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Zhenya Berkovich in the Zamoskvoretsky District Court, May 5, 2023 / Photo: Alexandra Astakhova, Mediazona

21.06.2023

Repressions report: May 2023

Текст на русском

Long-term detentions in the punishment cell (SHIZO), criminal prosecution of «Finist the Bright Falcon» play authors, searches of independent politicians, and cases related to torn down St. George ribbons — OVD-Info reports on the main news in May in our repressions report.

THE ANTI-WAR CASE

>581

individuals became defendants in the anti-war case (a collection of lawsuits against anti-war activists) by the end of May 2023



verdicts were issued against opponents of the war
in May 2023

In May, a court **sentenced** a pensioner from St. Petersburg to a suspended term for leaving a note on Putin's parents' grave requesting to «take [their son] in with them.» Former Mayor of Yekaterinburg, Yevgeny Royzman, was **fined** 260,000 rubles (US\$3177) under the article on discrediting the army. A military court **sentenced** Nikita Tushkanov, a teacher from the Komi Republic, to two and a half years in a penal colony. Tushkanov faced persecution due to comments about the explosion on the Crimean Bridge.

OVD-Info maintains regularly updated **infographics** about individuals who have faced criminal prosecution due to their anti-war stance. You can find information about the development of anti-war repressions for the dates of April 22nd to May 21st of this year in our **Anti-War Repression Summary**.

DETENTION CONDITIONS OF POLITICAL PRISONERS

Punishment Cells (SHIZO) and Solitary Confinement

>750

days was the period of confinement in a Special Regime Isolation Cell (SHIZO) for athlete Teymur Abdullaev, convicted in the “Hizb ut-Tahrir” case

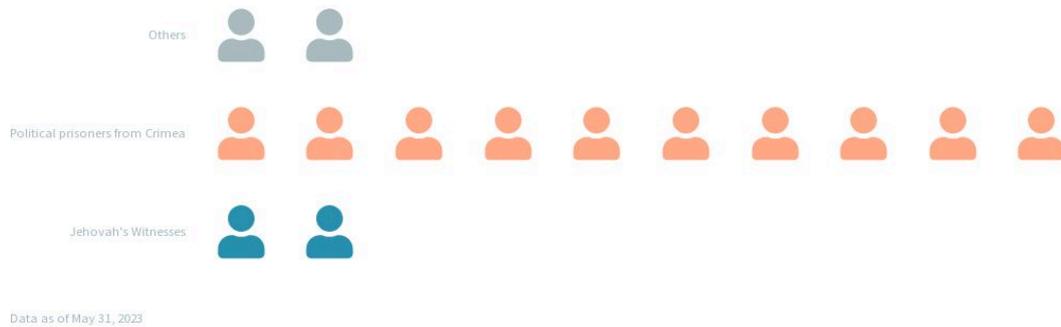
The administration of IK-6 penal colony in the Vladimir region, where Alexei Navalny is located, placed the politician in the Special Regime Isolation Cell (SHIZO) twice in May. The same happened with Alexander Shestun, the former head of the Serpukhov District in the Moscow region. The use of punitive isolation units serves as a tool of pressure on other political prisoners as well. For instance, activist Grigory Severin from Voronezh has been held in SHIZO for over two months, and Crimean Tatar Muslim Aliyev for over four months. Another political prisoner from Crimea, athlete Teymur Abdullaev, spent over 750 days in SHIZO. Additionally, human rights defender Vladimir Taranenko from Kemerovo was held in the detention center’s punitive confinement for a month.

Health Impact

14

cases where imprisonment has led to a deterioration in the health of political prisoners

In May, there were reports of 14 cases of deterioration in the health of political prisoners as a result of their imprisonment.



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The prosecutor's representative in the trial on the «anti-war case» against Igor Baryshnikov believes that the defendant's cancer diagnosis is not an obstacle to a real prison sentence. In May, the prosecution **requested** eight years in a penal colony for Baryshnikov under the article related to spreading «fake news» about the army.

