



Illustration: Anna Kichigina for OVD-Info

28.02.2024

## **Persecution of the anti-war movement report. Two years of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. February 2024.**

[Русская версия](#)

Twenty-four months ago — on the morning of February 24, 2022 — Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukrainian territory. Along with a new round of aggression against another state, the Russian authorities began repression within their own country. Almost 20 thousand detentions, more than 800 defendants in anti-war cases, as well as regularly appearing laws that contradict common sense and the Constitution.

OVD-Info analyzed the main trends in repression against opponents of the war in Russia and on the territory of the annexed Republic of Crimea.

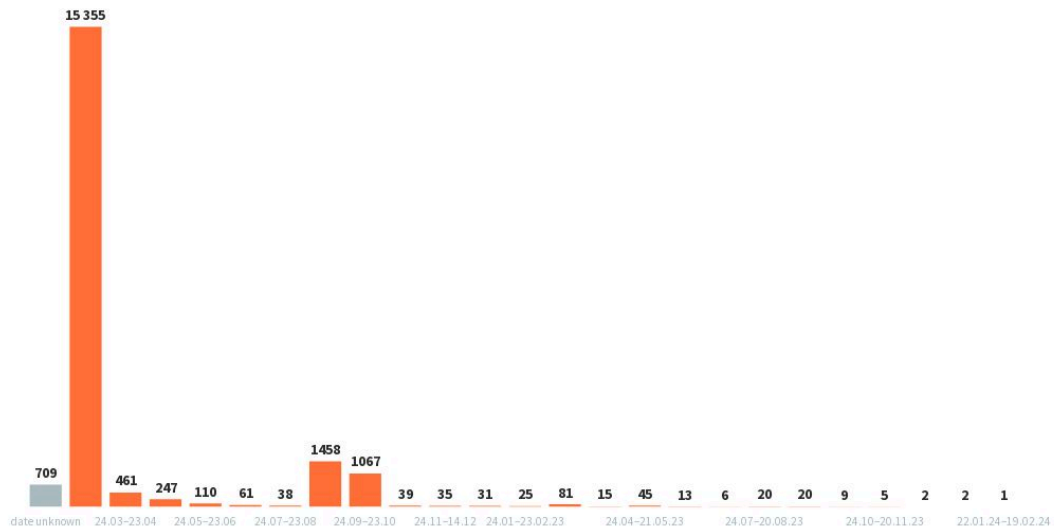
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## **DETENTIONS FOR ANTI-WAR STANCE**

# 19850

## detentions for anti-war stance between 24 February 2022 and 22 January 2024

Number of detentions for anti-war views by month



Data OVD-Info • As of 14.02.2024

The breakdown by month does not include 704 arrests from the categories After anti-war actions (after the fact) and Other (Internet, symbols, conversations)

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## CRIMINAL CASES

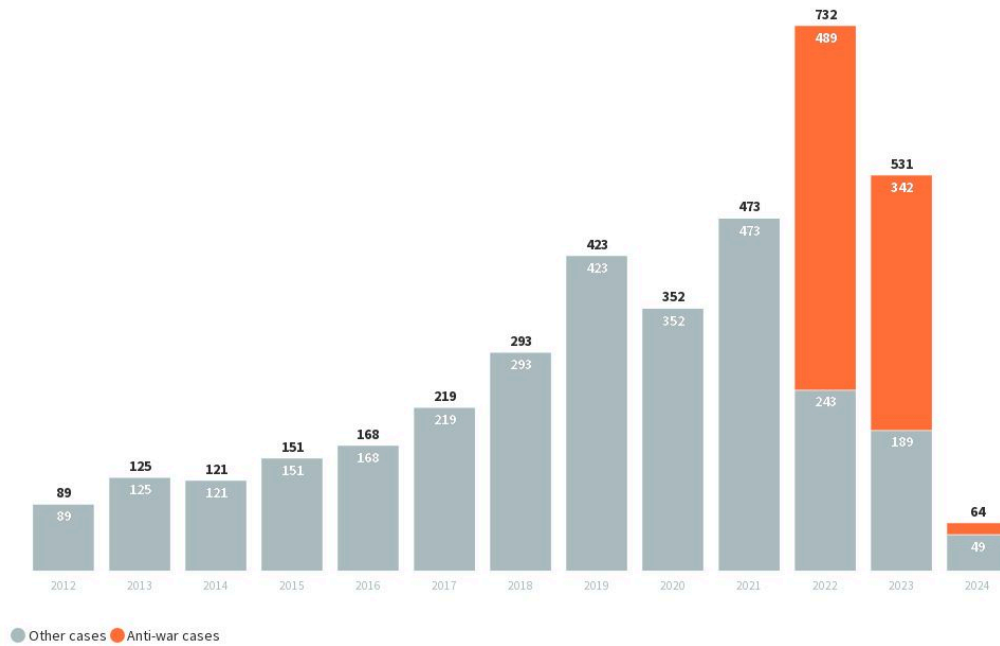


Source: OVD-Info. The data shows words that were mentioned in anti-war cases' criminal indictments  $\geq 5$  times.

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Criminal prosecution is now the part of anti-war repression that receives the most attention from both the state apparatus and the media. It is a large part of both anti-war persecution in Russia and repression in general. «Anti-war» criminal cases make up the majority of politically motivated criminal prosecutions in Russia in the last two years.

Among all politically motivated criminal prosecutions in 2022-2023, the overwhelming majority (67 and 64%) are cases for anti-war views

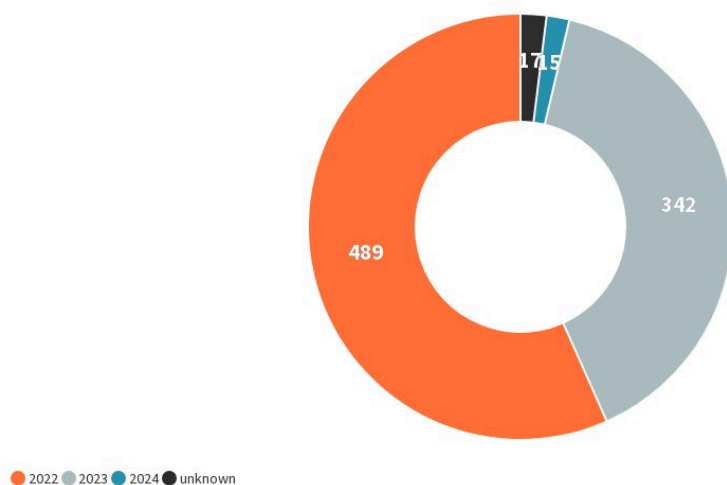


Data: OVD-Info • As of 19 February 2024  
When calculating the data, we focused on calendar years - this means that the data for 2022 is from January 1, and not from February 24

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Since February 2023, we have become aware of 412 new defendants in the anti-war case. As of February 20, 2024, there are 848 defendants in total.

