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Акция протеста 21 апреля 2021 года / Фото: Давид Френкель, «Медиазона»

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Suppression of the April 21 protests

Доклад на русском языке: [Пресечение протестов 21 апреля: С фокусом на нарушения в Санкт-Петербурге](#)

On the evening of April 21, protest actions in support of Alexei Navalny were held throughout Russia. Demanding medical assistance, the politician went on a hunger strike in the colony on March 31; on April 16, the Moscow prosecutor's office [filed](#) the suit at the court demanding that the Anti-Corruption Foundation and Navalny's headquarters be recognized as extremist organizations. On April 18, Navalny's team announced rallies demanding to allow doctors to see the opposition leader, whose health situation, according to doctors, was becoming critical.

The authorities responded to the protests with preventive pressure and mass detentions. As of April 29, OVD-Info is aware of almost two thousand people detained on April 21 in connection with protest actions in 97 localities. These are the largest detentions since [the January protests](#). Most of the detentions were reported in St. Petersburg — at least 839 people were detained there, and the police behaved extremely aggressively.

This review describes cases of pressure and persecution in connection with the April 21 rally in St. Petersburg and key violations during detentions and legal procedures in police stations. In the annex to the review, we publish a list of known key violations by police stations (there is a high probability that they're even more numerous). Since the detainees in St. Petersburg were transported en masse from one police station to another on April 21, the errors in the police station numbers might be present, although unlikely.

FIGHT AGAINST THE DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION ABOUT THE ACTION, THREATS AND PREVENTIVE DETENTIONS

State authorities massively resorted to threats and other means to prevent the dissemination of information about the actions.

- On April 19, the day after the announcement of the rally, the Prosecutor General's Office **issued** a warning about the inadmissibility of calls for participation in unauthorized actions. According to the agency, «the calls to participate in unauthorized mass actions» constitute an offense under Article 20.2 of the Administrative Code on violation of the order of holding public events (the article itself does not say anything about calls, but the courts have recently equated the publication of information about unauthorized actions with their «organization»).

- On the same day, it became known that Roskomnadzor (Federal Service for Supervision of Communications, Information Technology and Mass Media) **demanded** that the video-hosting service YouTube block the video by Navalny's team «The Final Battle between Good and Neutrality, » in which the actions were announced. After that, Navalny's press secretary Kira Yarmysh **was arrested** for 10 days for «organizing» an unauthorized rally by calling on the Internet (Part 2 of Article 20.2 of the Administrative Code), even though she cannot use the Internet due to her being under house arrest for 2,5 months for «**health code violation case.**»
- On April 20, the online media Fontanka **reported** that the deputy head of the Housing Committee of St. Petersburg, Stepan Kuralov, demanded the district administrations to «urgently organize a house-to-house and inspection of entrances and mailboxes for information leaflets. If detected, the leaflets must be withdrawn, the number of them as well as the addresses — reported on».

Official statements stressed the illegality and danger of the protest.

- The statement **was made** by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation. It called on citizens to refrain from participating in the rallies and not even visit the streets where they will be held, citing restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the risk of infection, as well as warning of possible «provocations of disruptive elements» and detentions of «offenders.» A similar message was **published** on the website of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of St. Petersburg.
- «If any unauthorized actions are initiated, they will automatically be deemed illegal, and law enforcement officers will react appropriately, following the law of the Russian Federation», — **said** Dmitry Peskov, press-secretary of President Vladimir Putin, on April 19.

Threats were also addressed to users who registered on the Navalny team website as potential action participants.

- After a leak of personal email addresses, they **started receiving** letters from unknown people who threatened to report them to their employers as having registered on the site. In St. Petersburg, at least one preventive detention of a person registered on the site has been **reported**.