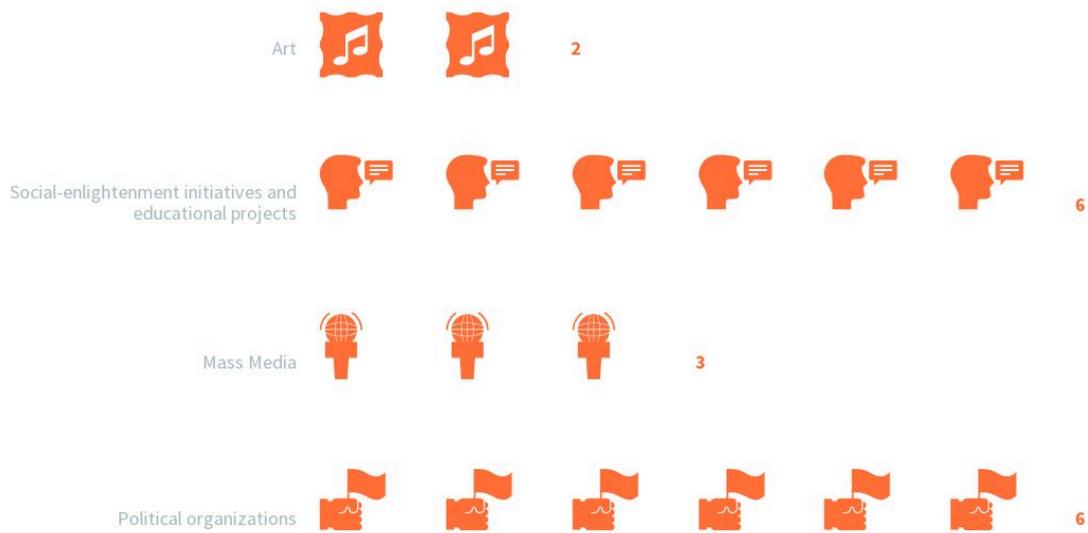
Other Forms of Pressure

Krasnodar-based blogger **Askhaveli Alibekov** and a defendant in one of the Crimean cases related to «Hizb ut-Tahrir, » **Ekrem Kroshe**, reported violence inflicted upon them in the pretrial detention center (SIZO). In Moscow, the Investigative Committee **refused** to initiate a case regarding the beating of Dmitry Ivanov, the author of «Protesting MGU [Moscow State University]» Telegram channel, by convoy officers.

The state news agency, RIA «Novosti, » **addressed** the editorial office of The Wall Street Journal with threats against journalist Evan Gershkovich, who is currently in SIZO.

«FOREIGN AGENTS» AND «UNDESIRABLE» ORGANIZATIONS

New “foreign agents” of the month



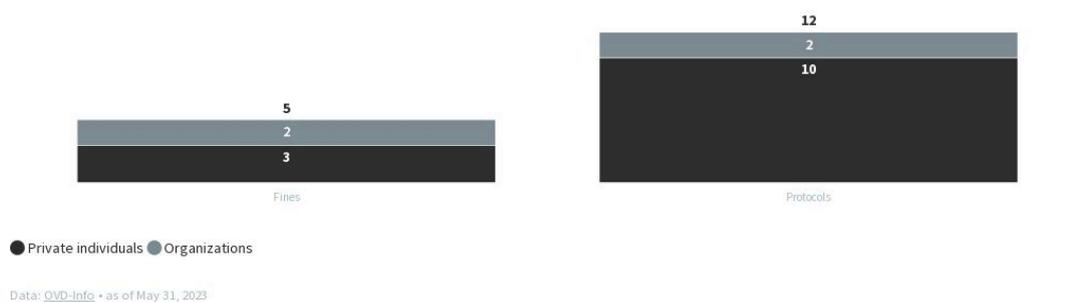
Data: [Inoteka](#) • as of May 31, 2023

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In May, at least 12 «foreign agents, » both individuals and heads of organizations listed in the register, were issued protocols for the lack of proper labeling in their publications. Among them are pop singer **Monetochka**, rapper **Noize MC**, libertarian blogger **Mikhail Svetov**, and historian **Tamara Eidelman**. Moscow City Duma deputy Darya Besedina had three protocols drawn up against her, but the court **returned** them to the Ministry of Justice.