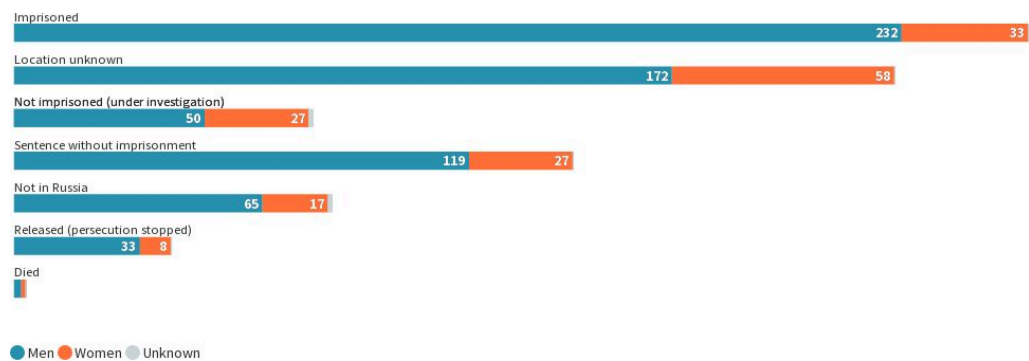
Since February 2023, we have become aware of 412 new defendants of anti-war cases, a total of 848 defendants as of 20 February, 2024



Data: OVD-Info • As of 21 February 2024  
When calculating the data, we focused on calendar years - this means that the data for 2022 is from January 1, and not from February 24

At least 267 defendants are imprisoned right now (as of 02/20/24). The prosecution of at least 41 defendants has already ended — 13 of them have already served their prison sentences.

267 defendants in the anti-war case (33 of them women) are now imprisoned

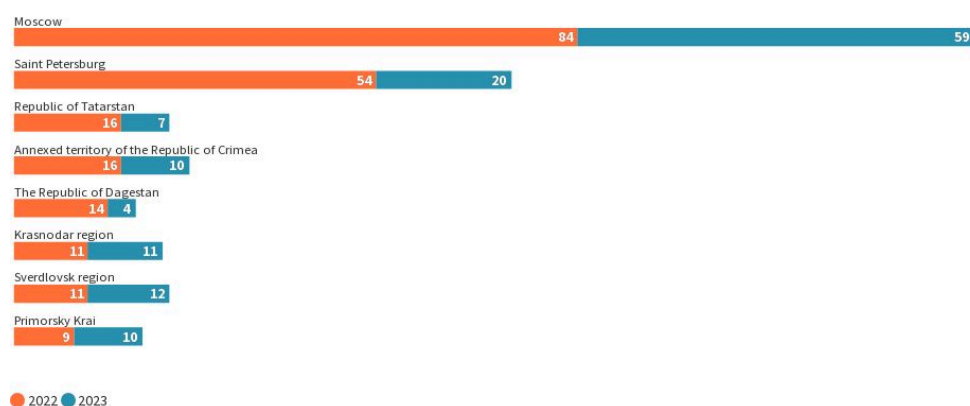


Data: OVD-Info • As of 19 February 2024  
When calculating the data, we focused on calendar years, which means that the data for 2022 is from January 1, and not from February 24.

## Geography

In 2023, the Sverdlovsk region entered the top three. In some regions, for example, in the Republic of Tatarstan or the Novosibirsk region, the number of cases decreased noticeably compared to 2022.

Regions with the largest number of defendants in the Anti-War Case in 2022 and 2023

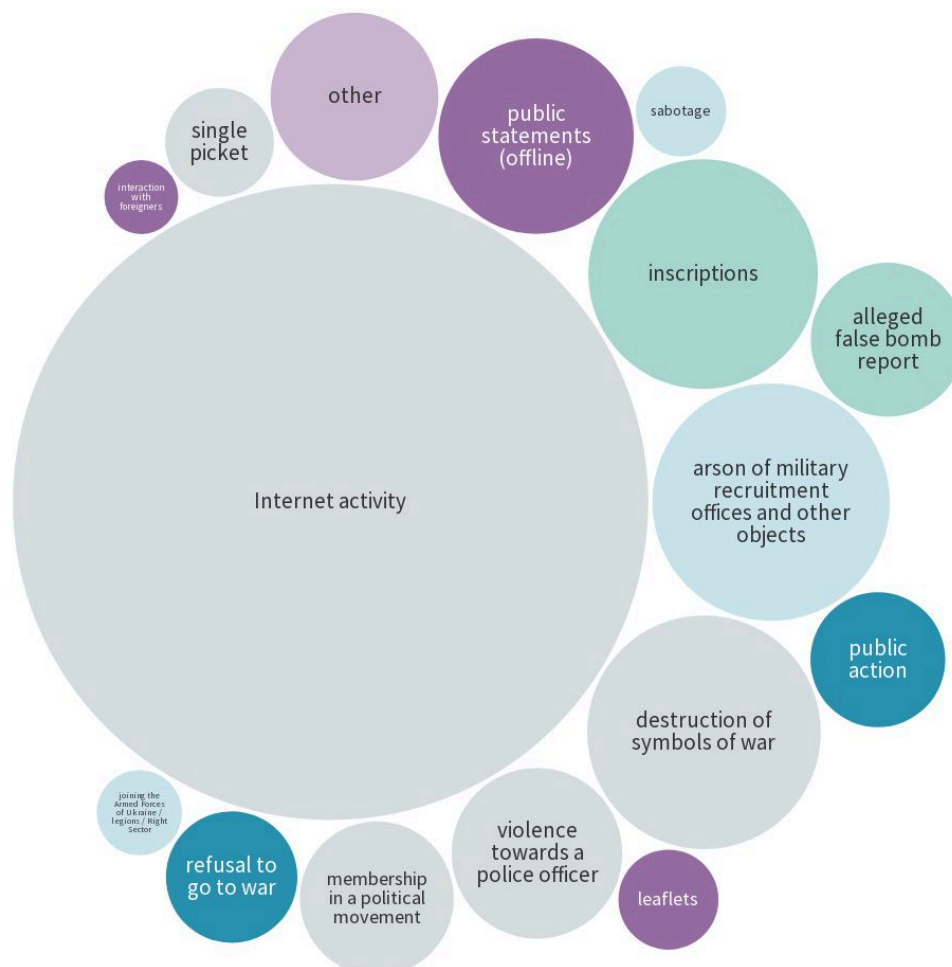


Данные: OVD-Info • As of 19 February 2024  
When calculating the data, we focused on calendar years - this means that the data for 2022 is from January 1, and not from February 24.

## What are the reasons for initiating «anti-war» criminal cases?

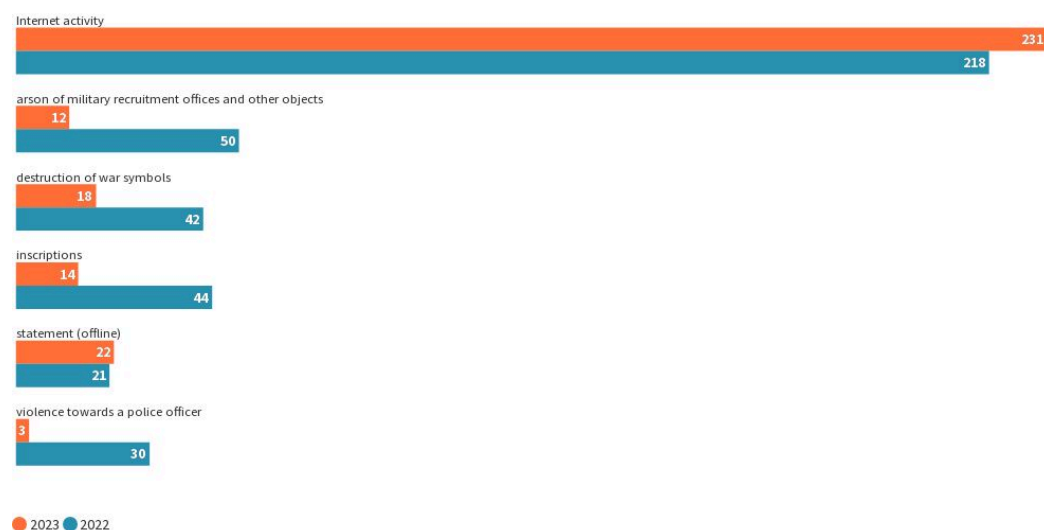
The most popular reasons are various activities on the Internet: videos, publications, and comments on social networks or even chat messages. Despite many criminal articles being initiated for the purpose of censorship, people continue to speak out on social networks. In 2023, for such statements, Article 205.2 of the Criminal Code («public calls to terrorist activities, public justification of terrorism or propaganda of terrorism») began to be used more often.

