the TV channel AVIA TV was **fined** for showing a video clip of popular Russian singer Sergey Lazarev: the law enforcement officers did not like the „relative position in space“ and „individual characteristics“ of the actors' hands. The court ruled that they „broadcasted homosexual preferences“.

The LGBTQ group **“Vyhod”** (Coming out) identified the following trends:

- 1) Blocking LGBTQ content on various platforms, from activist projects to popular streaming platforms;
- 2) Fines imposed on different streaming platforms and TV channels for incorrect labelling of LGBTQ content or for distributing what the Russian government considers «propaganda»;
- 3) Self-censorship: Many platforms/websites/publishers and individuals remove LGBTQ content and even mentions of LGBTQ by themselves due to concerns about possible sanctions (or they assign an «R18» content rating to it);

#### 4) Fines and deportations of transgender sex workers.

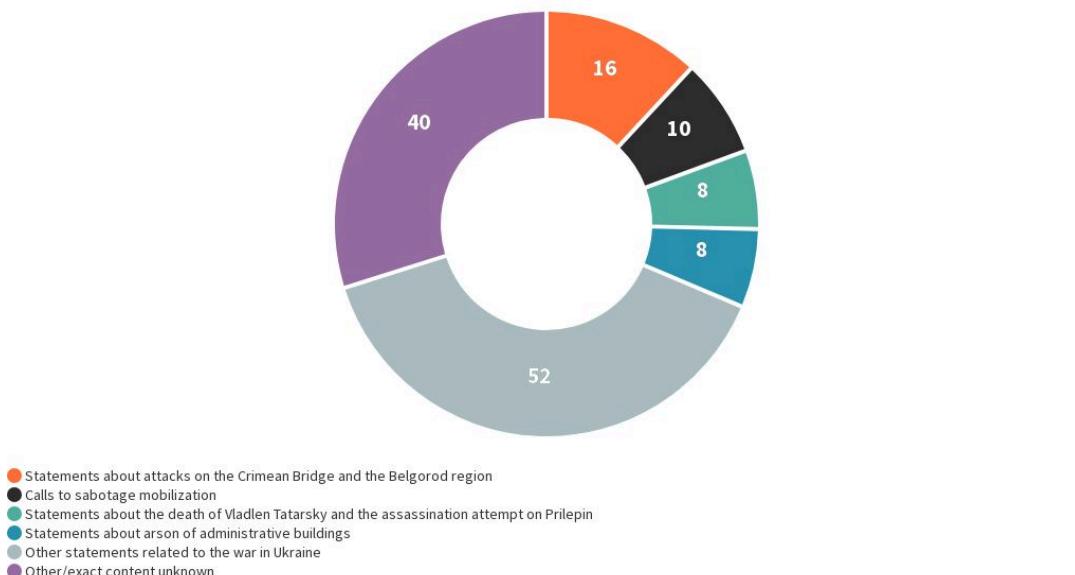
Notably, Haoyang Xu and Gela Gogishvili, creators of the channel [@realxhy](#) in Telegram Messenger, were persecuted under the «propaganda» article. The young couple was detained in April, with Xu [arrested](#) and [expelled](#) from Russia. Gogishvili also [left](#) the country and was later [fined](#) 100,000 rubles (\$1,110 approximately).

## **FREEDOM OF SPEECH**

In 2023, Russian authorities continued to apply articles on promoting extremism and terrorism, and began actively using a new article on incitement to anti-state activities. Statements about partisan actions, attacks on the Crimean (Kerch Strait) Bridge, and incitement to sabotage mobilisation activities became grounds for initiating criminal proceedings. In addition, law enforcement authorities continued to initiate cases under articles on the «rehabilitation of Nazism» and «offending religious feelings». Such cases often referred to acts of minor hooliganism portrayed in law enforcement press releases as socially dangerous activities.

## **Cases related to calls for terrorism, extremism, or anti-state activities**

>134 criminal cases under articles of calls for extremism, terrorism and anti-state activities were opened in 2023



Data OVD-Info • As of 17 December 2023

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In 2023, the entrenched practice of persecuting dissenters under articles on terrorism and extremism continued, supplemented by prosecution under the new Article 280.4 of the Criminal Code related to promoting activities against the security of the state. At least 134 politically motivated cases were initiated under these articles, with at least 10 of them related to incitement to sabotage mobilisation activities. **Oleg Kuvaev**, the creator of Masyanya flash-animated series, **Parvinakhan Abuzarova**, a female blogger from Kazan (a city in southwest Russia), and three Moscow poets involved in the so-called «**Mayakovsky case**» were among those persecuted under the article on calling for anti-state activities for expressing opinions against mobilisation.

One of the most notorious examples of using the article on justification of terrorism is the case against the authors of the play «**Finist — Bright Falcon**», Yevgenia Berkovich and Svetlana Petrijchuk. Although the play, about women recruited by Islamic State militants, **won** the 2022 Golden Mask award, in 2023 the creators were sent to a pre-trial

detention centre based on charges related to justifying terrorism that relied on the **expert** opinion of Roman Silantiev, based on the concept of the science of «destructology», which Silantiev himself invented.

Since 2019, there has been a **reported** increase in the number of criminal cases on terrorist propaganda within detention facilities, with the most prosecutions involving members of religious minorities. In 2023, such cases were brought against other political prisoners, such as **Alexei Gorinov**, who was previously convicted for his anti-war statements, and anarchist **Azat Miftakhov**, both charged with «justifying terrorism» in conversations with fellow inmates.

Cases on propaganda of terrorism or extremism continued against those who commented on current events on the Internet. In 2023, at least 16 such cases were brought against those who commented on the attacks on the Crimean Bridge or Belgorod Region, and at least 8 against those who commented on the death of military correspondent Vladlen Tatarsky or the attempted assassination of pro-war author Zakhar Prilepin.

Russian law enforcement also initiated cases of incitement to terrorism or extremism for various reasons, including **negative remarks** about Rostec CEO Sergei Chemezov, **discussions** on how to throw paint on a police car, and **jokes** about Vladimir Putin. Igor «Strelkov» Girkin, a nationalist and former separatist fighter in the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic, also **became** a defendant in the case on the promotion of extremism. Earlier, a court in the Netherland found him guilty in the downing of Malaysian flight MH-17, but Russian authorities sent him to a pre-trial detention centre based on his two posts on Telegram.

## **Cases on propaganda of prohibited symbols**

In July 2022, the State Duma **adopted** a law providing for punishment for the «threat to the security» of Russia, leading

to the introduction of Article 282.4 in the Criminal Code. This allowed criminal prosecution of those who repeatedly violate the ban on displaying Nazi or «extremist» symbols after being subjected to administrative liability.