Cases of pressure on students were reported, including in St. Petersburg universities:

- The St. Petersburg University of Aerospace Instrumentation (GUAP) **administration threatened** students with expulsion for participating in the action on April 21. According to the student online journal DOXA, the message said: «If facts come up identifying you as a rally participant, you will be expelled from the university! <...> You are adults and, I hope, you understand that you must not take part in such events». In a comment to the «Fontanka» journal, the head of the Department of Information and Strategic Communications of the GUAP, Sergei Yershevsky, **said** that some students taking part in unauthorized rallies «may have had it and get criminally prosecuted.» «Various actors who, unfortunately, are monitoring the civic activity [of our students], later come into contact with us, the university, » he added.
- As **reported** by DOXA subscribers, the degree program department of the HSE Faculty of Law in St. Petersburg sent out a warning letter to students in connection with possible participation in the rally. «Remember that participation in such events [as rallies] may lead to serious legal consequences. We also remind you that the use of the university's logo in connection with these events is unacceptable» — DOXA quotes from the letter.
- **According** to DOXA, Acting Rector of the St. Petersburg State Pediatric Medical University, Ivan Lyakhov demanded that the deans of the faculties check students' attendance from April 21 to 30.
- In the St. Petersburg Chemical and Pharmaceutical University dorms, on the evening of April 21, when the rally was to take place, mandatory cleaning of the territory was scheduled. DOXA readers **reported** receiving warnings: those who missed the cleaning will have to «work it off.»

On the eve and in the morning before the action, numerous visits of representatives of law enforcement agencies, preventive detentions, and trials were reported throughout

the country. St. Petersburg channels **reported** police visits to well-known local **activists** and **journalists**; the police **also searched** St. Petersburg's Navalny headquarters. «These actions by police officers are carried out within the framework of the current legislation and are aimed at preventing offenses» — **responded** the regional Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs to the request of the editorial office Znak.com about police visiting detainees of winter protests, made during April 19-20, with demands to sign warning notes.

Law enforcement agencies often used the participation of people in the winter protests as reasons for their detention: thus, Open Russia's coordinator in St. Petersburg, Sergei Kuzin, was detained and later **arrested** in connection with the January 31 rally in support of Navalny; another resident was **detained** in connection with the rally of January 23 and brought for questioning with connection to the case of road closures on that day (Article 267 of the Criminal Code). In addition to detentions, police also carried out visits and searches among activists, partly in connection to the same prior events. The same **took place** on the **day** of the rally.

AUTHORITIES INTERFERING WITH TRAFFIC AND PEDESTRIAN MOVEMENT

On the afternoon of April 21, shortly before the start of the rally, journalists **reported** that the approaches to the Palace Square, where the gathering was announced, were blocked by temporary fences and sanitation vehicles.

From 19:03, that is, from the beginning of the rally, the metro stations «Admiralteiskaya» and «Nevsky Prospekt» in the city center were **closed** for exit. The movement of trolleybuses on Nevsky Prospekt and the tram on Sadovaya Street was suspended.

At 20:40 «ZakS.ru» **reported** that exits to Nevsky Prospekt were blocked by riot police officers equipped with shields and by municipal vehicles, the passage was blocked for cars from Gostiny Dvor along Sadovaya Street; **according** to Mediazona, municipal equipment also blocked the exit from Bolshaya Morskaya Street to the Nevsky Prospekt. The online magazine «Sobaka.ru» signaled the closure of Vladimirsky Prospekt, the blocking of a section of the Nevsky Prospekt from Palace Square to Vosstaniya Square: «Public transport and residents of St. Petersburg in private cars got into a traffic jam — they only let a resuscitation car through, heading to the Mariinsky Hospital, » the publication **reported**. To the question from «Sobaka.ru»'s correspondent on how long the Nevsky Prospekt is closed, police officers responded: «It will be opened after we calm down all those who are raging»

By 21:30, the exit from «Admiralteyskaya» and «Nevsky Prospekt " was reopened, but three other stations — «Gostiny Dvor, » «Mayakovskaya, » and «Ploshchad Vosstaniya» — **were closed** for entry and exit, trains passed them without stopping.

Road traffic in the city center was **restored** at around 10:30 PM.