Actions of defendants in criminal cases according to the plot of the case



The next most popular are various actions that allow one to express an anti-war position outside the Internet, for example, burning military recruitment offices, destroying patriotic symbols or making anti-war inscriptions. The number of cases for «violence against a police officer» is explained by the fact that such charges are often brought against participants in public events; in 2023, almost no such cases were brought.

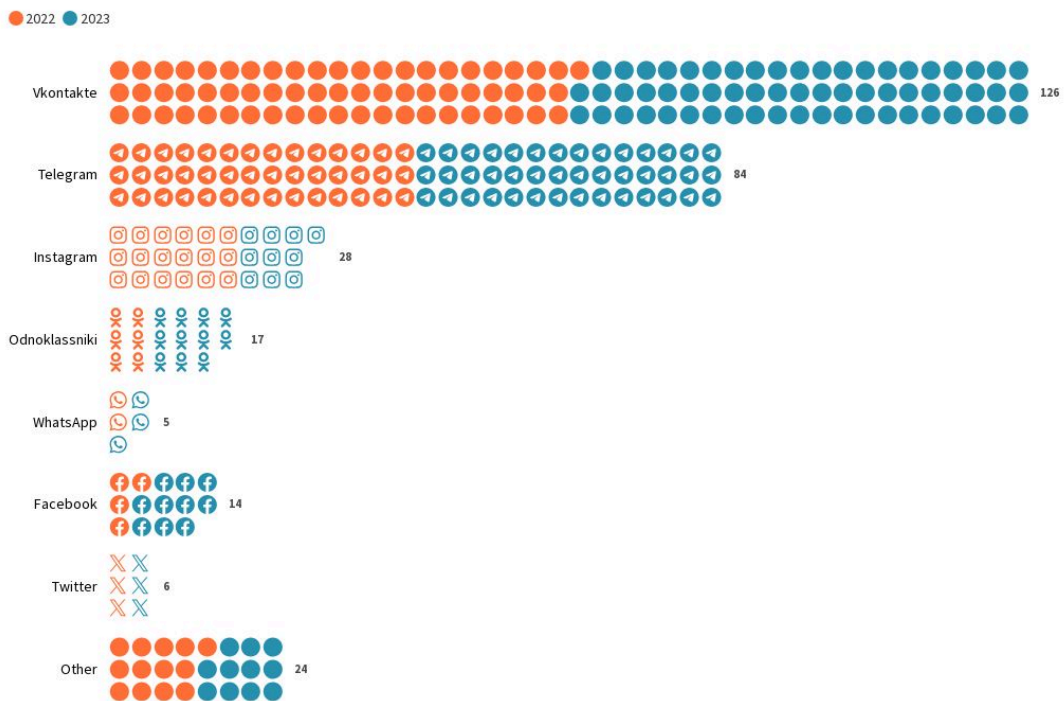
Change of actions by year

Data: [OVD-Info](#) • As of 19 February 2024

## Publications on which social networks have become the most popular reasons for initiating criminal cases?

Vkontakte and Telegram are leading by a wide margin; criminal cases are often initiated because of videos or publications on Instagram.

Social networks mentioned in the plot of the case as a place where illegal actions were committed by the defendant



Data: [QVD-Info](#) • As of 19 February 2024

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## Articles of the Criminal Code

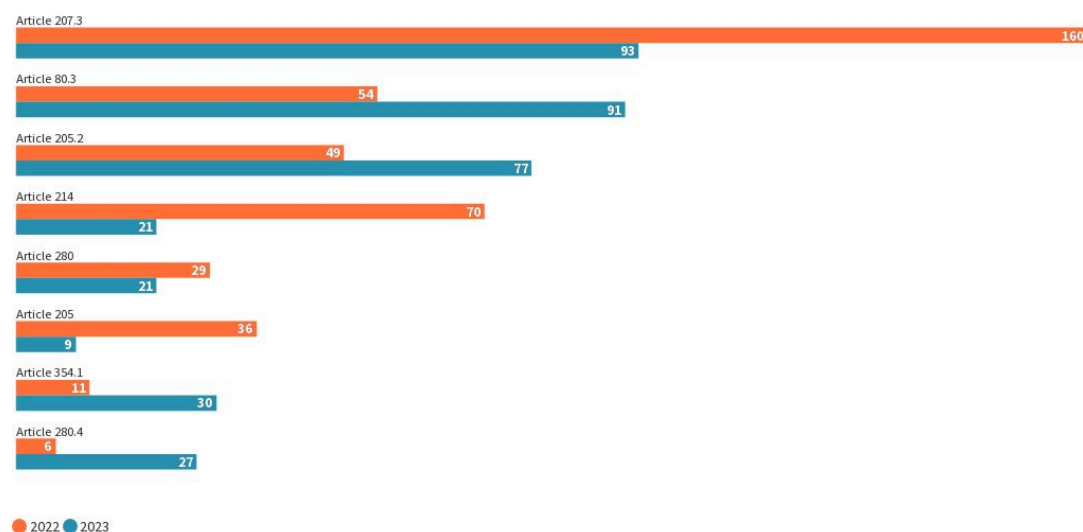
As for the articles themselves, we see that the number of prosecutions under Article 205.2 of the Criminal Code — Public Calls for Terrorist Activities or the Public Justification of Terrorism — has increased, mainly due to statements on the Internet. Thus, approving comments about the arson of military recruitment offices, explosions on the Crimean Bridge, explosions in which Russian propagandists were killed or injured, drone attacks, as well as calls for the overthrow of the government are considered justification of terrorism. The number of cases under Article 280.4 of the Criminal Code on «public calls to carry out activities directed against the security of the state» has also increased. For example, such are considered **calls** to Russian citizens to hold protests against the war in Ukraine and disrupt «mobilization events»; **calls** to those subject to conscription to not go to the

military recruitment offices; **calls** to Russian soldiers to surrender with the help of the «I Want to Live» project.

There have also been significantly more cases under Article 354.1 of the Criminal Code (rehabilitation of Nazism). This article has become more popular among security forces in 2023, and the 4th part of the article («distribution of information expressing obvious disrespect for society about days of military glory and memorable dates Russia, a group of individuals or using the Internet») is used especially often. Cases were initiated, for example, for demanding to remove the St. George ribbon from clothes or painting over graffiti in the shape of the letter Z with the inscription «We do not abandon our own» and the St. George ribbon.

The increase in cases under Articles 280.4 of the Criminal Code and 354.1 of the Criminal Code is also explained by the **collective case** against the «Vesna» movement — at least 15 people involved in the case are accused under both of these articles in connection with the movement's publications on social networks.