Administrative protocols under Article 20.3, in particular, are drawn up for displaying symbols like the white-blue-white flag (Russian anti-war symbol), the letter «N» and Nazi symbolism (even if it appears in historical materials or anti-fascist cartoons).

According to the data of the «Sova» Research Center, 22 people became defendants in criminal cases in 2023. Sanan Ulanov, from the Republic of Kalmykia in southern Russia, was sentenced to two years in an open prison in September, but was posthumously acquitted in December. Ulanov, according to official information, took his own life in a pre-trial detention centre in November.

## **«Rehabilitation of Nazism» and desecration of symbols of military glory**

>45 politically motivated cases of “rehabilitation of Nazism” were opened in 2023



- Provocative actions at the Eternal Flame
- “Desecration” of the St. George ribbons
- Statements related to the war in Ukraine
- Discussions on historical topics
- Other/content of actions or statements unknown

In 2023, Russian law enforcement initiated at least 45 politically motivated cases under the article on «rehabilitation of Nazism», with 12 of them related to actions near the Eternal flame that the authorities deemed inappropriate. Such criminal cases were initiated for various reasons, including **drifting** (driving a vehicle into a controlled skid), **lighting cigarettes, spilling lemonade on the monument**, and **eating** sunflower seeds near the Eternal flame. Also, a case under the article on desecration of burial sites was **initiated** against the blogger Alena Agafonova, who filmed a humorous video in which she «tickled» the chest of the «Motherland Calls» monument.

## 5

**criminal cases related to the "desecration" of the St. George ribbon**

After Vladimir Putin **signed** a law in December 2022, granting the orange and black St. George ribbon the status of a «symbol of military glory,» law enforcement became more active in initiating cases under the «rehabilitation of Nazism» article and for the desecration of the ribbon. Those persecuted were a resident of **Netinka** village in central Russia, who tore the St. George ribbon from a fellow villager's clothing, and the singer **Sharlot**, who filmed a video tearing an orange-black ribbon.

Most criminal cases have been initiated under parts 3 and 4 of the article on «the rehabilitation of Nazism», involving the desecration of symbols of military glory and insulting the memory of the defenders of the Motherland. These cases typically involve individuals committing minor acts of hooliganism, often without apparent political motive. In contrast, parts 1 and 2 are more commonly used against

critics of the authorities. For instance, in March, security forces **conducted** extensive searches of the residences of well-known human rights organisation Memorial employees. They were targeted because the names of three individuals who collaborated with Nazis appeared in the database of victims of political repression during the USSR era. The denunciation of «Memorial» was submitted by the organisation «Russian Veterans.»

OVD-Info has reported cases where political persecution under the article on the rehabilitation of Nazism were triggered by statements on historical topics. A criminal case was **initiated** against university lecturer Mikhail Belousov, who was **dismissed** from Saint Petersburg State University for discussions with students that authorities found «evidence of historical falsification in some World War II topics».

Local historian Dmitry Vitushkin from St. Petersburg was **arrested** due to his statements on the Siege of Leningrad. An argument on the same topic **resulted** in the imposition of a two million rubles fine (US\$10863) on Sergey Volkov, an architect from Ivanovo.

## **Insulting Religious Feelings**

**11**

verdicts under the article on insulting feelings of religious believers were issued in 2023

In May, security forces **initiated** a criminal case on the insult of believers' feelings against Nikita Zhuravel from Volgograd. The reason cited was a video showing the burning of the Koran. Subsequently, Zhuravel was transferred to a pre-trial detention centre in Grozny, where he was **assaulted** by 15-year-old Adam, the son of Chechen Republic leader Ramzan Kadyrov. The video of the assault circulated on the internet,

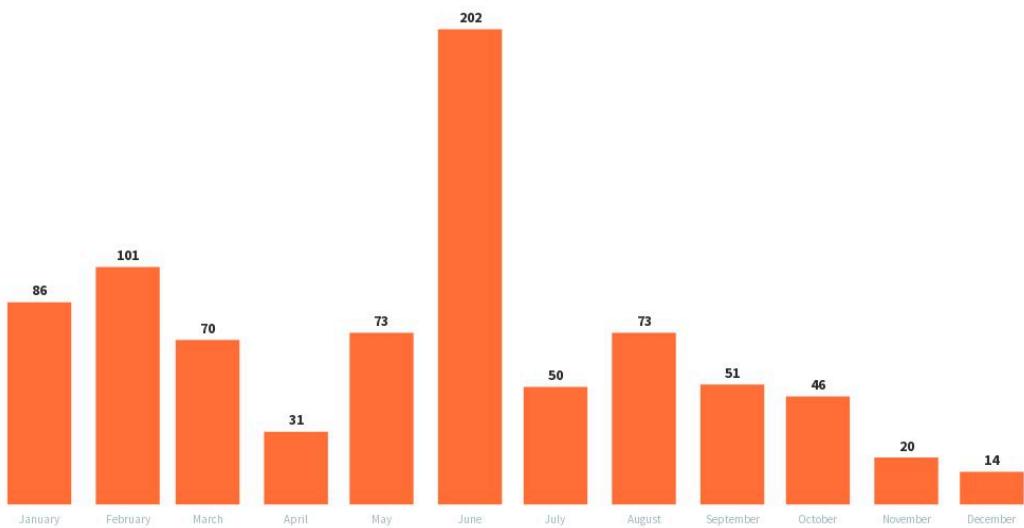
but the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Chechen Republic **refrained** from initiating a criminal case against Adam Kadyrov. After this incident, Adam received state awards in several regions.

Others who faced persecution under this article included **blogger Olesya Pavlova** (due to a video where she emerges from a coffin screaming «It's basically comfortable here, Christ has risen!»), **singer Sharlot** (who nailed a photograph of Patriarch Kirill to a tree), **Yury Kravtsov** from Volgadonsk (who hung himself from a cross), and **Nadezhda Tolokonnikova**, a member of the female band Pussy Riot.

#### Freedom of assembly

Despite the lack of massive protests in 2023, the exercise of the right to freedom of assembly was still prosecuted, with a total of **817** arrests during street rallies.