PEACEFUL PROTESTS AND MASS DETENTIONS

According to the **report** of the Commissioner for Human Rights in St. Petersburg, Alexander Shishlov, on April 21, 2021, during the public event, «no provocations from the participants were recorded.»

The report also notes that many participants of the rally used personal protective equipment, walked on sidewalks, while «some law enforcement officials, on the contrary, often moved across the lawns.» Not all law enforcement officers

were wearing individual **badges**, which makes it impossible to identify them to investigate violations. Despite the peaceful character of the public event, «numerous unjustifiably harsh detentions using batons and stun guns» were **recorded**. Both participants of the public event and random passers-by were detained.

«People were dragged out of front doors and doorways. Passers-by were stopped. For instance, a person passing on a scooter next to a bus for detainees transporting was asked to stop and fold the scooter. After he did this, he was escorted to a bus», the **report** of the Commissioner in St. Petersburg says.

In addition, the media **recorded** cases of cordons in St. Petersburg, also they were reported to OVD-Info by the detainees themselves.

According to OVD-Info, at least 839 people were detained in St. Petersburg during the rally.

POLICE VIOLENCE

The detentions were characterized by unjustified and excessive violence by law enforcement officers against peaceful protesters. The police used special equipment such as batons and stun guns.

Detainees and witnesses of the detentions reported to OVD-Info about the use of stun guns on at least 14 people. Cases of the use of stun guns were **recorded** on videos published by the media.

- A stun gun was **used** three times on a person diagnosed with arrhythmia in one case. The use of a stun gun caused a seizure. He managed to stop the attack thanks to the medications he had with him.

Participants of the rally were beaten on the head and **stomach**, hit on the asphalt; one of the detainees in St. Petersburg got his finger **broken**. Detainees and witnesses of the detentions also reported other consequences of the use of force: chest contusion, head and face contusion, stun gun burns, bruises and abrasions. For some detained people an ambulance **had** to be called.

«The actions of some police officers who used force and special means during the detention of non-resisting participants of an unauthorized but peaceful rally, according to the representatives of the Commissioner, can be regarded as abuse of official authority, » the report of the Commissioner for Human Rights in St. Petersburg, Alexander Shishlov, **says**.

In response to the request of the «Podyom» media outlet about the use of stun guns, the press service of the regional Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs **replied** on April 26 that there were no complaints about the actions of the police. Similarly, the St. Petersburg police refused to admit the use of force in detentions during the winter protests: on April 28, news agency «Znak.com» reported that in response to a request about the beating and detention of an «Ekho Moskvyy» journalist during a rally on January 23, the regional department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs **stated** that the police officers acted strictly following the law and did not allow abuse of official authority.

CONVOY CONDITIONS

Law enforcement officers in St. Petersburg used large passenger buses, placing 40-60 detainees at once in them, and took people to different police stations, breaking them into groups both in police vans and in police stations, before drawing up a protocol. The detainees were being transported even at night time.

- «We were on an ordinary large bus, » one of the detainees in St. Petersburg told OVD-Info, «On the way to the police station, we stopped at another station because there were two buses and only one accompanying car. Therefore, another bus was escorted first <...>, and then we went to the police station No 32 of the Nevsky district. In total, at police station No 32, 17 people had to get off our bus because there was no more place in the police station. The rest were taken to the police station No 10, if I'm not mistaken.»

In some police vans, people were driven around the city for two to four hours or were not taken to police stations for a long time.

This is contrary to the law's requirement that the delivery must be «made as soon as possible.» In fact, this practice allowed the police to increase the period of detention, which is counted from the moment of delivery and registration at the police station. Moreover, it made it harder to search for specific detainees. This, in its turn, prevented the meeting with the defenders and the transfer of necessary things into the police stations.

Poor conditions compounded the lengthy transportation: some buses had more people than seats, and the detainees had to stand for long periods of time; they complained about the lack of food, water, and **the ability** to go to the toilet. Some detainees in the police vans became sick, cases of calling ambulances were recorded.

