

Anton Kamardin (right) and Yegor Shtovba during the sentence pronouncement in Tverskoy district court in Moscow, December 28th, 2023 / Photo: Alexandra Astakhova for Mediazona

05.02.2024

## Repressions Report. December 2023

*Individuals sentenced for poetic readings, popular author and translator persecuted, a leftist activist released from custody — this chronicle by OVD-Info provides a quick summary of Russian political repressions in December.*

[Текст на русском](#)

### THE CASE OF «MAYAKOVSKY READINGS»

At the end of December, Anton Kamardin and Yegor Shtovba were **sentenced** to 7 years and 5.5 years in penal colony, respectively, for participating in «**Mayakovsky readings**». Another defendant in this case, Nikolay Dayneko, was **sentenced** to a prison sentence in May, after he **struck** a pre-trial agreement.

The criminal investigation was initially **opened** under «incitement to hatred or enmity» article (in this case, enmity towards «combatants in Donetsk and Luhansk regions»). The pretext was the poem «Kill me, militiaman» recited

by Kamardin near Mayakovsky monument in Moscow on September 24th, 2022. Next day the apartment where Anton lived with his girlfriend Alexandra Popova, was stormed by security forces.

A search ensued. Later a video surfaced where Anton issued an «apology» (recently in Russia siloviki are forcing detained individuals to record a video apology for their actions) for using the line «Glory to Kievan Rus', Novorossiia sucks» in his poem. After the detainment doctors **refused** to allow Kamardin to the hospital, despite the fact that ambulance workers, in presence of Anton's attorney, diagnosed Anton with concussion, closed-head injury, bruised in the chest area and multiple face abrasions. On the same day Shtovba and Dayneko were detained; later all three **were placed** in a pre-trial detention centre.

In March 2023 the original charge was expanded to **include** the article on public calls to anti-state activities due to Kamardin's call not to accept military recruitment office's summons. Shtovba and Dayneko were considered «accomplices» because they «repeated Kamardin's poem» and «raised their hands in the air».

## **PERSECUTIONS FOR ANTI-WAR STANCE**

**>806**

individuals became defendants of the “Anti-War Case” by the end of December 2023

**>27**

verdicts were issued against opponents of the war in December 2023

Igor Baryshnikov, human rights activist from Kaliningrad city, earlier sentenced for spreading «fake news» about the Russian army, is in a critical condition. Maria Bontsler, his attorney provided by OVD-info, reported in mid-December that his legs and hands have **turned blue** because of poor blood circulation. OVD-info asked subscribers to support Igor by sending official messages to the regional department of the Federal Penitentiary Service with demands to provide Igor with medical support. In January 2024, thanks to your help, medical help was **provided** to Igor.

Boris Kagarlitskiy, sociologist, was **sentenced** to a large fine in the case built around his statements on the explosion of the Crimean bridge that happened in October 2022, despite the prosecution asking for a prison sentence. Prosecutor general's office has already **appealed** the case. Oleg Orlov, co-chairman of human rights center «Memorial», had his fine for discrediting the Russian army **annulled**, and his case is due for a retrial — also due to the **appeal** by the prosecutor general's office. The first court of cassation **decided** to revisit the decision on the case of Alexey Moskalev, from Tula region (Centre of European Russia), who was sentenced for 2 years in penal colony under the same discreditation article, as prosecutors considered this penalty «too mild».



Alexey Moskalev by videoconferencing during the pronouncement of the verdict by the First court of cassation in Saratov (Lower Volga region) on December 6, 2023 / Screenshot: RusNews

A criminal case has been initiated for «fake» articles about the Russian army and calls for terrorism against the writer Boris Akunin (legal name — Grigory Chkhartishvili) after pro-Kremlin pranksters published a conversation with Akunin and Dmitry Bykov online, in which both writers spoke about supporting the Ukrainian Armed Forces. Searches were **conducted** at Zakharov publishing house, which continued to publish Akunin's books. Russian stores **started** removing the writer's works from sale, and at least **two theatres** cancelled productions based on his novels.