Top 8 criminal articles according to the number of persecutions



Data: [OVD-Info](#) • As of 19.02.2024

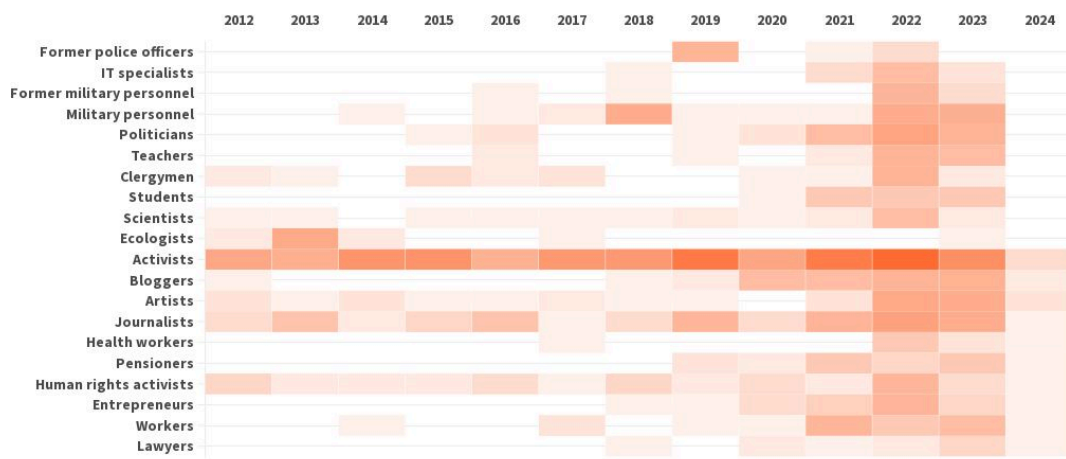
An increase in those accused under Article 280.3 of the Criminal Code («Discredit of the Armed Forces») is also visible — most cases are initiated under Part 1 of this article. It became possible after the decision in the administrative case under Article 20.3.3 of the Code of Administrative Offenses («discredit of the Armed Forces») came into force. Regarding Part 2 of this article, we know about only six defendants; this part does not require previous administrative responsibility but is charged in case of causing harm to health, damage or tampering with the operations of a critical infrastructure facility.»

There have been fewer charges under the article on vandalism. For example, in the first year of the war, they were actively charged against people applying anti-war inscriptions to various objects in the city or destroying patriotic symbols.

## **Who are the «anti-war» criminal cases initiated against?**

Since the bulk of the actions for which «anti-war» criminal cases are initiated are publications, comments and statements, it is not surprising that the number of journalists, politicians, artists and bloggers who become involved in anti-war cases is growing. In the second year of the war, as in 2022, the number of cases initiated against military personnel is also much higher than before the start of the war.

### Top 20 professions/activities of the persecuted persons



[OVD-Info](#)

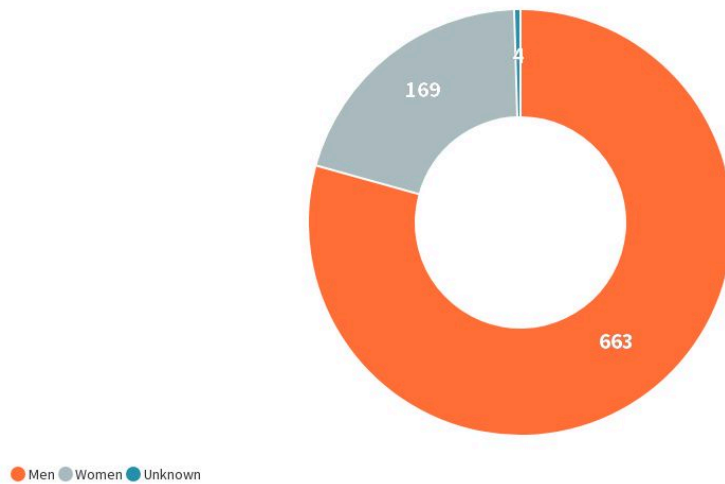
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It is also noticeable that while last year, representatives of certain professions — for example, entrepreneurs, human rights activists, and IT specialists — began to be persecuted more often than before the war, in the second year, the number of persecutions returned to pre-war levels.

*Note: we often do not know details about a person and their profession, so conclusions are drawn from a small sample of cases where we know the person's history.*

In terms of gender, although the majority of those prosecuted are men, the proportion of women prosecuted for their anti-war stance is higher than the average for all politically motivated criminal cases. Of the 848 persons involved in criminal prosecution for their anti-war position, 20% (170) are women. For comparison, in other politically motivated criminal cases, the proportion of women prosecuted is 13%.

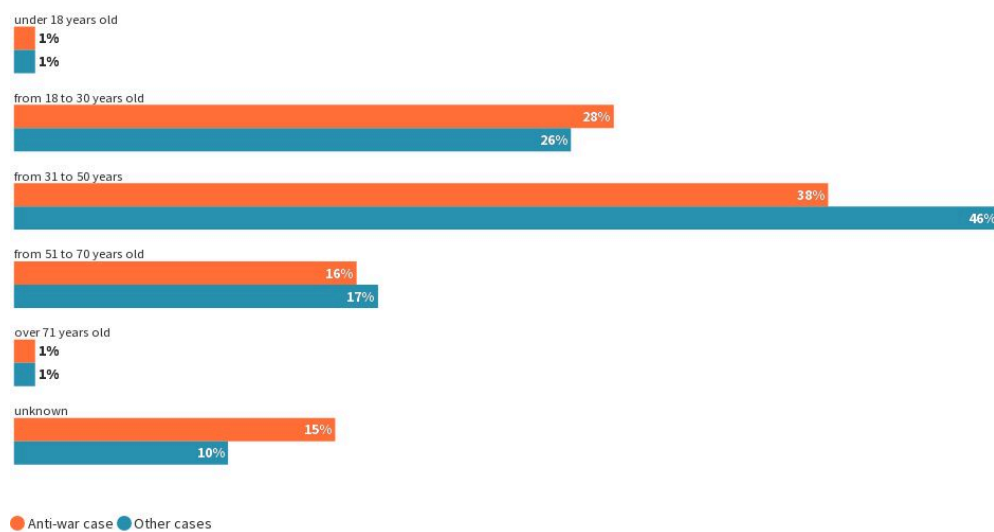
20% (169) of individuals persecuted for anti-war views are women



Data: [QVD-Info](#) • As of 19.02.24

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Age groups of defendants in anti-war cases were distributed as follows:



Data: [QVD-Info](#) • As of 19 February 2024

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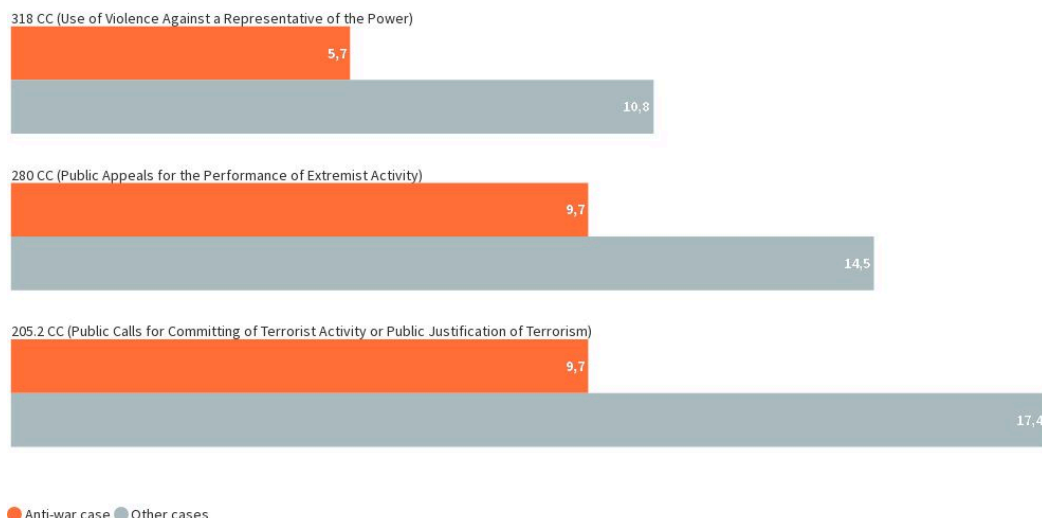
Among other facts about criminal prosecution is that courts consider «anti-war» cases much faster than other politically motivated ones.