- The detainees told OVD-Info that they were brought to police station No. 53 at about 21:20. «Some of them started to be processed, but the queue did not reach us, » — around 23:00, they were transported to police station No. 86. According to the information at 01: 07, people were still not provided with the food.

- In one case, which was reported to OVD-Info, a detainee who lost consciousness in a police van was dropped off from the car, accompanied by another detainee, and left to wait for an ambulance on the road.
- In some cases, the detainees were subjected to psychological pressure in the police vans. «They said that if we stand up without staff (permission — *OVD-info*), they will put their face on the floor with handcuffs, » one of the detainees said.

But even after being taken to the police stations, the detainees were not always immediately registered in the register (this was reported by the detainees from at least seven police stations), which further delayed the period of detention.

- It was reported from police station No 66 that the detainees «are kept for 3 hours in the police station without registration and even without entering them in the book of delivered persons.»

LIMITED COMMUNICATION AND LACK OF OFFICIAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE DETAINEES

Despite the mass nature of the detentions on April 21 and the obvious public significance of these events, official information about the number of detainees was not announced either on the day of the action or **during the week** after it. At the same time, on the evening of April 21, the St. Petersburg police found it possible to estimate the number of participants in the action and **announced** that 4.5 thousand people participated in the event.

At the same time, the relatives of the detainees and their lawyers on April 21 suffered from a lack of information about the detainees and their locations. It was reported to OVD-Info

that the phone of the prosecutor on duty and the helpline of the Ministry of Internal Affairs didn't answer.

There have also been reported cases of blatant misinformation from the authorities' side.

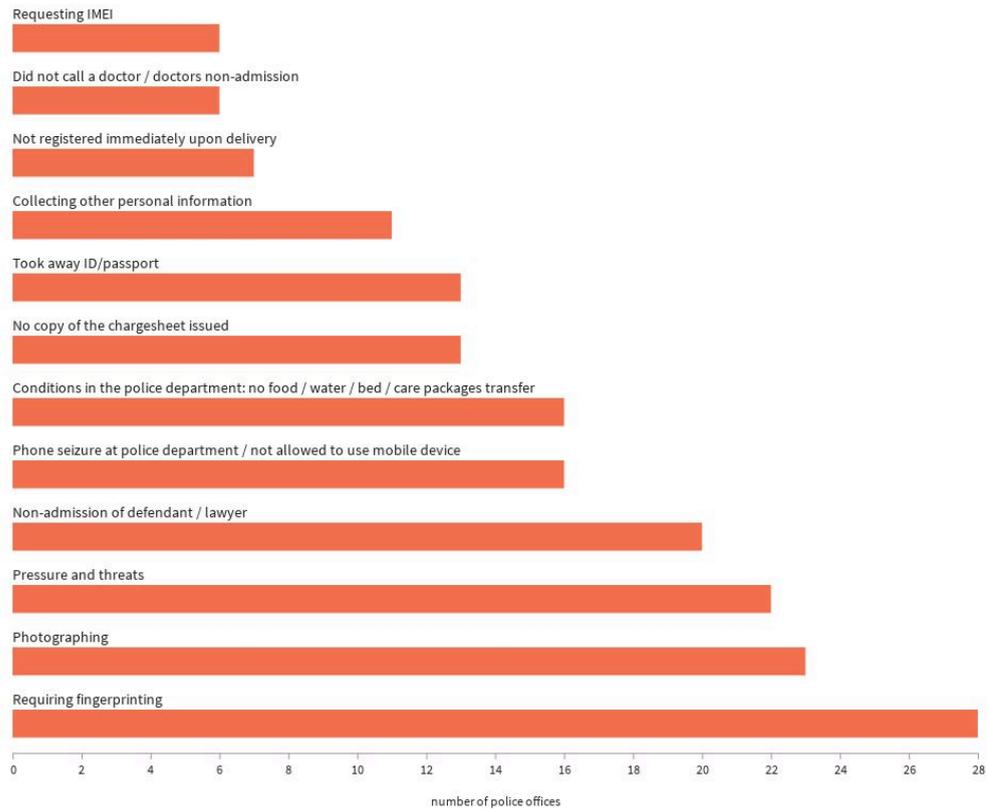
- So, the mother of one of the detainees, who called the police stations, was informed in police stations Nos. 44 and 86 that there was no one there, although the detainees were taken to both police stations.
- In police station No. 70, the lawyer was informed that his client was released, although that was not the truth.