*OVD-Info regularly updates an **infographic** on people facing criminal prosecution due to their anti-war stance. You can learn about the developments in anti-war repression from November 24 to December 23 2023 in our **Persecution of the anti-war movement report**.*

## **REPRESSIVE LEGISLATION**

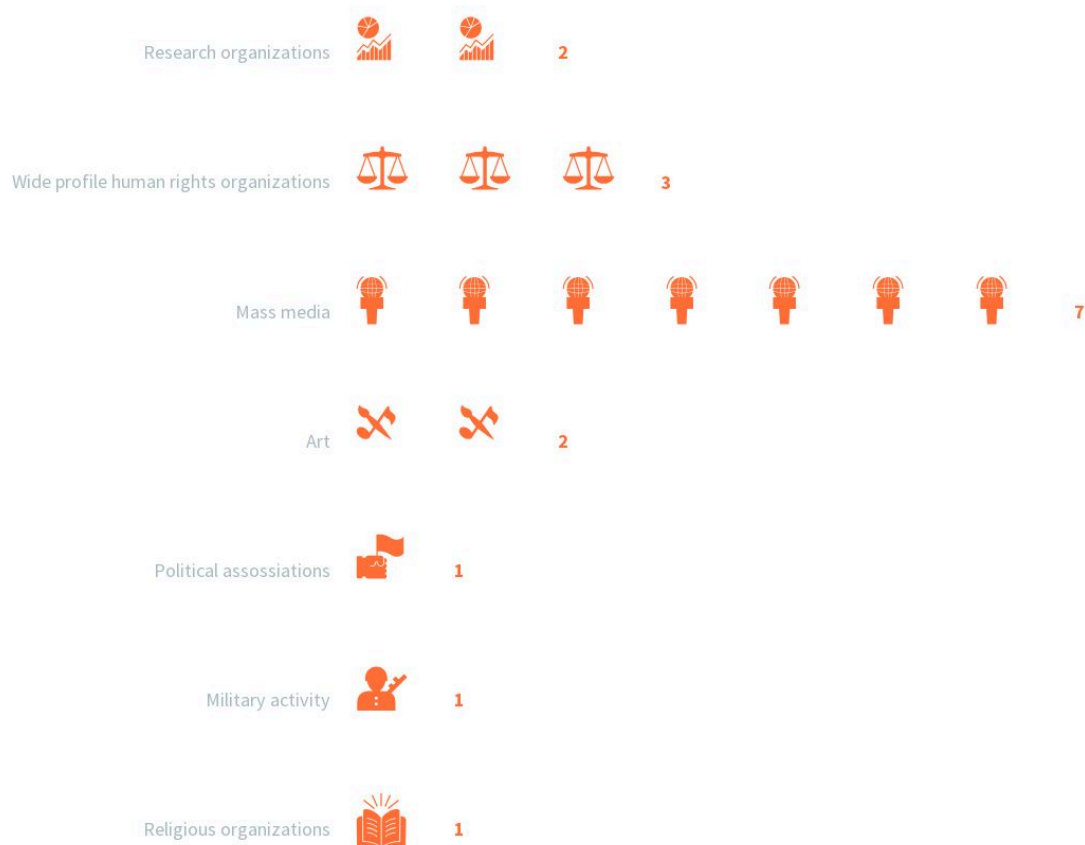
In December, Vladimir Putin **signed** a law introducing administrative and criminal liability for «fakes» and «discrediting» statements about servicemen and employees

of the Russian National Guard (paramilitary formation, reporting directly to the president). The law also expands the scope of the article on assisting in the enforcement of decisions of international instances in which Russia does not participate. Thus, National Guard officers are now protected not only from criticism and slander but also possibly from decisions of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR).