## months on average pass from initiation of case to conviction in “anti-war” criminal cases

This is especially evident in cases under individual articles. Thus, under Article 318 of the Criminal Code (use of violence against a representative of the power), there can be two different situations: in other cases, the average time to the first verdict is 10.7 months, and in «anti-war» cases, there are 5.7 months. Under Article 280 of the Criminal Code (public calls for extremism), there are 14.5 months in other cases versus 9.5 months for «anti-war» cases. Under Article 205.2 of the Criminal Code (public justification of terrorism), there are 17.4 months versus 9.8 months, respectively.

Average time period that passes from initiation of prosecution to first conviction (in months)



Data: [OVD-Info](#) • As of 19 February 2024

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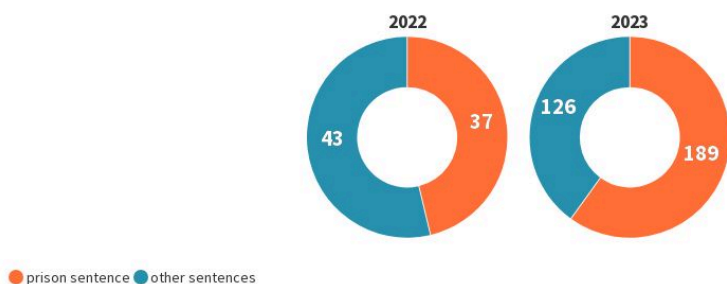
## Sentences

### What is the outcome of anti-war cases' consideration?

Of course, in 2023, we saw a larger number of imposed sentences than in 2022: cases brought in 2022 and new ones that appeared in 2023 came to trial.

The number of sentences with jail time has increased — in 2022, such sentences made up 46% of the total number, and in 2023, they made up 60%.

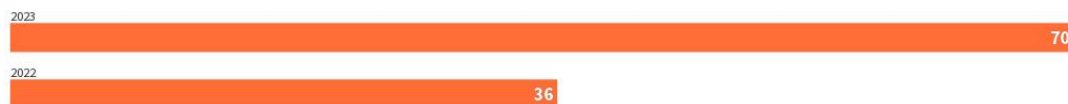
Prison sentences and other types of punishment



Данные: [ОВД-Инфо](#) • от 19 февраля 2024

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Average term of a prison sentence in anti-war cases

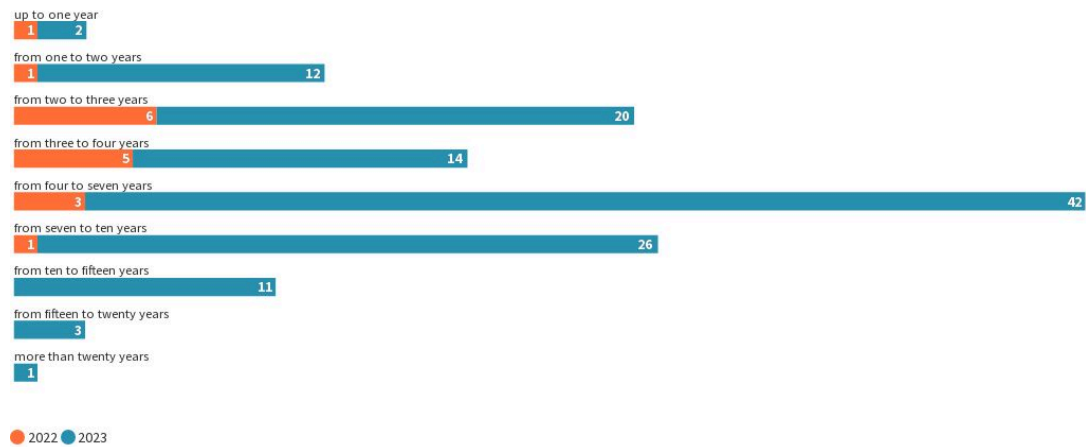


Data [OVD-Info](#) • As of 22 January 2024

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The most common sentences passed in 2023 were four to seven years in prison; in second place are terms from seven to ten years. Also, only last year, those involved in anti-war cases began to receive prison sentences of over ten years — for example, [Alexey Nuriev and Roman Nasryev](#); [Vitaly Torochkov](#); [Ilya Podkamenny](#) and [Bogdan Ziza](#).

### Number of anti-war cases ranged by terms of prison sentences



Data: [QVD-Info](#) • As of 19 February 2024

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As far as we can see, a large part of the ongoing anti-war repression has focused on criminal cases as a means of targeted prosecution with the most severe consequences for those who disagree.

## ADMINISTRATIVE CASES

# 8693

cases under Article 20.3.3 (“Discreditation”)

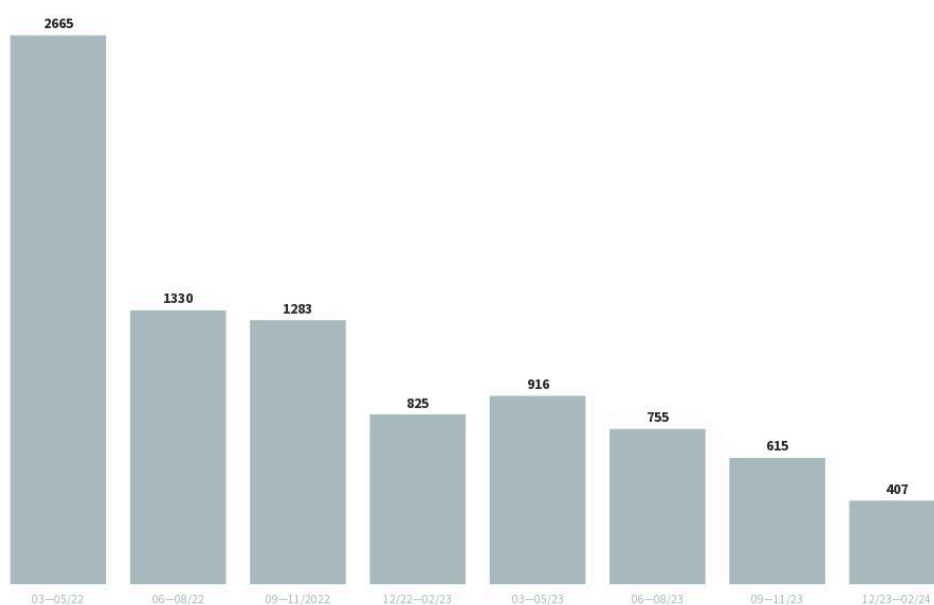
According to Mediazona

As of 17.02.2024



The region with the largest number of cases of discreditation of the Russian Armed Forces in the second year of the war was the annexed Republic of Crimea. It is also a leader in other indicators: the number of people prosecuted for anti-war statements and the number of known cases of extrajudicial persecution.

Number of cases initiated under Article 20.3.3 of the Code of Administrative Offenses (“Discreditation”)



Data: OVD-Info • As of 19 February 2024

When calculating the data, we focused on calendar years - this means that the data for 2022 is from January 1, and not from February 24

The decrease in the number of cases happened because, in 2023, there were no major anti-war actions. If, in the first year of the war, it was quite easy for police officers to impute Article 20.3.3 of the Code of Administrative Offenses to an entire paddy wagon of detainees, then this year, to initiate cases (for example, for publications on the Internet), more preliminary work is required to identify the offender, collect evidence and even examinations.