Often, when people were detained, in police vans or police stations, their phones were taken away or forbidden to use (including under the threat of being taken away). We were informed about this from 16 police stations, but detainees from other police stations often just stopped contacting us. OVD-Info received mass requests from relatives and friends of detainees who lost contact with them during the delivery to the police station.

Sometimes the detainees were even forbidden to communicate with each other.

- From police station No 53, it was reported: «There is no way to provide information about other people as it is forbidden to talk.»

Violations in the police stations of St. Petersburg after mass detentions on April 21, 2021



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NON-ADMISSION OF LAWYERS

The police prevented the access of defenders and lawyers to the detainees. The non-admission of lawyers is recorded in at least 20 police stations.

- From police station No 5, it was reported that " the defender is not allowed, citing the fact that the protocols were not drawn up.»
- In some cases, the defenders **were threatened** to use force, denying them access to the detainees.
- The lawyer who arrived at police station No. 43 «was pushed out before our eyes,» reported the detainees.
- In police station No. 44, the detainees on the second floor demanded to see their lawyer, who was waiting downstairs, to which the head of the station answered that he had no right to let him on the second floor.
- From police station No. 53, information was received that members of the Public Monitoring Commission were not admitted.

Information was received from five police stations about implementing the «**Fortress**» plan — a special regime to protect police stations from raids, which restricts access inside and which the police **actively use** to prevent lawyers from visiting detained participants of rallies.

CONDITIONS OF DETENTION IN POLICE STATIONS

Problems with detention conditions were reported from 16 stations: lack of food, water, normal places to sleep, non-admission of parcels.

- The participants of the rally who found themselves in police station No. 9 told OVD-Info that they were given water only 6.5 hours after they were brought to the station.
- Information was received from police station No. 13 that police officers shouted at the detainee for her request to go to the toilet.
- «We were given food for the first time this evening (April 22 — *OVD-Info*) and brought to the station yesterday at about 10 PM. We were kept without food for more than 20 hours. <... > The air in the cell also probably doesn't meet any standards; the ventilation didn't seem to work either,» reported the detainees from police station No. 15.
- The SOTA channel **reported, referring to local** chats that the detainees in the police station No. 39 «did not sleep for more than 24 hours — in eighteen hours in the station, they were not given any mattresses or food.» OVD-Info got information from the police station No. 30 that people left for the night were kept in a cell without sleeping places until 9 AM.
- The following was reported from the police station No. 53 after 4 AM: «We're sitting in two rooms; they're drawing up detention reports on the last ones, even though we were received at 8:30 PM. As for sleeping places for 25 people, there is one table.» The police station No. 74 had a similar situation: «At 5 in the morning, there is no possibility to lie down. 20 people haven't even been called yet. This is some kind of torture,» the detainees told OVD-Info. By 1:00 AM the next day, the detainees reported that they had been sitting in chairs in the assembly hall all night and had not slept. The detainees of the police station No. 34 reported that they slept sitting on benches.

In six stations, detainees complained that the police refused to call an ambulance for the injured or let doctors in.

- From police station No. 13, there were reports that an ambulance was not called for a detained woman for an hour and a half.
- It was reported from police station No. 39 that a doctor wasn't allowed to see a beaten woman with concussion symptoms who had been in the station for more than 18 hours.

In police stations Nos. 14 and 15, the necessary medicines were not handed over to the detainees.

There were also certain problems related to the rights of children and parents.

- Information was received from police stations Nos. 13 and 26 that mothers of under-aged children were kept there overnight.
- Information was received from police station No. 18 that a minor was left in the station for the night; her parents were not allowed to see her.