Detentions at the street protests in 2023 by month



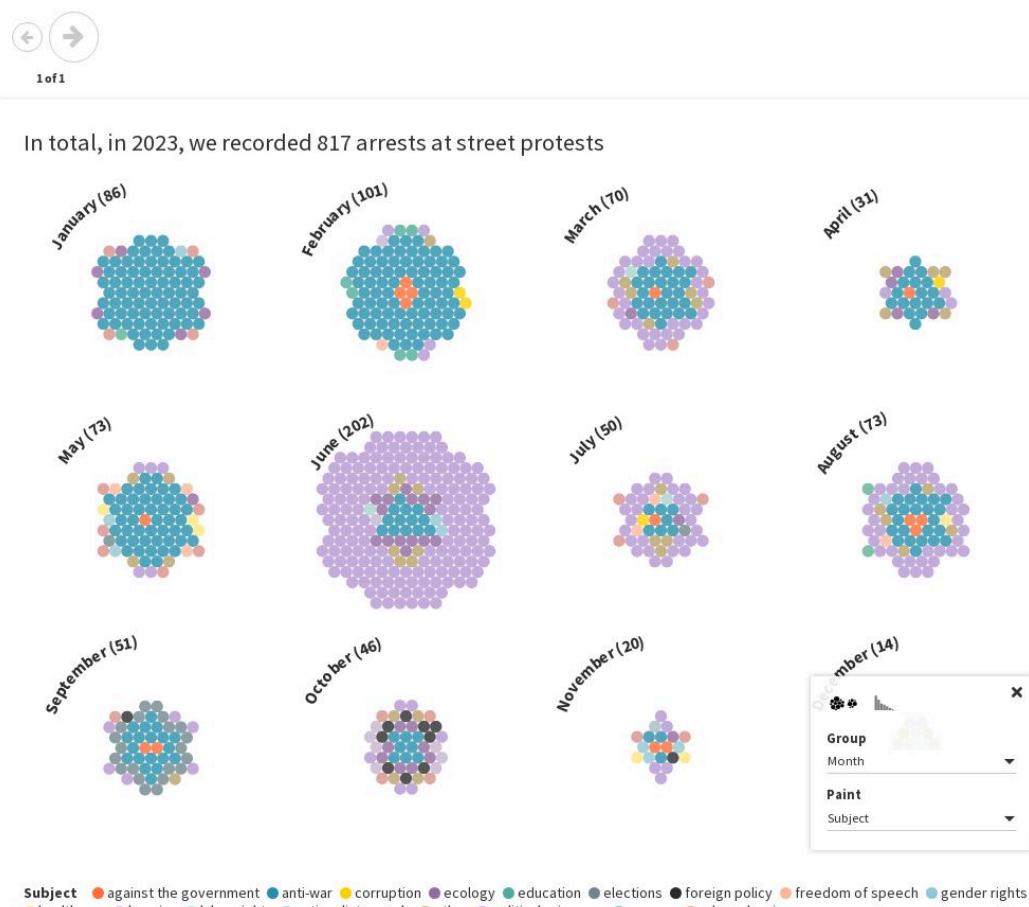
Data [OVD-Info](#) • The graph shows the number of arrests at street protests by month in Russia and in the annexed Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol  
Updated as of 6 December 2023

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The most significant arrests for anti-war expressions occurred on February 24th, during the laying of flowers on monuments in Russia to Ukrainian writers, on March 19th, during the presentation of Sasha Skochilenko's book (30

people arrested), and on May 9th, during an anti-war exhibition (14 people arrested).

Arrests also took place at events in support of political prisoners and LGBTQ community, rallies by environmental activists and urban preservationists, and rallies against governmental arbitrariness, the prohibition of abortion, and violence.



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Notable mass arrests occurred in front of the Kievskiy district court in Simferopol, where people came to support Crimean Tatar defendants in the Hizb ut-Tahrir case. On January 25th and August 25th, 55 people were arrested overall. Mass arrests occurred as well during the rally in support of political prisoners that was held on June 4th, Alexei Navalny's birthday, with 114 people arrested.

## **Prosecution of environmental activists and preservationists**

This year, prosecutions of environmental activists who organised events for environmental protection were especially noticeable.

In Moscow alone, defenders of the [Bitsa Forest](#) and the [Kosinski Park](#) and opponents of construction work on [Bolshaya Dorogomilovskaya street](#) were arrested this year. Environmental activists faced arrest in at least 11 other Russian regions, with a total of 37 such arrests in 2023.

### **«You can kill us, you can run us over». One village with protest history against corruption and pollution**

[ОВД-Инфо](#)

The active resistance by residents of [Poltavskaya stanitsa](#) (a village in southern Russian Kuban region) [opposing a landfill](#) hasn't escaped the authorities' notice. In spring of 2023, the pressure on activists increased: the police [intervened](#) in residents' meetings, and activist Lyudmila Grishkova [faced threats of](#) criminal charges under Article 318 of the Criminal Code for allegedly using violence against a police officer. Spouses Natalya Garyaeva and Vadim Motovilov, participants in the protests, [became involved](#) in a criminal case under Article 326 of the Criminal Code for destroying a vehicle's registration number. Searches at Garyaeva's enterprise, «Kamavtorus, » occurred in April as part of a case against her late ex-husband. Police [stopped](#) a bus carrying activists on their way to submit a petition to the governor (the practice of detaining an entire bus of activists [was also used](#) in the Primorsky Krai, in Russia's Far East.)

On 26 May, Poltavskaya activists **blocking** the road to the landfill had 10 people **detained** and fined. They also faced fines for Telegram **messages** calling for participation in actions and **videos** about the landfill. On 11 December, **news broke** that the landfill was closed and would not resume operations.

Environmental activists experienced extrajudicial pressure in different regions: in Nizhny Novgorod region, near the Volga River, activists and journalists **were beaten** during an inspection of an illegal landfill; in Novorossiysk, a city on the Black Sea, a man reported **threats**; in Kemerovo, in western Siberia, environmentalists **were attacked** at a coal mine; in the Leningrad region, officials allegedly threatened **to cancel** a cleanup day; opponents of the landfill in the Sverdlovsk region, in the Ural Mountains, **received** reprisal threats, and defenders of the Bitsa Forest **were attacked**.

In a notable case, a resident of the west-central city of Izhevsk had a criminal case **initiated** against them, with charges of incitement to terrorism (Part 2 of Article 205.2 of the Criminal Code) and incitement to extremist activities (Part 2 of Article 280 of the Criminal Code). This was in response to comments suggesting the execution of officials who sought to reduce the standards for discharging wastewater into Lake Baikal.

Urban preservationists were detained, including an incident in St. Petersburg with historic Basyevich House defenders. In May, three activists were **detained** and **subjected** to administrative arrests ranging from 12 to 14 days. Kyrill Kaverin, one of them, **was expelled** from the second year of the Faculty of Political Science at Saint Petersburg State University after his arrest, with no reinstatement option.

This wasn't the sole incident with urban preservationists in St. Petersburg. In January, activist Yaroslav Kostrov **reported** an attack during a historic building demolition.

Moscow urban activists supporting the protection of the Central Hippodrome **were also detained** during a protest.