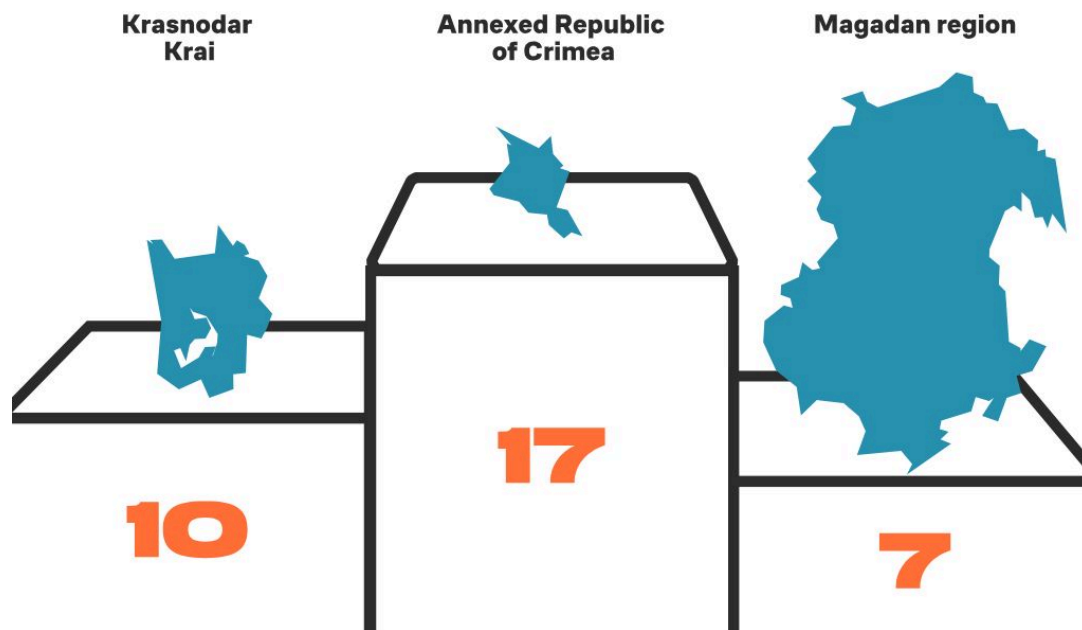
In 2023, OVD-Info, together with other human rights activists, sent more than 20 complaints to the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation, in which they asked to recognize Article 20.3.3 of the Code of Administrative Offenses on discrediting as contrary to the Constitution. The Constitutional Court refused to consider these complaints and indicated that anti-war statements negatively affect the effectiveness of the armed forces and, therefore, may be prohibited. This absurd decision not only confirmed the lack of independence of the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation but also completely discredited it as a body of constitutional control.

Article 20.3.3 of the Administrative Code is not the only basis for administrative prosecution for anti-war statements. For example, under Article 20.3 of the Code of Administrative Offenses («propaganda or public display of Nazi symbols»), people are prosecuted — and even **arrested** for several days — for the slogan «Glory to Ukraine!..» During the second year of the war (from 02/24/23 to 02/23/24), at least 49 such cases were known to have been considered by the courts (this figure was obtained from monitoring court data, as well as according to the SOVA Research Center). The judges argue for prosecution because this slogan is «a **symbol** used by the 'Volunteer Movement of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists'» or, for example, by the fact that «the **greeting** „GLORY

TO UKRAINE“ with the response „GLORY TO HEROES“ is an organizational password-greeting among members of the „Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists“ and the Ukrainian organization „Ukrainian Insurgent Army“ at the beginning of the Second World War.»

Most of these cases were considered in the annexed Republic of Crimea and Krasnodar Krai.

Top-3 regions with the largest number of cases under Article 20.3 of the Administrative Code ("Propaganda and public display of Nazi paraphernalia and symbols")



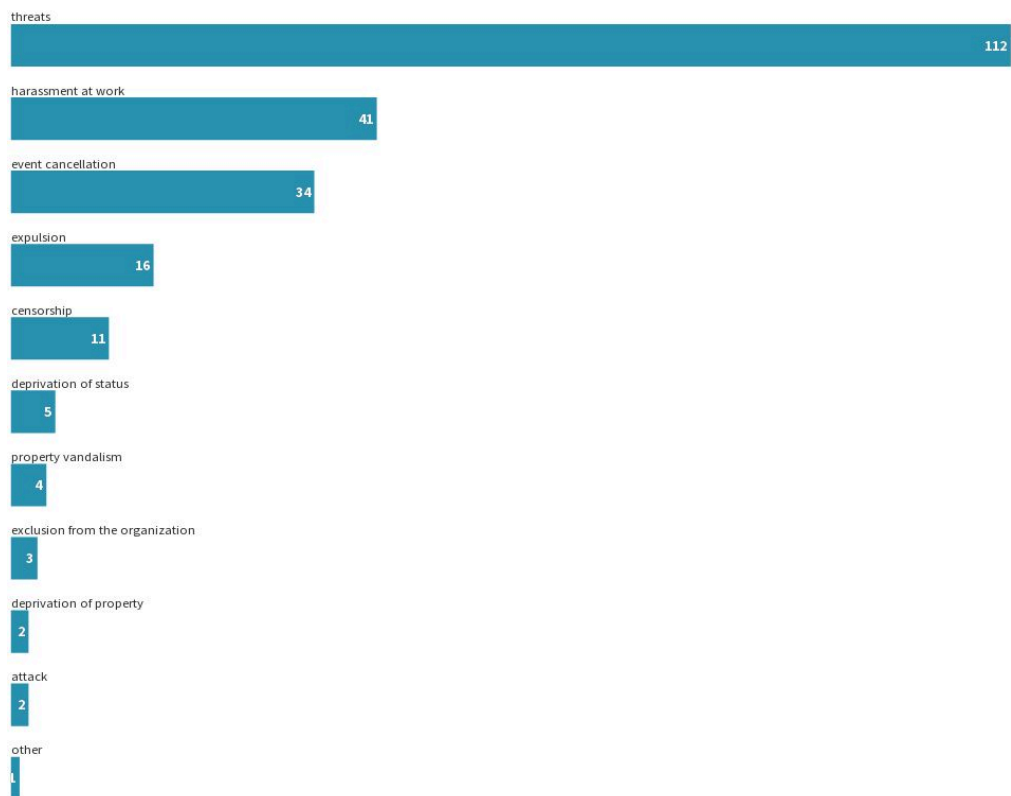
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## EXTRAJUDICIAL PRESSURE

# 579

cases of extrajudicial pressure for anti-war stance since  
24 February 2022

## Extrajudicial persecution for anti-war views



Данные OVD-Info • As of 19 February 2024

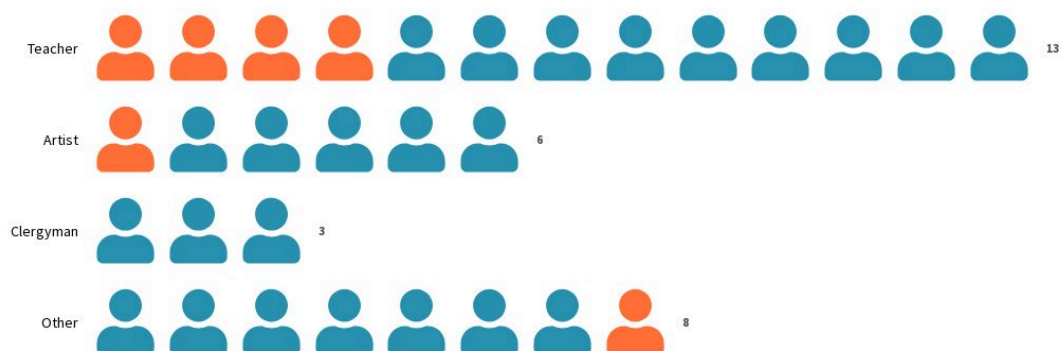
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In the spring, cases of **coercion to public apologies** were especially common. Overall, this practice continued throughout the year, mainly in annexed Crimea.