12 «foreign agents» were issued protocols for the lack of proper labeling in their publications

12 "foreign agents" were issued protocols for the lack of proper labeling in their publications



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In May, the new «undesirable» organizations included **Greenpeace** and the international project of the **Anti-Corruption Foundation**, registered in the USA.

Greenpeace announced the closure of its Russian branch. «Can the protection of the country’s nature contradict its interests? The answer is obvious, » the environmentalists wrote in their statement.

Additionally, in May, OVD-Info reported a **fine** imposed under the article related to cooperation with an «undesirable organization» due to references to publications from «**Meduza**» and the «**Free Idel-Ural**» organization. They also faced **protocols** under the same article for reposting materials from «Meduza.» Furthermore, a court in St. Petersburg **fined** a journalist from «Vazhnye Istoriy» under the same article for sending questions to a defense enterprise on behalf of the publication.

FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Cases Related to Calls for Terrorism or Extremism



new criminal cases under articles related to calls for terrorism or extremism

At least 6 new criminal cases under articles related to calls for terrorism or extremism



● comments in Vkontakte social network ● theatrical performance ● YouTube streams ● unknown

Data: OVD-Info - as of May 31, 2023

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May brought the news of a criminal case initiated under the article on justifying terrorism against the authors of «Finist Bright Falcon» play — director Zhenya Berkovich and playwright Svetlana Petrychuk. Both of them were **sent** to pretrial detention. The play tells the story of women who faced terrorist organization recruitment. The accusation in the criminal case is **based** on an expertise conducted by an author who invented a new science called «destructology» a few years ago.

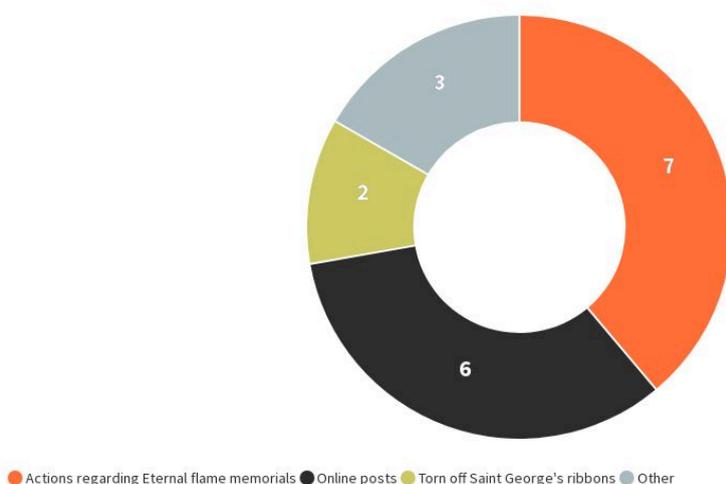
Activist Mikhail Kriger has been **sentenced** to seven years in a penal colony due to his Facebook posts, specifically regarding the self-immolation of Mikhail Zhlobitsky at the Arkhangelsk FSB building. Additionally, a resident of Kurgan was **fined** for calls to «violently overthrow state power and murder its representatives.»

Cases Related to the Article on «Rehabilitation of Nazism»



new criminal cases under the article on “rehabilitation of Nazism”

18 criminal cases were initiated under the article on “rehabilitation of Nazism” by law enforcement in 2023



Data: OVD-Info, as of May 31, 2023

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Seven new criminal cases under the article on «rehabilitation of Nazism» appeared in May. Two of them were initiated in the **Bryansk region** and **Nizhny Novgorod** due to St. George ribbons being torn off the local residents' clothing. **Lighting** a cigarette from the Eternal Flame and a social media **comment** about the division of Poland between Nazi Germany and the USSR also served as reasons for initiating criminal cases.

Insulting the Religious Feelings of Believers

In May, the Investigative Committee **initiated** a criminal case against Nikita Zhuravel from Volgograd, accusing him of burning the Quran in front of a mosque. After the court decided to remand him in custody, the young man was **transferred** to a pretrial detention center in Grozny, where his case will be handled by Chechen law enforcement. Russian Minister of Justice, Konstantin Chuychenko, considered it «appropriate» for Zhuravel to serve his sentence in a region with a predominantly Muslim population «after a guilty verdict is reached».