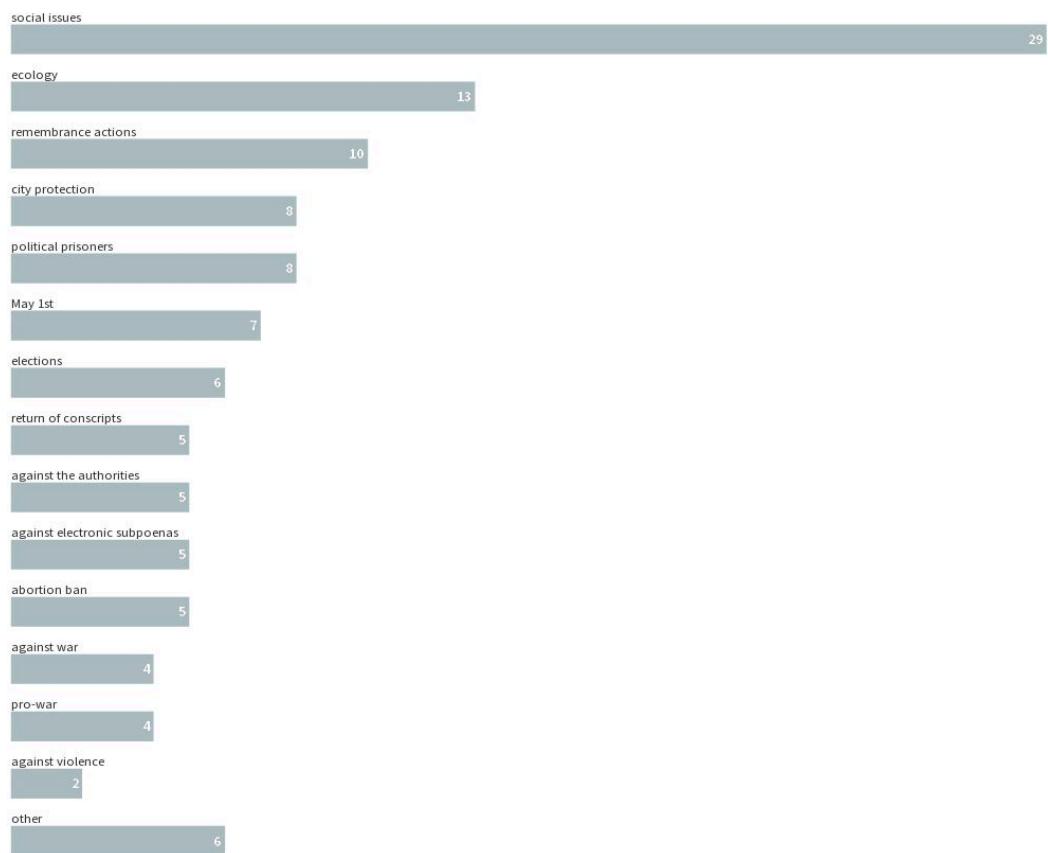
## **Ingush case**

In 2023, trials and prosecutions related to the 2019 protests in Ingushetia continued. In July, the court **affirmed** the conviction of seven protest leaders, imposing sentences from 7.5 to 10 years. During the appeal, the defendants **sought** the recusal of judges and court-appointed lawyers. Despite the fact that the appointed lawyers themselves supported the motion, the court refused.

## **Refusal to permit rallies: a year in statistics**

In 2023, according to OVD-Info, the authorities denied approval for public events at least 117 times, citing COVID-19 restrictions at least 15 times. Rospotrebnadzor (Federal Service for Surveillance on Consumer Rights, Protection and Human Well-Being) had cancelled these restrictions a year and a half ago, including for public events, and the WHO (World Health Organisation) declared an end to the pandemic in May 2023. In November at least 5 refusals concerned events organised by relatives of mobilised individuals calling for their return from the front.

In 2023, authorities refused to approve public events at least 117 times

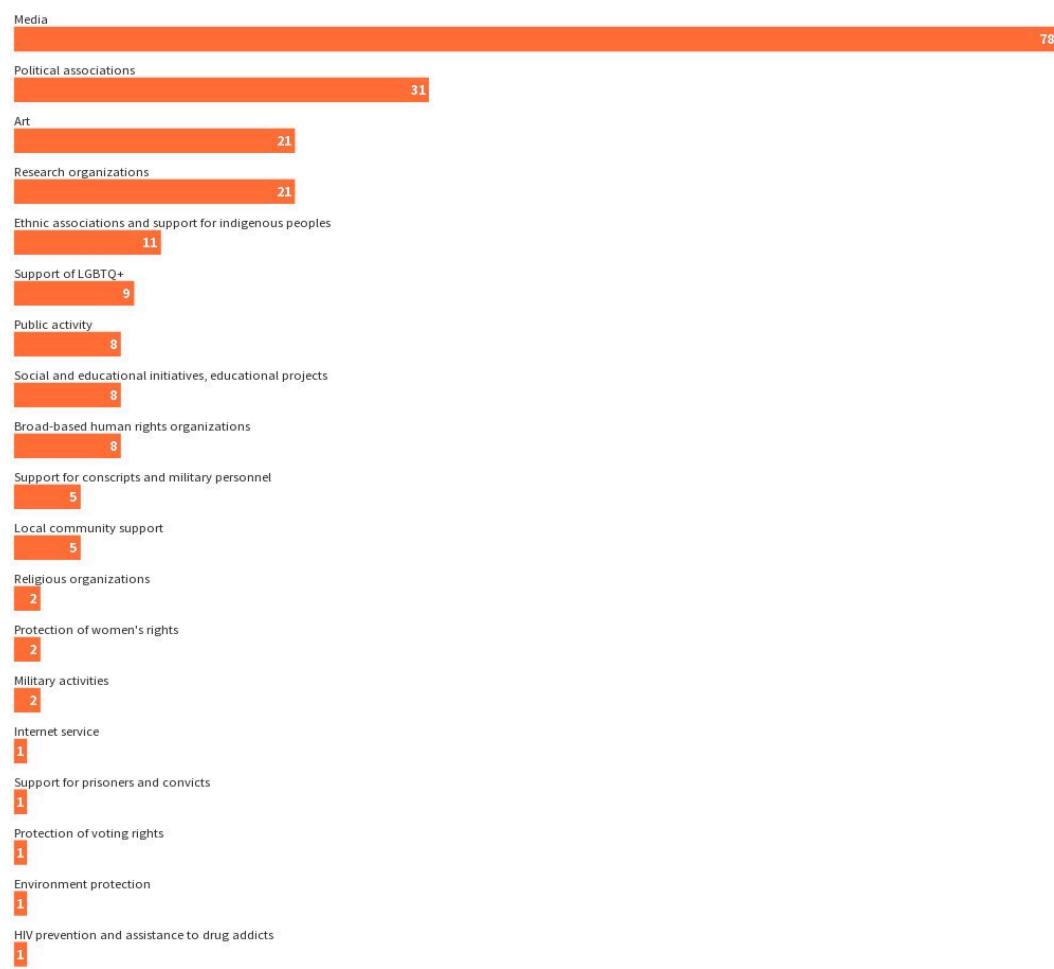


Data [OVD-Info](#) • As of 15 December 2023

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## «Foreign agents»