The second most popular type of extrajudicial persecution was dismissal from work, and this is who was affected during the second year of the war. Educators — university or college professors, as well as school teachers — are especially often victims of such persecution.

### Who was fired from their job?

Women Men

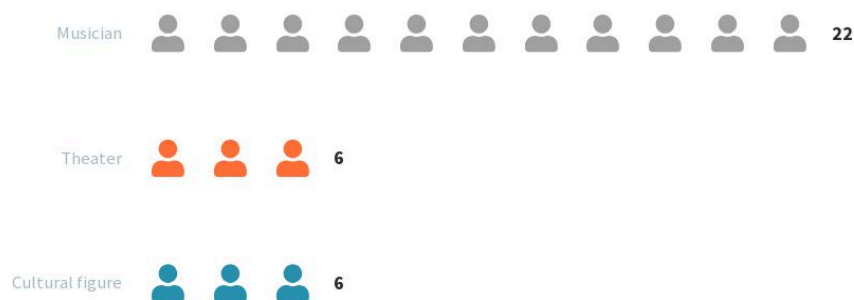


Данные: OVD-Info • As of 19 February 2024

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Another trend continued — the cancellation and disruption of various events of people who spoke out against the war. Most often, musicians or people associated with the theatre encountered this, but other artists also were engaged. For example, a film directed by Artem Burlov was removed from the program of the Pskov festival «Western Gate».


### Whose events were cancelled?



Data: OVD-Info • As of 19 February 2024

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# REPRESSION AT A LEGISLATIVE LEVEL

 24 repressive laws have been introduced into the State Duma since February 24, 2023

The past year has been largely devoted to tightening existing practices or expanding various concepts that have long been used in legislation.

Thus, during the second year of the war, the disposition of articles on discrediting the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation (280.3 of the Criminal Code) and fakes about the army (207.3 of the Criminal Code) was expanded twice — now they also apply to «troops of the **National Guard** of the Russian Federation» or «assisting to **volunteer formations**, organizations or individuals in performing the tasks assigned to the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation.»

Probably, largely due to various anti-war actions of direct action, as well as part of the punishment for any activity involving connections with Ukraine, in the spring, deputies adopted **a law** that introduced life sentences under the article on treason and expanded and tightened several articles of the Criminal Code.

This law established higher minimum penalties, for example, for recruitment or inducement to terrorism, and increased penalties for several «terrorist» articles and sabotage up to 20 years, with the possibility of sending those convicted to prison and confiscation of property. The concept of sabotage has also been expanded — arson of military recruitment offices, government institutions and infrastructure, which can be qualified as sabotage, is now punishable under the second, more stringent part of this article, providing for a term of up to 20 years. The interpretation of the crime «of attacking internationally protected persons or institutions» has also been expanded.

Now, it is possible to punish for threats of such an attack, for example, on Russian embassies or diplomats.

The same law introduced a new article 284.3 of the Criminal Code on providing assistance in the execution of decisions of international organizations. Criminal liability now arises for assistance in the execution of decisions of international organizations in which the Russian Federation does not participate or foreign state bodies' decisions on criminal prosecution of Russian officials, military personnel or volunteers. In fact, the law criminalized the documentation of war crimes, and the broad language, in theory, allows punishment even for working with the ECtHR.

The amendments to the **citizenship law** expanded the list of crimes the commission of which entails the deprivation of acquired Russian citizenship, including «serious crimes against the state», for example, Article 280.3 of the Criminal Code on discrediting the Armed Forces and 212.1 of the Criminal Code on repeated violation of public assembly regulations.

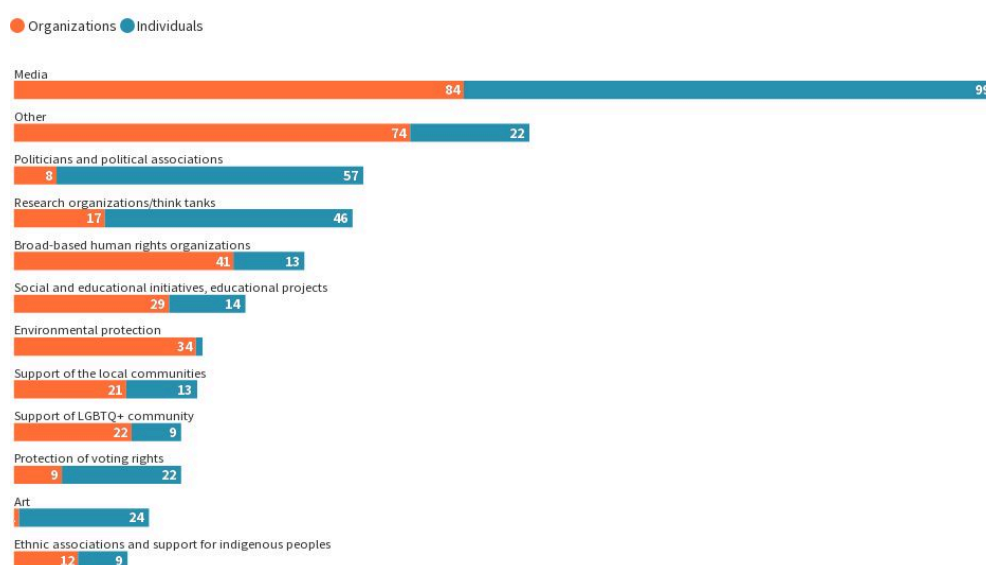
At the beginning of 2024, the authorities **adopted a law** on the confiscation of property obtained as a result of committing «crimes» under Article 207.3 of the Criminal Code («military fakes») and Article 280.4 of the Criminal Code («public calls against the security of the state») — in both cases «for personal gain». The authorities also introduced a **law** that would make it possible to recognize organizations where foreign government bodies are the founders or participants as undesirable in Russia. The need for this law is **explained** by the deputies themselves, including the fact that foreign governments are involved in «developing sanctions, blocking investment projects, training agents of influence, interfering in elections, inciting national hatred» after the start of the war.

Also, in February 2024, two bills were introduced to the State Duma dedicated to «the genocide of the multinational

Peoples of the Soviet Union during the Great Patriotic War.»  
The **first draft** defines what genocide of the Russian people is, and the **second** proposes amendments to Article 354.1 of the Criminal Code, expanding the article and introducing criminal liability «for denying the genocide of the multinational Peoples of the Soviet Union during the Great Patriotic War.»

## «FOREIGN AGENTS» AND «UNDESIRABLE ORGANIZATIONS»

Foreign agents ranged by area of activity



Data: OVD-Info • As of 14.12.2023

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Since February 24, 2023, 218 positions have been added to the registers of «foreign agents» — 56 organizations and 162 individuals. Of these, at least 109 had «opposed a special military operation in Ukraine» as stated in their reasons for recognition, and 133 had «disseminated false information about the decisions taken by public authorities of the Russian Federation and the policies pursued by them.»

# 30

**individuals recognized as “foreign agents” since 24 February, 2023, are being prosecuted in “anti-war” criminal cases**

Of those included in the registers since February 24, 2023, at least 30 people are being prosecuted in various criminal cases — 11 of them under Article 207.3 of the Criminal Code («military fakes»). Also, over the past year, at least 4 people became involved in criminal cases under Article 330.1 of the Criminal Code («evasion of duties provided for by the legislation of the Russian Federation on foreign agents»). Two of them are members of the «Golos» movement. Two journalists also became the defendants: the editor-in-chief of the Pskovskaya Gubernia (Pskov Province) newspaper Denis Kamalyagin and the editor of the Tatar-Bashkir service of «Radio Liberty» Alsu Kurmasheva. Alsu became the first person charged with Part 3 of Article 330.1 of the Criminal Code — she is accused of obtaining information about teachers of one of the universities in Tatarstan who were mobilized into the army. Security officials believe that since Kurmasheva found out such information, she should have denounced herself to the Ministry of Justice so that, on this basis, she could be included in the register of «foreign agents.»