Additionally, in May, there were two more verdicts under the article on insulting the religious feelings of believers: residents of **Tula region** and **Abakan** were sentenced to compulsory labor for their online publications. A similar case was also **initiated** in the Kirov region.

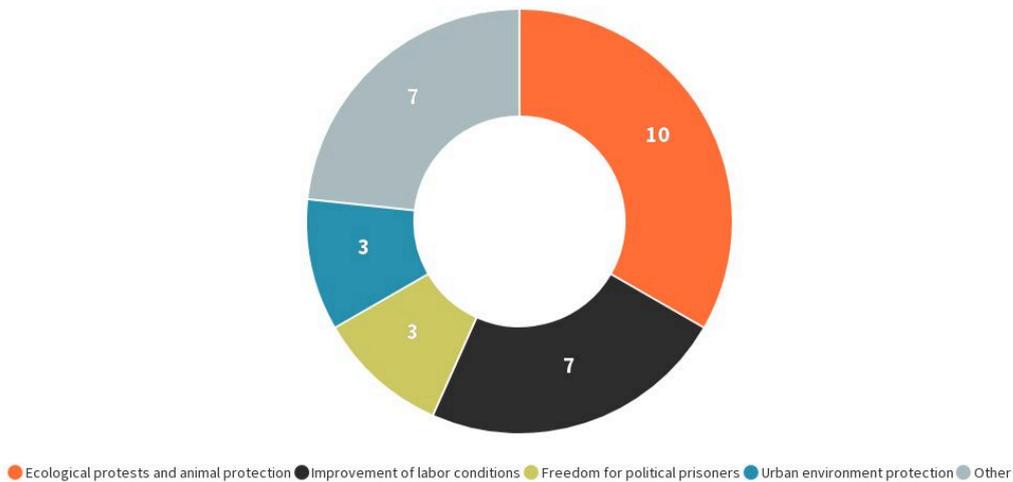
Cases Related to «LGBT Propaganda»

In May, Russian courts continued to consider cases under the article on «LGBT propaganda.» Fines of 100,000 rubles (US\$1220) were imposed on **Yan Dvorkin**, the head of «Center T», an initiative group providing assistance to transgender and non-binary individuals, a **resident of Volgograd** who posted a profile on a dating website, and blogger **Gela Gogishvili**.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Arrests at Protests and their Consequences

More than 30 detentions, in addition to anti-war protests



Data: OVD-info • as of May 31, 2023

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In the Ulyanovsk region, at least seven workers from a local car factory who participated in a strike demanding higher wages have been **detained**. Moscow journalist Ilya Pivovarov was **beaten** and taken to a detention center for filming the laying of a mourning wreath at the building of the Prosecutor General's Office.

Denial of Protest Permits



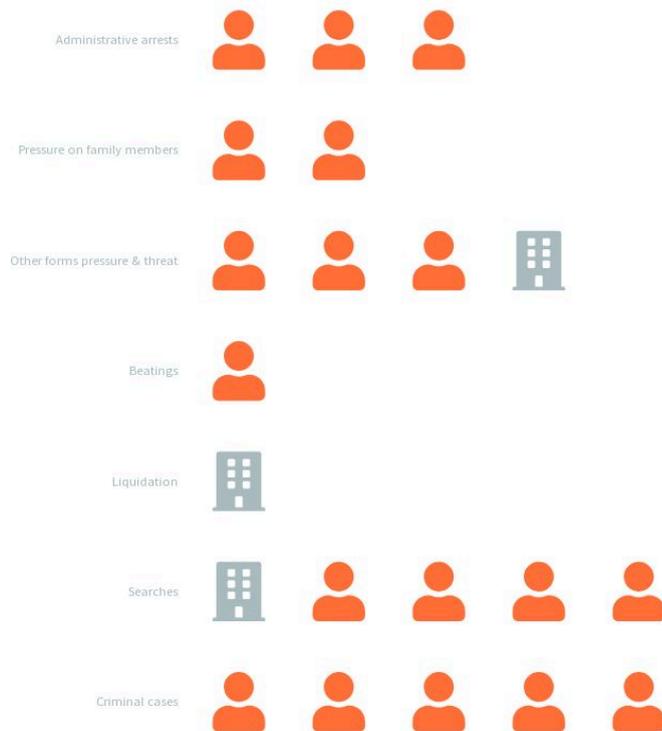
rallies were denied permission by the Russian authorities in May 2023