In 2023, 217 entries were added to the Ministry of Justice register



Data [Inoteka](#) • As of 18 December 2023

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In 2023, 217 individuals and organisations were added to the «foreign agents» registry of the Ministry of Justice. Notable figures added to the registry include regional activist [Elena Agafonova](#) («People's Council of Tula Oblast») and ex-prime minister [Mikhail Kasyanov](#). Among the organisations put into the registry there are activist communities (“[Omsk Civil Unity](#)», »[Council of Mothers and Wives](#)«), mass media (»[Tayga.info](#)«, »[Advokatskaya Street](#)«, [SOTAvision](#) and «[7x7 — Horizontal Russia](#)«), and VPN-service provider [Hidemyname](#).

The existence of a closed registry of persons «affiliated with „foreign agents“ [was first revealed](#) in June. A document

published by the Ministry of Justice revealed that by 31 December 2022, 861 people had been added to it.

**57**

people are close to criminal prosecution under the relevant article

«Foreign agents» are most often fined under criminal articles for «inappropriate» labelling of publications (or not using the label), as well as failure to report their status. If two such fines come into force, then during the year a criminal case can be made on «foreign agent» status due to the third «violation».

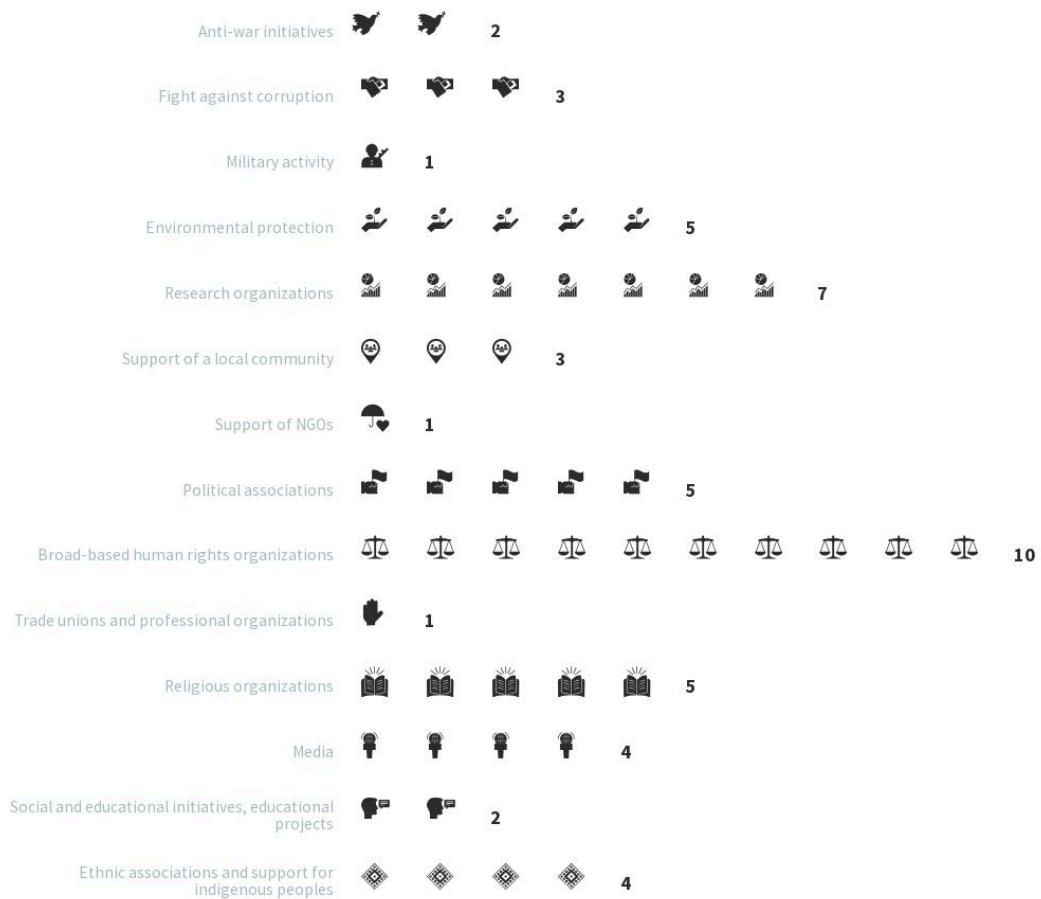
Alsu Kurmasheva, a journalist with the Tatar-Bashkir Service of «Radio Liberty», **faces charges** for receiving information about mobilized teachers at one of the universities in Tatarstan (a republic whose population is about half ethnic Tatars). Security forces claim that, since Kurmasheva received such information, she should have reported it to the Ministry of Justice. It was on this basis that she was placed in the register of «foreign agents». Currently held in a pre-trial detention centre, Kurmasheva faces up to five years in a colony.

## **FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION**

Despite the fact that practices of violations of the right to freedom of associations in 2023 did not essentially change, the scale of their application increased significantly. While 23 organisations were recognised as «undesirable» in the previous year, 2023 saw more than 50 legal entities included in this list. Furthermore, persecution of the members (or alleged members) of associations, deemed «extremist» or «terrorist» by Russian authorities, did not diminish.