# 66

**organizations included in the register of “undesirables” since February 24, 2023**

Of the 66 listed, at least 41 organizations are related to the war in Ukraine. The reasons for recognition, among other things, range from «the university’s programs 'devaluating and distorting the history of the Russian state, downplaying the merits of prominent Russian scientists, writers, and

cultural figures, and promoting pseudo-statements about Russia's guilt in all world cataclysms'» to «involving Russians into the ranks of volunteer battalions as part of the armed forces of Ukraine and preparing the so-called „resistance groups.“


## **BLOCKING AND CENSORSHIP**

 1152 cases of persecution of the media, journalists and media workers

As of 17.02.2024

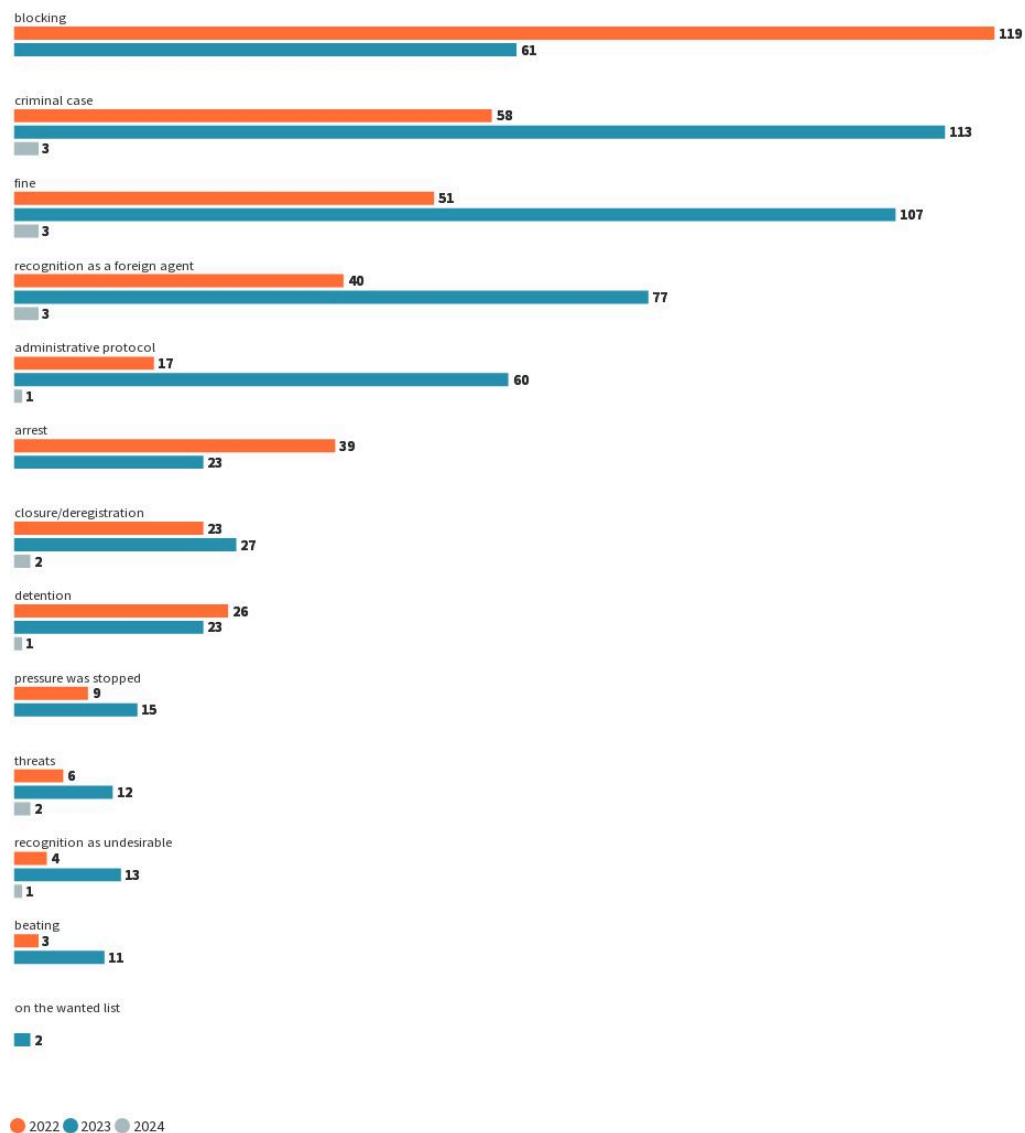
Based on open sources, we know of 1,152 cases of persecution of journalists, media workers and individual media outlets. The pressure of the Russian authorities on independent media can be divided into three categories: assignment of status (foreign agent/undesirable), legislative (fine, criminal or administrative case) and extrajudicial (threats and other). In 2022, the «most popular» type of pressure was blocking, and in 2023 — criminal cases.

From the open sources, we know of 23 cases where pressure on journalists and media workers was stopped. Among them are the **termination** of the administrative case against the editor-in-chief of the Rostov-on-Don news portal, the **cancellation** of the fine for the Pskovskaya Gubernia (Pskov Province) journalist, and the **recognition** of the inclusion of the journalist in the register of «foreign agents» as illegal.

 since February 24, 2022, Roskomnadzor has blocked 66,061 Internet resources.

According to Roskomsvoboda

## 1149 cases of persecution of media, journalists and media workers



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## CONCLUSIONS

The main trend of the second year of the war is the tightening of existing instruments of repression. This is evidenced by increased sentence lengths, as well as an increase in cases of pressure on the media and extrajudicial pressure, including public apologies. There is every reason to believe that the trend will remain the same — new laws, new sentences, new articles and new ways to put pressure on dissenters.

OVD-Info, like many of our colleagues — human rights defenders, journalists, NGO employees and activists — continues to work. Despite intensifying repression, entering the third year of a full-scale war, and the murder of Alexei Navalny, civil society in Russia is alive and resisting.

Thanks for your support.

We will get through this together.

No to war.

## **LINKS TO OTHER OVD-INFO DATA AND REPORTS**

- Wartime repression reports. [January 2024](#), [December 2023](#), [November 2023](#), [October 2023](#), [September 2023](#), [August 2023](#), [July 2023](#), [June 2023](#), [May 2023](#), [April 2023](#), [March 2023](#), [February 2023](#), [January 2023](#), [December 2022](#), [October 2022](#), [September 2022](#), [August 2022](#), [July 2022](#), [June 2022](#)
- Report in Russian «No war. How the Russian authorities are fighting anti-war protests»
- Report in Ukrainian «Ні війні»
- Guide «The anti-war case»
- The input of information in reply to the call for submissions: [Challenges to freedom of opinion and expression in times of conflicts and disturbances](#).
- The Report on Civil Rights and Freedoms of Children
- Report «Blocking Internet resources as a tool of political censorship»
- Project on the law on «foreign agents» — «[Inoteka](#)».
- Report «How the authorities use cameras and facial recognition against protesters»
- [Reports](#) of OVD-Info and other organizations on the compliance of the Russian Federation with its international obligations in the field of human rights.
- Information on the human rights situation in Russia for the OSCE Moscow Mechanism.

**Ещё почитать**



**No to war**