## «FOREIGN AGENTS» AND «UNDESIRABLE» ORGANIZATIONS

### «Foreign Agents»

17 new "foreign agents" were added to the registry in November 2023

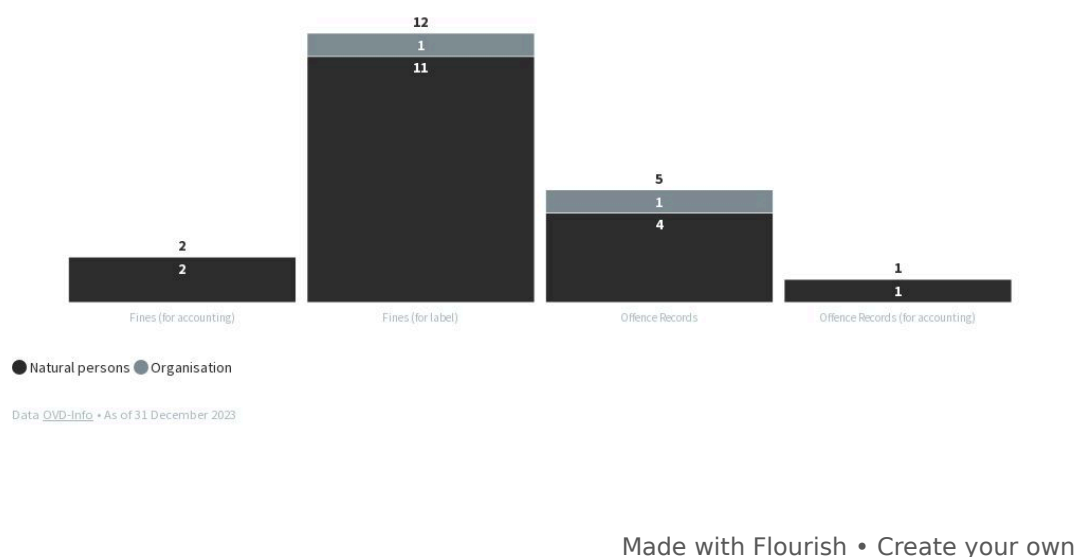


Data: [Inoteka](#) • As on 31 December 2023



In December, the project «Kovcheg», which assists Russian political emigrants, and its founder Anastasia Burakova, priest **Andrey Kuraev**, and the creator of the «Masyanya» cartoon series **Oleg Kuvaev**, among others, were **included** in the foreign agent registry. «Other» «Rain association» was also **recognized** as a foreign agent.

Reports and fines aimed at "foreign agents" due to lack of proper labelling or reporting.



## «Undesirable» Organisations

7

new “undesirable organizations” became known in December 2023

In December, «**Helpdesk Media**» Foundation, anti-war initiatives «**Russian Action Committee**» and «**True Russia**», research projects «**Academic Network „Eastern Europe“**» and **RAND Corporation**, as well as the «**Global Investigative Journalism Network**» were included in the list of «undesirable» organisations.

State Duma deputy Andrei Lugovoy also **reported** that, based on his denunciation, the emigrant project Russian America for Democracy in Russia, supporting the Ukrainian Armed Forces, was declared «undesirable» in November.

Courts imposed fines under the article on cooperation with «undesirable» organisations on the evangelical church **«Awakening of Nations»** (due to the use of symbolism of the «Covenant of Churches TCCN» in one of the sermons), the **European University in St. Petersburg** (due to books published with the support of the Open Society Foundation and the Kennan Institute), and Buryat human rights activist **Nadezhda Nizovkina** (due to her participation in the «Forum of Free Peoples of Post-Russia»).

## **«EXTREMIST» ORGANISATIONS AND COMMUNITIES**

# **25**

### **Jehovah's Witnesses sentenced in December 2023**

The Court of Cassation **sent the case** of Jehovah's Witness Dmitry Barmakin for retrial; he was initially acquitted of involvement in an extremist organisation, then sentenced to eight years in prison. Sentences were also handed down to other Jehovah's Witnesses in **Surgut, Kazan, Novosibirsk, Moscow, and Kostroma**. In Vladivostok, **sweeping searches** were conducted among Jehovah's Witnesses, resulting in at least one detention.