# «Undesirable» organisations

Undesirable organizations 2023



Data: [Innoteka](#) • As of 14 December 2023

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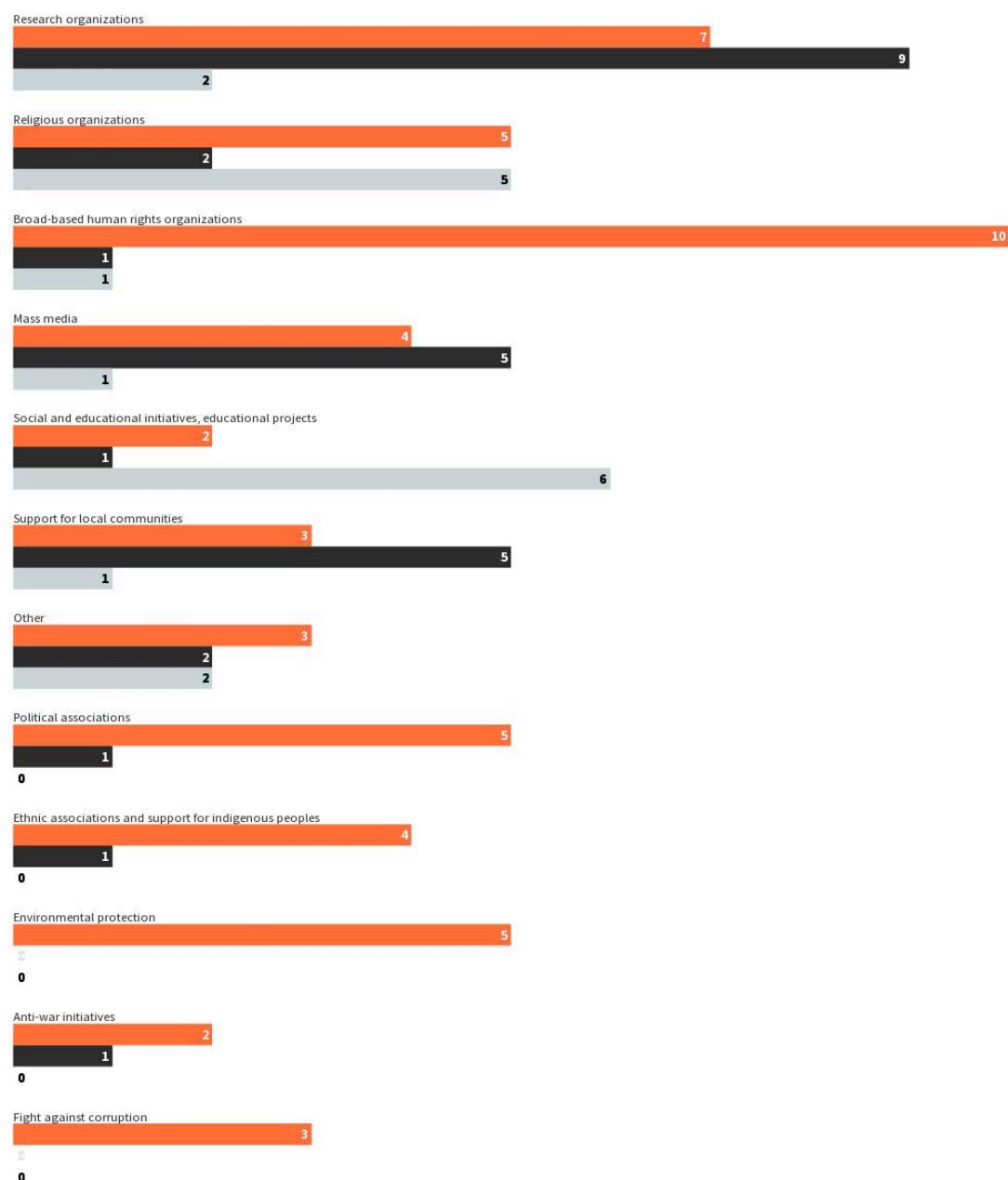
In 2023, the General Prosecutor's Office designated 53 organisations as «undesirable», compared to 23 in 2022. These included media organisations (such as »[Meduza](#)» media platform, »[Dozd' / Rain](#)» TV station, and »[Novaya Gazeta / New Gazette](#)»), environmental groups ([Greenpeace](#) and [World Wildlife Fund](#)), academic institutions ([Central European University](#) and the [Free University](#)), religious entities (USA-based [Transformation Center Covenant Church Network TSSN](#) and [Allatra](#), founded in Ukraine), human rights organisations ([Agora](#) and the network [Human](#)

(Rights House Foundation), and political organisations (Congress of National Deputies, located in Poland, and the Lithuania-registered League of Free Nations.)

In 2023, human rights defenders and journalists discovered that some organisations were declared «undesirable» after being placed on the Ministry of Justice's list instead of via statements by the prosecutor general's office, as was the previous practice. This approach increased the risks for participants, since collaboration liability begins as soon as organisations enter the registry.

## "Undesirable organizations" in 2021, 2022, 2023

● 2023 ● 2022 ● 2021



Data: OVD-Info • As of 14 December 2023

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Due to criminal cases connected to «undesirable» organisations, extensive searches were conducted, in particular, involving [the Voice election-monitoring group](#), accused of collaboration with the European Network of Election Observation on Organisations (ENEMO), and the Ukrainian church Renaissance.

Sentences were handed down due to criminal cases of collaboration with «undesirable» organisations, affecting individuals like **Vladimir Kara-Murza** (convicted of taking part in Free Russia Foundation event), Pentecostal pastors **Nikolai Bogoslovskij**, **Svyatoslav Yugov** and **Nikolai Ulitin** (accused of collaboration with the Latvian/Ukrainian **New Generation** church) and **Denis Shibankov**, president of the regional Federation of Mixed Martial Arts (convicted of collaborating with the Chinese religious movement Falun Gong).

## **Pressure on Alexei Navalny and his supporters after banning of his projects**

In August, the Moscow City Court **passed** a decision on the case of creating an extremist organisation against Alexei Navalny, sentencing him to nineteen years in a strict regime penal colony. His colleague Daniel Kholodny received an eight year sentence in a general regime prison. In June, the former manager of Navalny's Ufa (north-central Russia) headquarters, Lilia Chanyshева, **was sentenced** to seven and a half years in a colony on the same charges (as well as for public calls for terrorism), while Rustem Mulyukov, charged in the same case with Chanysheva, received a two and a half year sentence. Ksenia Fadeeva, the former manager of Navalny's Tomsk headquarters, in Siberia, **was sent** to a pre-trial detention centre for belonging to an extremist organisation.

This autumn, three lawyers defending Navalny, Vadim Kobzev, Alexey Liptser, and Igor Sergunin, were sent to a pre-trial detention centre on charges of participating in an extremist community, accused of smuggling letters from their client out of a penal colony. In 2023, cases related to donations to Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation emerged, along with at least six instances of participation in the activities of an extremist organisation (i.e., Navalny's projects) after their ban.

At the beginning of December, information surfaced on Navalny's social media accounts about the initiation of a criminal case against him under a vandalism charge. The specifics of the charges are unknown, but earlier in the Udmurt Republic (west of the Urals) and the Yaroslavl region (northeast of Moscow), cases were opened for participating in an extremist organisation, due to graffiti showing support for him. Navalny spent a significant part of the year in a punishment cell. On 7 December, his relatives, lawyers, and associates lost contact with him: he was no longer connected to court hearings via video link, and representatives of the Federal Penitentiary Service later stated that he «was transported from the Vladimir region.»