ILLEGAL COLLECTION OF PERSONAL DATA

OVD-Info was informed that at 28 police stations of St. Petersburg, people were forced to give fingerprints, and at 23 police stations — to be photographed. In at least 11 police stations, police officers collected additional personal information.

- Nine police stations were reported to collect detainees' personal data such as height, weight, hair color, tattoos, job information, registered vehicles, marital status, and criminal records.
- From police station No. 18, it was reported that the detainees were asked to unlock their phones during the inspection.
- From police stations Nos. 5, 7, and 32, it was reported that the detainees were made **to take** prints of the soles of their shoes.

According to the law, the police have the right to manage registration, photographing, audio, film, and video recording, fingerprinting of the detainees of administrative offenses, only if it is otherwise impossible to establish their identity.

From 6 police stations, information was received that police officers demanded the detainees to show the IMEI (unique codes) of the phones.

THREATS, PRESSURE AND MANIPULATION USED BY THE POLICE

People who defended their rights and refused illegal procedures and demands of the police faced pressure: police officers threatened to use force, send them to jail, or, most often, keep them at the police station for up to 48 hours. Reports of threats and pressure were received by OVD—info from the detainees of April 21 from 22 police stations of St. Petersburg.

- From police station No. 9, it was reported that fingerprints and photos were taken from the beaten detainee under the threat that they would not call an ambulance.
- From Police station No. 86, they reported: «We can hear the guys from the criminal investigation department trying to put down a guy who refuses to give his IMEI. There's a very aggressive police officer here.» It was also reported that the police officers threatened to keep for the night those who refuse to hand over fingerprinting, photos and IMEI.

There were recorded cases of the police forcing the detainees to refuse legal protection.

- From police station No. 44, the detainees reported: «They say that if we keep asking questions and demanding a lawyer — they will put us in jail until the tomorrow trial»
- In police station No. 39, the detainees were asked to sign a waiver from the lawyer, promising, in this case, to give a subpoena to the court on the next day and release them.

In some cases, the threats were fulfilled, and those who refused to be fingerprinted, photographed, or give away their phones, were separated from the rest of the detainees, kept at the station for hours, or left overnight, or the force was used against them.

- In police station No. 32, the detainee was «put aside» and kept for the night after she refused to give up the phone; those who agreed to do so were released.
- Police station No. 53 reported that the only person who refused to be fingerprinted and photographed was put in jail separately as a punishment. Then, his fingerprints were taken by force. «I was held in a cell for about 4 hours», said a detainee from the police station No. 53, who refused to fingerprint,» first in solitary confinement, then transferred to another solitary one with a sleeping cellmate. Then they took me back to their boss, and he asked me if I'd changed my mind about the fingerprints, and I said no, so he said he'd use force, and he called two colleagues to help. They handcuffed me and, holding my hands, did everything by themselves. I also refused to put a signature on the prints; they said that they would put a squiggle themselves.»

For a long time, the detainees were not told whether the protocols would be drawn up and under what article. The maximum duration of detention also depends on the same article: if the violation does not provide for administrative arrest, the detention should not exceed three hours, otherwise 48 hours. Against the background of uncertainty, the police have additional means for pressure.

- Detainees from police station No. 18 reported that they were ordered to fill out questionnaires, give fingerprints, and be photographed. In case of refusal, they were threatened to be kept overnight. At the same time, the police did not name the alleged offense, saying, «You will see when we start the registration.»
- Detainees from police station No. 5 reported that they were requested to come back to draw up a protocol on Monday, April 26.

The police made additional efforts to force the detainees to return to the police station to draw up protocols. The detainees were often forced to sign «an undertaking to appear» for a protocol drawing up, which in fact has no legal force.

Detainees from 13 police stations reported that their passports were taken from them. In some cases, the police did not **return** passports to detainees released on an undertaking to appear. In police station No. 28, police officers **tore up** the passport of one of the detainees.

Some discriminatory practices **were applied** to those who did not have a residence permit in St. Petersburg (or did not have it on hand). In particular, they were kept overnight while other detainees were released.