December also saw the emergence of new criminal cases against alleged members of Allya Ayaat (Child of the Sun), At-Takfir wal-Hijra (Excommunication and Exodus) and against Rais Mavlutov, who had previously been convicted

in the Hizb ut-Tahrir (Party of Liberation) Islamic group case in Tatarstan.

The Kemerovo region's prosecutor's office filed a lawsuit to recognize the local «citizens of the U.S.S.R.» association as «extremist», and a resident of Khakassia was sentenced to two years in prison for posting content from the Novokuybyshevsk (Samara oblast) «citizens» group on social media.

Alena Krylova, a defendant in the «Left Resistance» case who had previously emigrated to Kyrgyzstan but later was forced back to Russia, was sentenced to two years in prison. Earlier, two other case defendants — movement founder Darya Polyudova and activist Kirill Krylov — were **sentenced** to nine years in prison and three years of suspended sentence, respectively. Another alleged movement participant, Sergey Kirsanov, was **sent** for compulsory treatment.



Alena Krylova in the Meshchansky District Court of Moscow during the pronouncement of the verdict / Photo: Courts of General Jurisdiction of the City of Moscow



# PRESSURE ON ALEXEY NAVALNY AND HIS SUPPORTERS

In a closed trial, Ksenia Fadeeva, former coordinator of Alexey Navalny's Tomsk headquarters, was **sentenced** to nine years in prison for creating an extremist community.

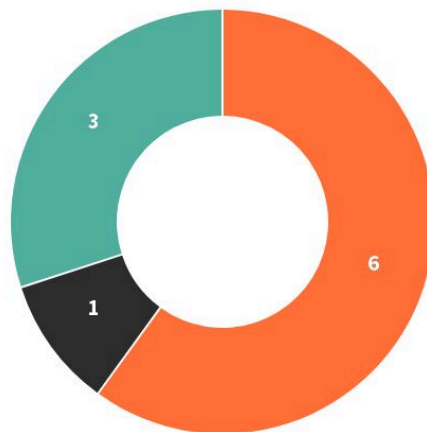
Navalny was **transferred** from Vladimir region to a penal colony in Harp (Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug, Far North). His whereabouts were unknown for several weeks. FBK Director Ivan Zhdanov noted the colony's remote location in the permafrost zone, disconnected from penitentiary mail services.

In early January, it became **known** that a new criminal case was initiated against Navalny for alleged vandalism, with details not yet disclosed.

## PERSECUTION RELATED TO FREEDOM OF SPEECH

### Cases on Calls for Terrorism, Extremism, and Anti-State Activities

Over ten new criminal cases were opened for calls for terrorism, extremism, or anti-state activities, stemming from negative remarks about Russian authorities



● Statements about the war in Ukraine ● Statements about public authorities ● The express contents of a statement are unknown

Data: [OVD-Info](#) • As on 31 December 2023

In December, Russian courts issued verdicts in cases related to comments on the Crimean Bridge explosion — sociologist **Boris Kagarlitsky** and Syktyvkar resident **Dmitry P.** were convicted, with Dmitry P. receiving a three-year prison term despite serious illness.

Ramilya Saitova, a defender of the Kushtau shikhan, a chalk hill in the Republic of Bashkortostan, **was sentenced** to five years in a penal colony because of her calls to sabotage mobilisation, while Felix Yeliseyev, the ex-administrator of the VKontakte community «IT'S BROKEN UP», **was sentenced** to 14 years in a penal colony, in particular because of his post about an explosion at an oil depot in Belgorod. In addition, the man was charged with high treason.

Lenard Valeev, a Kemerovo resident, **was fined** 360.000 rubles (US\$ 4.093) because of posts urging mobilised people to use the weapons issued to them «to overthrow the authorities», while Andrei Gromov, a St. Petersburg resident, **was sentenced to** compulsory labour because of some inscriptions «about Russians» in a public washroom and on the walls of a local factory.