In **Vladimir** and **Yakutsk**, the authorities refused to allow protests for those affected by housing conditions. In **Barnaul**, they did not approve the May Day demonstration, and in **Novosibirsk**, they rejected the «Immortal Regiment» procession.

OTHER FORMS OF PRESSURE

Persecution of Political Organizations and Activists

Persecution of Political Organizations and Activists



As of May 31, 2023

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Searches were **conducted** in several cities of Russia as part of a criminal case related to «fakes» about the Russian army and public justification of terrorism against former State Duma deputy Ilya Ponomarev. Law enforcement officers in St. Petersburg conducted searches in the homes of activists from the «Union of Carriers of Russia» and the organization's office. The formal pretext for the searches **was** a case against a man who is not a member of the organization.

The Novosibirsk Regional Court **liquidated** the local branch of the Party of People's Freedom (PARNAS), while the

«Movement of Nationalists» **announced** the dissolution of its structures in six regions due to a criminal case against the movement's leader, Vladimir Basmanov.

Persecution of Human Rights Activists

In May, human rights defender and former member of the disbanded Memorial Human Rights Center, Bakrom Khamroev, was **sentenced** to 14 years in a penal colony for his human rights activities. Employees of the Perm branch of «Memorial» and a lawyer from the «Public Verdict» foundation were subjected to searches in a case related to an alleged **attempt** to smuggle cultural artifacts, as it was claimed that the human rights activists were trying to export the organization's archive to Germany. Former head of the Perm branch of «Memoria», Robert Latypov, and member of the organization, Alexander Chernyshov, became suspects in the case. The latter **is currently** in pre-trial detention.

A criminal case has been **initiated** against human rights defender Nadezhda Nizovkina in Buryatia because she refused to testify against her client, Natalia Filonova. Svetlana Arshavskaya, an employee of a foundation in Orenburg that assists drug addicts, has been **charged** with illegal drug trafficking.

Another search **took place** at the office of the «Team against Torture, » this time in Krasnodar. Pressure is being exerted on human rights defenders in connection with a case against their client.

«Extremist Organizations»

In May, Russian courts issued at least three verdicts in cases related to involvement in «extremist organizations.» In all cases, the defendants were sentenced to non-custodial punishments. A **resident of Dagestan**, who identifies herself as a «citizen of the USSR, » received a suspended sentence,

as well as [Ivan Shulyuk](#), a Jehovah's Witness from Krasnoyarsk. Significant fines were [imposed](#) on the co-religionists of Shulyuk from the Murmansk region, Yunona Ilyasova, and Alexey Eliseev.

Also this month, we were informed that criminal cases have been initiated against Jehovah's Witnesses in [Chuvashia](#), [Samara region](#), and [Crimea](#).

REPRESSIONS ON THE TERRITORY OF ANNEXED CRIMEA

In May, the Lefortovo Court in Moscow [sent](#) Lenie Umerova, a Ukrainian citizen who attempted to enter Crimea to visit her sick father, to a pretrial detention center (SIZO). The young woman was charged with espionage. Prior to the initiation of the criminal case, she spent several months at the Center for Temporary Detention of Foreign Citizens.

Four residents of Crimea were sentenced to prison terms ranging from [12](#) to [18](#) years in cases related to their alleged involvement with «Hizb ut-Tahrir.» Among the convicted individuals is Alexander Sizikov, a man with a disability classified as Group I. He was sentenced to 17 years of imprisonment in a high-security correctional colony, with the first four years to be served in prison.

More to read



The strangling of Crimea

Denis Shedov and Dan Storyev explain how the repression in occupied Crimea was structured and how it evolved