Detainees from at least 13 police stations reported that they did not receive copies of their protocols. Detainees **reported** at least one case of being brought to court at night.

The presented stories clearly demonstrate the extensive powers of law enforcers, the lack of transparency and predictability of law enforcement, as well as the manipulative possibility of discriminatory use of legal measures against people detained at rallies. At the same time, the Russian legal system contains practically no effective means of appealing against such abuses. For example, a collective administrative claim against rights violations of the detainees at the protest rally on 23 January 2021 in Voronezh during mass detentions and in police stations **was not admitted** by the court for consideration on formal grounds.

TRIALS OF DETAINEES

In St. Petersburg, protocols of people detained on April 21 were mostly drawn up for «simultaneous mass gathering,» which resulted in disturbance of public order and breach

of health and safety regulations (as per article 20.2.2, Code of Administrative Offences). It was also reported that some protocols were drawn up for violation of restrictions imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, the most common «rally» article on violation of the established procedure for arranging or conducting a meeting (20.2, Code of Administrative Offences) was imputed much less frequently.

By April 30, information on 43 cases under Article 20.2 of the Code of Administrative Offences and 370 cases under Article 20.2.2 of the Code of Administrative Offences, which have been submitted to the courts since April 21, was published on the websites of the courts of St. Petersburg. The results of the proceedings were published for 230 of these cases: one case was dismissed, the materials of another 52 were returned to the police for corrections, and in all other cases, a penalty was imposed. The courts considered 197 cases on the day of receipt, only 22 were considered on the next day, and one was considered three days later. According to the Joint press Service of the courts of St. Petersburg, on April 23, at least 56 people were arrested for 3 to 15 days, 81 people were fined up to 15 thousand rubles, and one person received a sentence of 70 hours of community service.

Two main waves of litigation follow mass detentions: during the first 48 hours, the trials of those who spent a night in the police station are held. They are charged with an article of the Administrative Code, providing for arrest as a punishment. Further, within a year (this is the statute of limitations for bringing to administrative liability for most of the articles of the Administrative Code imputed to detainees at actions), trials of all other detainees follow. Both of these waves of litigations have their own special patterns of violations.

During «arrest» trials, in the first 48 hours after mass detentions, the practical possibility of organizing an effective

defense is most limited: the detainees have little or no time to find a defense lawyer, the communication with the outside world is limited, fatigue and stress after a night or two in the police station have a huge impact. The courts, as a rule, are forced to consider a large number of similar and hastily filed by the police cases in the first 48 hours. As a result, the procedure suffers greatly, and the procedural guarantees provided by law are not always respected. For example, detainees are given little time (about 10-15 minutes) to review the case materials (usually about 40-50 pages), often are refused to call defense and prosecution witnesses (police officers who report the illegality of the detainees' actions), video and photo evidence is not always investigated, etc.

The risks for detainees are the highest in such processes since there is a real danger of getting administrative arrest as a punishment. The participation of a lawyer in such circumstances is most important, but lawyers often face various obstacles by assisting detainees.

- **According** to the detainees, in the Krasnoselsky district Court of St. Petersburg on April 22, the lawyers were not allowed to attend, and as a sign of protest, the detainees refused to leave the police van which forced the police to remove the detainees in handcuffs forcefully. Eyewitnesses described the situation as follows: «Not allowed in lawyers are standing outside the court, trying to pass the petition through the window, the police officers prevent them.»
- In the Nevsky District Court, when admitted to the trial, the defense lawyers were required to provide proof of legal education, which is not provided for by the norms of the Administrative Code. One of the lawyers describes the situation as follows: «The judge flatly refused to allow me without a university diploma (fortunately, I had it with me), but then she did not like the university I finished, and she seriously considered not allowing me, but after 5 minutes of reflection, she let me attend.»

A separate problem is the difficulties in filing appeals by those convicted of serving their arrests: it is difficult to contact a lawyer from a special detention center, and it is almost impossible to control the sending of a complaint. The legislation provides for urgent consideration of appeals filed by arrested persons — within a day. This deadline is not always observed by the courts in practice.