At the beginning of the month human rights activists **managed** to locate a member of «Artpodgotovka» Rafail Shepelev, who disappeared in Georgia in autumn. The man is being held in a pre-trial detention centre in the Sverdlovsk region, he was charged under articles on justification of terrorism and participation in the activities of a terrorist organisation. The formal reason for Shepelev's prosecution is unknown.

## **Cases under the article on the rehabilitation of Nazism**

In December, two new cases under the article on desecration of the military glory symbols due to various pranks at the Eternal flame became known: this time a **woman** who put out the flame with water in Kurgan and **four young people** who danced lezginka (national dance) at the monument in the Stavropol region faced persecution. A court in St Petersburg **has ordered** the expulsion from Russia of families of teenagers who threw snowballs at the Eternal flame. A U.S. citizen, Yuri Malev, **has ended up** in a St. Petersburg pre-trial detention centre because of his posts about the St. George ribbon in Odnoklassniki (a social network in Russia).

A resident of the Republic of Tatarstan who burnt wires on the blaze of the Eternal flame **was sentenced** to corrective labour through wage docking, while a **Tula resident** who photoshopped Hitler into the photo of the «Immortal Regiment» was sentenced to three years of compulsory labour at a state-run work site. Alexander Kudryashov from Leningrad Region **was fined** because of the drawings with swastikas and the letter Z on the memorial to the victims of the blockade.

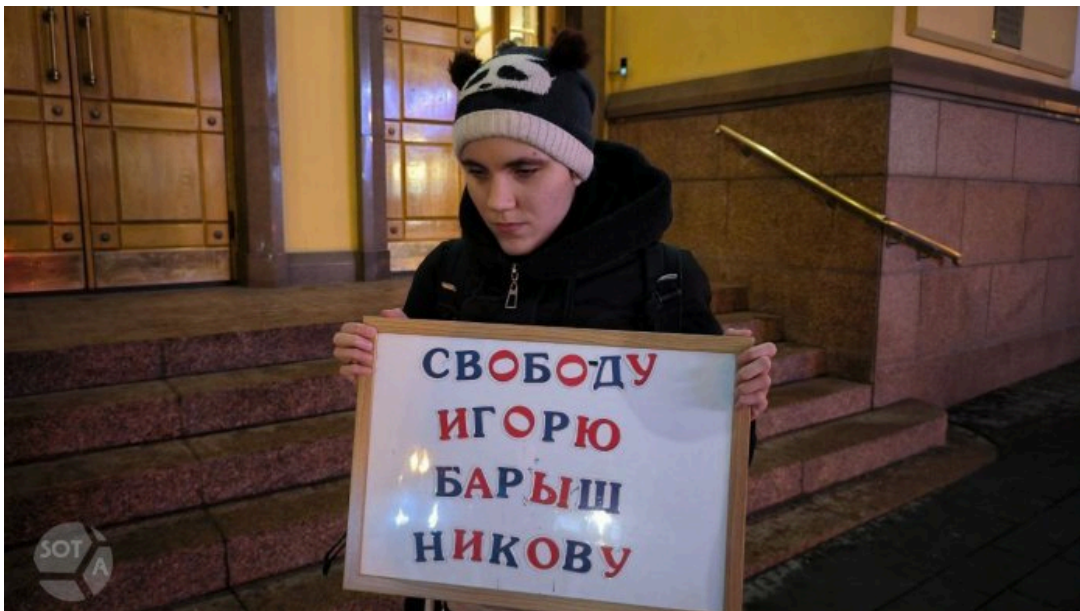
## **Cases of offending religious feelings**

Tambov blogger Olesya Pavlova **was prosecuted** for insulting religious feelings because she rose from a coffin with the words «Christ is Risen!» during a party. **An elderly man from Suzdal** was fined under the same article because of pictures in Odnoklassniki (a social network in Russia), and **Nikita Gomelkin from St. Petersburg** was fined because he broke a cross while drunk.

Egyptian Syed Mansour Rezk Abdelrazek **was sentenced** to one and a half years in prison over a video in which he trampled on and threw a Quran into a river.

