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RUSSIA: Anti-war protests and repression in Russia are going on unabated

Anti-war protests and repression in Russia

Newsletter from OVD-News translated by HRWF

OVD (25.02.2023) – One year ago a full-scale war began in Ukraine. Tens of thousands of dead, destroyed cities and

millions of refugees, aggressive misanthropic propaganda from TV screens, military censorship and the forced emigration of hundreds of thousands from Russia – without exaggeration a real disaster. Shortly after the invasion began, a wave of protests swept through Russia. The state responded with an unprecedented intensification of repression: hundreds of citizens became subjects of criminal cases, and thousands more became administrative cases. But that did not silence the Russians: citizens continue to take to the streets and talk about the war and its tragedies on social networks, despite the risk of imprisonment. And we continue to talk about it.

54 arrests in anti-war rallies on 24 February

Yesterday, at least 54 people were detained in anti-war rallies in various Russian cities – for pickets, laying flowers and even writing on the snow. In St. Petersburg we had 18 people in police custody, in Yekaterinburg – 11, in Moscow – 7, and in Nizhny Novgorod and Barnaul – 4 people in each. In total, we recorded anti-war detentions in 14 cities.

Detention conditions in Russia

Alexei Gorinov, convicted in an “anti-war case,” was placed on a preventive registry in a colony. The administration characterized the former municipal deputy as prone to escape, citing some operational information, but did not disclose its details. Now every two hours the inmate is visited by the staff of the institution, this also happens at night. In June 2022, **Gorinov was sentenced to seven years in prison for speaking out about the war at the council of deputies, later**

his sentence was reduced by a month.

Preventive detention is one of the ways to put pressure on political prisoners in pre-trial detention centers and colonies. Quite often employees of the institutions do not explain in any way why they made such a decision; so it is almost impossible to challenge it. In February 2021, **Alexei Navalny** was placed on a preventive detention registry, also as prone to escape. They came to him every hour to check, and woke him up at night to film him with a camera. "Such actions deprive me of sleep, that is in fact torture which is applied to me," the politician noted.

The defendant in a case of justification of terrorism was placed on indefinite compulsory treatment. The court decided that **Maksim Voronouski** was not aware of the nature and public danger of his actions and could not therefore be punished. Now every six months a medical commission will determine whether or not the young man should continue his treatment. In March 2022 Voronovsky was sent to the detention center – a criminal case was opened against him for the posting of an alleged comment about Mikhail Zhlobitsky, who had committed a suicide bombing in the building of the Federal Security Service in the Arkhangelsk region. The young man claims that he didn't write that message.

There is no hope that a person placed in forced treatment will actually be able to receive quality medical care. Violence, torture conditions, and isolation are far more likely to be encountered. Punitive psychiatry is often applied to defendants in political cases. For example, since 2021, **Yakut shaman Alexander Gabyshev**, prosecuted under the article on violence against a representative of authority, has been under

compulsory treatment.

Staying in the hospital clearly didn't do him any good. "His appearance is very painful: pale, heavily reddened eyes and lost weight," was how his lawyer Alexei Pryanishnikov described him.

Protests against the war and repression in Russia go on unabated

In Russia, protests against the war with Ukraine did not stop throughout the year. During this time, we counted almost **20,000 detentions** because of an anti-war stance. On at least 413 occasions, police used force against detainees, such as by beating them or using tasers. **We documented 18,183 administrative cases under "rally" articles and 5,846 cases under the article on discrediting the Russian military.**

But even this was not enough for the Russian authorities – they set the goal of silencing all those who advocate peace. According to our data, **at least 447 people were prosecuted for "anti-war" cases, 128 of whom are in custody.** Some of them reported violence, threats, pressure and ill-treatment by security forces, and **at least 15 people were subjected to torture.**

Since the beginning of the war, military censorship has actually been declared in the country. **More than 10,000 Internet sites have been blocked.** The state continued its fight against independent media even more fiercely: **the sites**

of at least 265 publications were added to the registers of banned publications, and 34 journalists became subjects of “anti-war cases.

We published a summary in which we analyzed the main trends of repressions against opponents of the war in Russia and on the territory of annexed Crimea. Read the material on [our website](#).

OVD's legal assistance

Since the summer of 2022, we have been helping those who have been prosecuted for anti-war statements. In total, IAB-Info attorneys have defended 61 people in criminal cases. In administrative cases related to anti-war speech, we have been able to help even more people. During the year of the war, attorneys from IAB-Info went to police stations to visit detainees 1,157 times, where they helped 5,893 detainees. Our attorneys participated in 9133 administrative cases in court: they were able to completely dismiss 226 cases and return another 183 cases for reconsideration.

And we also want to remind you that it is especially important now to support political prisoners persecuted for their anti-war stance. Writing a letter is one of the easiest ways to do this. For many of those who have been imprisoned because of their views, it is important to understand that they are not alone and that like-minded people care about their fate. Read what to write about in a letter and how to send it in our [instructions](#).

Every day we take calls to our hotline, write news stories and texts about political persecution in Russia, and issue instructions, reports, and podcasts. Our lawyers handle criminal cases and prepare complaints to the ECHR, and our IT team works every day to make our services more user-friendly.

On September 29, 2021, the Ministry of Justice included OVD-Info in the “register of foreign agents”.

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