## **«Extremist» and «terrorist» organisations**

In 2023, the Supreme Court, following a lawsuit from the Ministry of Justice, **recognised** the «international LGBT movement» as an extremist organisation. The courts also banned the online youth »**Novoye Velichiye**« («New Greatness») movement and the **Congress of the Oirat-Kalmyk People** as extremist. In April, the decision to recognise the «Spring» movement as extremist came into force. Participants in «Spring» (and those whom the security forces consider to be involved in it) **were implicated** in several criminal cases, including accusations in June 2023 of distributing «fakes» about the army, making calls for anti-state activities, and disseminating disrespectful information about the days of military glory.



Jehovah's Witnesses faced charges of "extremism" in 2023

According to **JW**

Security forces continued to initiate cases under «extremist» charges against representatives of religious minorities, such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses and alleged supporters of Islamic groups Nurjular, Tablighi Jamaat, At-Takfir wal-Hijra, and Alla-ayat. Such cases are often initiated due to meetings with fellow believers or reading and discussing religious texts.

Purported followers of the Islamist party Hizb ut-Tahrir were prosecuted under what are commonly referred to as «terrorist» articles (typically, these articles involve accusations of orchestrating the activities of a terrorist organisation, but there are also accusations of justifying terrorism). As of autumn 2023, the Memorial project (formerly known as Supporting Political Prisoners. Memorial) **has documented** a minimum of 343 people prosecuted for these cases, with 115 of them receiving sentences of 15 years or more. The majority of those facing prosecution are Crimean Tatars. Human rights activists and journalists advocating for individuals charged with participation in Hizb ut-Tahrir also encounter considerable pressure. For example, human rights defender Bakhrom Khamroev **was sentenced** to 14 years in prison for aiding Muslims, while SOTA journalist Anna Loiko **faced accusations** of justifying terrorism due to her coverage of Hizb ut-Tahrir.

In 2023, OVD-Info also became aware of several cases under the so-called «extremist» articles targeting individuals who deny the collapse of the USSR. We view these cases as politically motivated. Charges were filed against «citizens of the USSR» in several regions.

## **Pressure on human rights defenders**

In 2023, the Ministry of Justice dissolved a number of human rights organisations, including the **Moscow Helsinki Group**, the **SOVA** Center for Information and Analysis, **Man and Law**, and the **Sakharov Centre**. The dissolutions were all justified on the grounds of «violations of ‘the territorial scope

of activity.'», ie, human rights defenders were accused of participating in activities outside the regions where their organisations were registered. In Petrozavodsk, a city in northwestern Russia, the non-profit organisation Rassadnik Kultury was closed down by court order following the **labelling of its founder**, journalist Natalia Sevets-Yermolina, as a «foreign agent».

Employees of International Memorial underwent **searches** in connection with a «rehabilitation of Nazism» case following the inclusion of several names of alleged Nazi collaborators in lists of victims of repressions. Alexander Chernyshov, the former chairman of the Memorial office in Perm, in the Ural Mountains, **was remanded** to a pre-trial detention centre on charges of attempting to smuggle cultural property. He was accused of trying to export the organisation's archives to Germany. Another defendant in the case, Robert Latypov, former head of the Memorial office in Perm, has left Russia. Bakhrom Khamroev, a member of the dissolved Human Rights Centre Memorial, **received** a 14-year prison sentence in a case linked to his professional activities.

## **«I am sure this monstrous lawlessness won't last long.» The story of a migrant rights defender sentenced to 14 years in prison**

ОВД-Инфо

Security forces **conducted** three searches in the offices of the Team against Torture. The Team's lawyer, Magomed Alamov, **was threatened** with physical violence by the family of the 27-year-old domestic violence victim Marina Yandieva, whom he assisted.

Lawyer Alexander Nemov and Novaya Gazeta journalist Elena Milashina **were beaten** when they were on their way to the **sentencing** of Zarema Musayeva, the mother of Chechen activists associated with the opposition channel 1ADAT.

Lawyer **Timur Idalov** (Moscow), human rights activists **Nadezhda Nizovkina** (Ulan-Ude, in eastern Siberia) and **Svetlana Arshavskaya** (Orenburg, in southwest Russia) faced criminal prosecution due to their work. Tatyana Kotlyar, a human rights activist in Obninsk (southwest of Moscow), aiding migrants, was **found guilty** of fictitious registration of clients for the sixth time.

Three supporters of Vladimir Vorontsov's human rights project Police Ombudsman were **sentenced** to prison terms in a case of deliberately false denunciation. Earlier, Vasily Fedorov, Evgeny Moiseev and Irina Andina made public information about a frame-up in this case. Vorontsov himself was **released** from prison in October; he had been in custody since May 2020.

## Criminal cases — general statistics

We are aware of 467 defendants in politically motivated criminal cases whose prosecution began in 2023. Overall, we know about at least 3,457 politically persecuted people, 1,027 of whom are currently deprived of liberty.

467 defendants in politically motivated criminal cases, whose prosecution began in 2023



Data [OVD-Info](#) • As of 14 December 2023

As in 2022, freedom of speech has become the most common topic of persecution. The use of the category of the «Other» is also growing: we include, for instance, cases of high treason, cases concerning arson of administrative buildings or sabotage. Both the types of protest and the profile itself of a politically persecuted person change with the increase in repression, and it is very important not to forget about people about whom there is little or almost no information. This happens for various reasons, such as because a person not having faced pressure from the system before, not being familiar with human rights defenders, or simply being deprived of contact with the outside world.



\*OVD-Info collects data on repression by Russian authorities in annexed Crimea, because we have the ability to verify this data

Source: [Mediapart](#) • [Get the data](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

In 2023, OVD-Info lawyers supported 108 defendants in criminal cases, assisted individuals undergoing 15 police searches, and provided legal advice during 62 interrogations.

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## Cases involving state security

The number of «state security» cases appears to be on the rise. This encompasses instances initiated under recently enacted articles, such as the one addressing confidential collaboration with a foreign state. By July 2023, a minimum of 43 cases **had been brought** under the state treason article since the beginning of the year, a notable increase from the 24 initiated throughout the entirety of 2022.

This year, law enforcement officers have frequently employed the «carousel arrest» tactic (see above) in these situations. This practice **gained** widespread use in 2023, as exemplified by cases involving Saveliy Frolov and **Aleksandr Kraichik**.