- On April 22, a complaint was filed against the **decision** of the judge of the Smolninsky District Court of St. Petersburg on the appointment of administrative arrest, which the St. Petersburg City Court considered only on April 27, that is, 5 days later.

The courts' problems following the first 48 hours of mass detentions are partly similar to those described above: it is not always possible for the defense to present evidence, call and interrogate witnesses, etc. An additional problem may be that people may be notified about upcoming court

sessions on the eve of the trial, significantly limiting the possibilities in preparing for the trial. Sometimes people are not notified at all, and the trials are held without the participation of the detainees, and therefore without presenting the defense arguments.

CONCLUSION

Although on April 21, the detentions of protesters in St. Petersburg were the largest compared to other cities and were characterized by unjustified brutality. These violations are not something new but rather reveal long-standing structural problems in the field of freedom of assembly and the functioning of law enforcement institutions. Such problems are:

- the authorities' fundamentally intolerant attitude to uncoordinated peaceful protest actions;
- lack of effective means of bringing to justice those responsible for abuses and violations of police officers and National Guard troops;
- lack of transparency and lack of public control over the practical instructions that police officers follow during public events and in police stations;
- disregard for legal procedures to speed up the process of bringing people to prosecution;
- lack of reliable and timely official information on the number of detainees, on the places of their delivery, on the progress and results of trials of detainees, on the places and conditions of serving sentences in the form of arrests.

The solution to these problems requires serious reforms. At the same time, professional communities, particularly those of lawyers and journalists, State institutions for monitoring and protecting human rights, and civil society

institutions can already take some steps to improve the situation. Concerning the cases of restriction of the rights of detainees on April 21 in St. Petersburg, it is necessary to:

- check the police stations from which information about human rights violations has been received ([see annex](#)), and the results of such check should be published;
- check the work regulations of the police and Rosgvardiya during public events and correlate them with [real actions](#) for the subsequent amendment of both regulations and practices.
- request information about which exactly police and Rosgvardiya units worked on April 21 during public events, who is responsible for mass detentions and related restrictions on the rights and freedoms of detainees;
- [investigate](#) cases of unjustified violence by law enforcement officers against participants of public events, with subsequent prosecution of the perpetrators, as well as investigate cases of tortures and degrading conditions of detention of detainees and arrested persons in some police stations and special detention centers;
- request information from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and other relevant agencies, as well as from the system of courts of general jurisdiction, on the number of detainees brought after public events, on the number and nature of the materials compiled on cases of administrative offenses, as well as on criminal cases following mass detentions; the information received should become public, since it is of particular value to society — it allows us to judge the extent and nature of restrictions of the constitutional right of freedom of assembly;
- support the [initiative](#) of «Team 29» and OVD-Info — the requirement of openness of data on mass detentions of participants of protest actions and subsequent trials over them;

- abolish discriminatory restrictions on public events, including single pickets, in St. Petersburg due to coronavirus infection: currently, any protest actions are prohibited in St. Petersburg, while other forms of mass gathering of people are allowed, such as visiting cafes, concerts, sports and other events;
- demand from the city authorities a public report on the measures taken to restrict traffic during the actions (which streets were blocked, for what period of time, what was the justification for the measures taken in each particular case);
- publicly investigate information about pressure on students, including threats of expulsion for participating in public events;
- check the legality of the **request** of the Deputy Head of the Housing Committee of St. Petersburg to check the mailboxes of residents of the city's houses for campaign materials;
- check cases of prolonged detention or arrests of parents of young children, discuss possible solutions to this problem with representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the structure of the courts of general jurisdiction in St. Petersburg.

ATTACHMENT

<input type="checkbox"/>	Police department	Violations:
1	Kolpino PD №80 of the Kolpinsky District of Saint-Petersburg	Non-adm
2	Krasnoye Selo PD №9 of the Krasnoselsky District of Saint-Petersburg	Conditio Did not Pressure
41 records		
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