# PERSECUTION RELATED TO FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

In December, Russians were detained because of pickets in support of **political prisoners** (in particular, those involved in the «anti-war case» of **Sasha Skochilenko** and **Igor Baryshnikov**), criticising **Ramzan Kadyrov** and **Vladimir Putin**. In addition, **participants in a procession in the Ulyanovsk region, 17 nationalists on Manezhnaya Square, Left Front coordinator Sergei Udaltsov** and **individuals** who tried to organise a photo shoot with a mock detention of girls carrying red caviar on Red Square faced detentions.



Activist Oksana Osadchaya with a poster supporting Igor Baryshnikov in front of the Prosecutor General's Office in Moscow, December 27, 2023 / Photo: Mikhail Lebedev, SOTAvision

**Kaliningrad** and **Chelyabinsk** authorities refused to sanction rallies against the abortion ban. In several regions, security forces **interfered** with the gathering of locals who wanted to record their messages for Vladimir Putin's «Direct Line», while a resident of the Moscow region was **reported** for recording a question to the president.

Members of the «Way Home» movement were **refused** the right to organise a rally in Dolgoprudny (Moscow Region).

Several female members **shared** that they and their husbands received threats. The women, who organised a flash mob «Give my husband back to me! I'm f#cking exhausted» in Ulyanovsk, were **summoned** to the police.

The security forces visited an event organised by the «**Organization of Internationalist Communists**» (more about it in our **text**), the **night** of solidarity with political prisoners in Moscow, an event organised by «**Space. Politics**» in Yekaterinburg, a **lecture** on the communist movement in Saratov, «**Limonov Readings**» in St. Petersburg.

## PRESSURE ON THE LGBTQ-COMMUNITY

7 новых штрафов и 1 протокол по статье о «пропаганде ЛГБТ»  
(о которых ОВД-Инфо стало известно в декабре 2023)

Штраф Протокол



Данные ОВД-Инфо • На 31 декабря 2023

Made with Flourish • Create your own

In December, Russian law enforcement authorities «exposed LGBT propaganda» in music videos by **Nikolai Baskov** and **Sergey Lazarev**, as well as in the comics about a pigeon named **Gennady**. They also conducted raids in gay clubs in **Krasnoyarsk** and **Yekaterinburg**, and **disrupted** an LGBTQ event in Moscow.

## PERSECUTION OF ACTIVISTS AND POLITICIANS

Prosecution requested five years of imprisonment for Lev Skoryakin, a member of the Left Block, for the protest action



«Happy Chekist Day»: on December 21, 2021, the activists displayed a poster with the identical message in front of the FSB building in Moscow and illuminated it with torches. The two defendants in the case — Skoryakin and Ruslan Abasov — were able to flee Russia, but Skoryakin was later taken back by force from Kyrgyzstan.

Despite the request of the prosecutor's office, the court only **imposed** a large fine, from which Skoryakin was exempted due to the time served in the pre-trial detention centre. He was released right after the verdict was read out. The OVD-Info lawyer, Yevgenia Grigorieva, was defending the interests of the activist.



Lev Skoryakin with OVD-Info lawyer Yevgenia Grigorieva after the verdict at Moscow's Gagarinsky District Court, December 13, 2023 / Photo: SOTAvision

## **REPRESSIONS AGAINST RESIDENTS OF ANNEXED CRIMEA**

In December, Dmitry Fomin, Crimean resident, was **sentenced** to a year of forced labour and a fine of 350,000 rubles because of two posts including one about the Freedom of Russia legion.

Imam **Ismail Yurdamov**, who supports local political prisoners, and activist **Rustem Mustafayev** were searched. School teacher Linara Rasulova was **fired** because of her performance of the Ukrainian anthem and the song «Chervona Kalina».

Bohdan Ziza, an artist who was sentenced to 15 years in a penal colony for his anti-war protest action, was **sent** to a punishment cell for five days. The prisoner was punished for his refusal to wear a prison robe stating that he did not consider himself a criminal.

## ANNUAL REPORT

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

ОВД-Инфо

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