Apart from these arrests, cases and court proceedings associated with such charges typically unfold behind closed doors, shrouded in secrecy. This makes it challenging to ascertain the charges against an individual, whether they are facing coercion, and the overall circumstances surrounding their situation. Given the heightened severity of prison sentences for state treason, extending to life imprisonment, law enforcement officers can now use intimidation and manipulation to coerce an accused person into admitting guilt, potentially leading to a reduced prison term.

The year 2023 also saw the initiation of the first espionage case in modern Russian history involving a foreign journalist. Evan Gershkovich, a journalist with the Wall Street Journal, was **detained** on March 29 in Yekaterinburg, the fourth-largest city in Russia. He was working on a story about public sentiment towards the Wagner Group, a privately funded Russian military company. Gershkovich was placed in the Lefortovo pre-trial detention centre, where he remains to this day.

Another significant espionage case involves Lenie Umerova, a Ukrainian citizen and Crimean Tatar. Umerova **has been** in detention since December 2022, apprehended at the Verkhniy Lars checkpoint on the Russian-Georgian border

while travelling to Crimea to visit her ailing father. After spending three months in a centre for foreign citizens, she faced administrative arrest. In early May 2023, it was revealed that Federal Security Service officers **moved** Umerova from the temporary detention centre in Vladikavkaz and initiated a criminal case against her.

The increasing number of cases underscores the Russian authorities' rhetoric about traitors, spies, and foreign agents, particularly amid the ongoing conflict with Ukraine and the broader struggle against the «collective West.» Many state treason cases are linked to Ukraine and alleged interactions with its citizens.

## **Punishment cells**

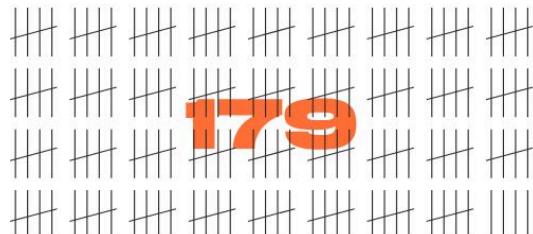
Another current frequent practice is to send a person convicted of a crime to the punishment cell. In October 2023, we **reported** that defendants in political cases were often sent to punishment cells, and we included statistics for the year. For the annual report, the data has been updated.

*The incidents when the defendants in political cases were sent to a punishment cell might be far more numerous. The problem is that not all of them have been reported: it can be very difficult or even impossible to convey information from penal colonies and prisons. Some prisoners (or their relatives) do not want to publicise their incarceration in punishment cells in the media. Despite this, we consider it necessary to record the known cases.*

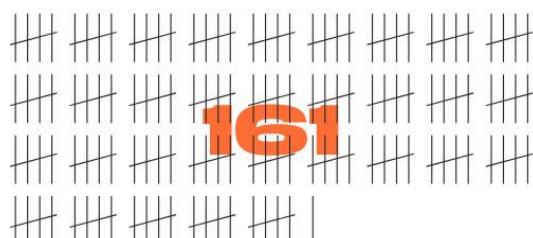
In 2023, at least **49** people persecuted for political reasons were incarcerated in punishment cells. On average, the incarceration lasted **17 days**. The maximum period a person can legally spend in a punishment cell is 15 days; however, the administration of a penal colony can inflict a new punishment on a prisoner and extend the period of incarceration in a punishment cell. We know the actual duration of incarceration in a punishment cell in 76 cases out of 103.

In summary, we can say that, in 2023, the defendants in political cases spent at least **1,354 days** in punishment cells.

**These people was sent to a punishment cell most often in 2023:**



**Teymur Abdullayev**  
"Hizb-ut-Tahrir" case



**Alexey Navalny**  
politician



**Muslim Aliyev**  
"Hizb-ut-Tahrir" case



**Timur Yalkabov**  
"Hizb-ut-Tahrir" case



**Vladimir Domnin**  
the case of the "Right Sector"

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Another three people persecuted for political reasons and placed in a punishment cell for at least **60 days** are **Server Zekiryaev**, a defendant in the second Bakhchisaray «Hizb ut-Tahrir case», Voronezh activist **Grigory Severin**, and the ex-head of the Serpukhov district of the Moscow region, **Alexander Shestun**.

In 2023, the defendants in the «Hizb ut-Tahrir cases» were incarcerated in punishment cells most often; we know of at least **14 people**. This punishment was also imposed on those convicted in the Jehovah's Witnesses cases, at least **8 people** in 2023.

Defendants in «anti-war cases» were also sent to punishment cells. This affected at least **7 people**. [Alexey Moskalev](#) and [Vladimir Kara-Murza](#) were sent 5 times, [Alexei Gorinov](#) and [Maria Ponomarenko](#) 3 times, as well as [Ilya Yashin](#), [Vyacheslav Popov](#), and [Bogdan Ziz](#), each placed there once.

At least **3 women** persecuted in political cases were sent to solitary confinement, journalist [Maria Ponomarenko](#), [Darya Polyudova](#), the creator of the anti-war «Left Resistance», and a participant in the case of Jehovah's Witnesses, [Olga Panyuta](#). [As we reported](#) in October, punishment cells in women's colonies are worse than men's. Before being placed there, women are literally stripped — left in a nightgown, panties, and rubber slippers. They stay in these clothes in isolation for the entire designated period.

As [noted](#) by «Mediazona,» political prisoners are increasingly sent to punishment cells immediately after arriving in the colony, after which they are transferred to strict conditions of detention. According to our information, in 2023, at least 10 people were sent to punishment cells immediately after being transported to the colony. Sergey Davidis, the head of the project «Support for Political Prisoners. Memorial,» [noted in a conversation with OVD-Info](#) that in this way, the colony administration seeks to isolate the prisoner from communication with other inmates and the outside world.

## CONCLUSION

In 2023, we witnessed a decrease in street protest activity. Mass protests were no longer being organised, and the main resistance to the regime, judging by the trends, manifested

itself online and in focused direct action events. However, this did not result in a reduction in the number of acts of repression.

Methods of applying political pressure are becoming more stringent. The number of cases under state security articles has sharply increased, the number of convictions with prison sentences is increasing in anti-war cases, and criminal articles related to sabotage, terrorism, and extremism have become more severe. We also see a record number of organisations declared undesirable, massive fines for «foreign agents», and an increase in repression of previously unaffected groups, such as LGBTQ activists.

It is clear that as long as the war continues, this trend will persist. The war increases the regime's need for repression. Nevertheless, amid the darkness and repression, Russians both inside the country and abroad continue to be active, develop NGOs and media, and provide assistance to citizens of Ukraine, political prisoners, and people unwilling to fight in the war.

Sometime in the future, there will be an end to both the war and the regime that unleashed it. In our view, the main actor in the future transformation of the state will be civil society. Therefore, take care of yourselves and do not lose hope.

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