



Vadim Kobzev, one of Alexei Navalny's lawyers, at the Basmanny District Court in Moscow, 13 October 2023 / Photo: Svetlana Vidanova, Novaya Gazeta

07.11.2023

## Repressions Report. October 2023

*Navalny's lawyers are arrested. New «undesirable organizations» and pressure on political prisoners — here's the key political repression news for October from OVD-Info.*

[Текст на русском](#)

## PRESSURE ON POLITICAL PRISONERS

Memorial day for victims of political repression was held in October. Once again the government tried to interfere with the public commemorative event «Returning the Names» during which participants read out the names of victims of the Stalinist Great Terror. At the same time current political prisoners continue to suffer in prison every day.

Court of Appeal [dismissed](#) all motions of defense representatives of critically ill activist Igor Baryshnikov, who previously was [sentenced](#) to seven years and six months of colony imprisonment for his anti-war views. Baryshnikov is suspected to have cancer and is at risk of kidney failure. His

OVD-Info lawyer Marya Bontsler is pursuing his exemption from criminal liability on the medical grounds.

Crimean activist Irina Danilovich may have had a [stroke](#) in the pre-trial detention center. While the woman has signs of brain damage, detention center doctors are not planning to do any further check-ups. One of the medical staff even said to Irina that she will be rid of the headaches once she «goes completely deaf». Earlier Danilovich was sentenced to seven years of prison because she was allegedly hiding explosives in a glasses case. Crimean-Tatar activist Vladlen Abdulkadyrov [says](#) that his leg went numb during his imprisonment, but he doesn't receive the appropriate treatment. Tofik Abdulgaziev, imprisoned on a similar conviction, lost 15 kg in prison and [suffers](#) from joint pain due to regular cold exposure.

Defendants in politically motivated cases continue to be held in solitary confinement, punitive isolation cells and single cell-type facilities. In October alone there was a number of prisoners who were subjected to these forms of repression, among them politician [Aleksey Navalny](#), defendants of «anti-war case» [Vladimir Kara-Murza](#), [Aleksey Gorinov](#), and [Marya Ponomarenko](#), Jehovah's witnesses [Alam Aliyev](#), who is suffering preinfarction angina, as well as his fellows [Victor Stashevsky](#), [Adam Svarichevsky](#), [Anton Olshevsky](#), and [Pavel Kazadaev](#). 19-year old Valeria Zotova, a defendant in the case of attempted arson of an aid collection point for mobilized soldiers, was [placed](#) in solitary confinement along with all her cellmates when they refused to report on her.

In October OVD-Info published a [comprehensive article](#) on how colonies administrations use punishment cells as a way to put pressure on political prisoners.

## «Hell within Hell» and Cold Torture. People Persecuted for Political Cases Keep Being Placed in a Punishment Cell (SHIZO)

Moreover many defendants are denied any connection with the outside world: they are banned from phone calls or receiving letters or parcels. In October this was the experience of [Yan Ksenzhepolsky](#), defendant in the Vesna case, [Mikhail Kulkov](#), defendant in the «Network» case, [Richard Rose](#) and [Ludmila Razumova](#), sentenced for anti-war statements, [Saveliy Frolov](#), convicted for an attempt to join the «Freedom of Russia» legion, as well as the creator of Left Resistance [Darya Poludova](#), ex-chief of Navalny Headquarters in Ufa [Liliya Chanyshova](#) and activist of Crimean Solidarity [Ametkhan Umerov](#).

The imprisoned Aleksey Navalny continues to file lawsuits against his colony administration based on violation of his rights. Only in October five such lawsuits were [dismissed](#) by court. On the eve of one such hearing the news of the [arrest](#) of three Navalny's lawyers: Igor Sergunin, Vadim Kobzeev, and Aleksey Liptser became known. All three were [detained](#) awaiting trial and charged with participation in an extremist organisation: allegedly they have been delivering Navalny's letters from prison. «Why were they arrested? Why is lawyer Kobzeev, who has three children, being repressed? Or two other lawyers who haven't been working with me for more than a year?» Aleksey Navalny [commented](#) on this matter.

# PROSECUTIONS DUE TO ANTI-WAR STANCE

**754**

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

**>27**

verdicts were issued against opponents of the war in October 2023

Criminal cases against activists [Irina Izmaylova](#) and [Alexander Demidenko](#), who gave assistance to Ukrainian refugees, were initiated in October. Izmaylova’s boyfriend was placed on the wanted list because he joined the Ukrainian Armed Forces. Security forces conducted a [search](#) in St. Tikhon and Intercession Church in Slavyansk-on-Kuban, during which they mocked and abused priest Ion (Ilya Sigida), threatening to initiate a criminal case on the grounds of discrediting the Russian army.

Yakut activist Aykhal Ammosov [was taken](#) to a pre-trial detention centre in Almaty, Kazakhstan, after Russian security forces initiated cases for repeatedly discrediting Russian army in Ukraine and justification of terrorism. He could face extradition. The Kamchatka resident was [stripped](#) of Russian citizenship due to posts criticizing Russians and the war in Ukraine. Before getting Russian citizenship he was a citizen of Ukraine. Now he has no citizenship.

Irkutsk activist Ilya Podkamenny was [sentenced](#) to 12 years imprisonment. He is accused of planning an arson attempt on a military recruiting office and of attaching anti-military

flyers to railway tracks. Podkamenny is 19 years old. His own mother was a witness for the prosecution at the trial.

The Memorial's co-head Oleg Orlov was **fined** 250 thousand rubles (approx. 2725 USD) under the article on repeated discrediting the Russian army. Later the prosecutor's office **requested** that Orlov should be sentenced to 3 years of penal colony.

OVD-Info regularly updates the **infographic** about people who are faced with criminal prosecution for their anti-war position. You can get the details of the latest updates in this month's **Persecution of the anti-war movement report**.

## **REPRESSIVE LAWMAKING**

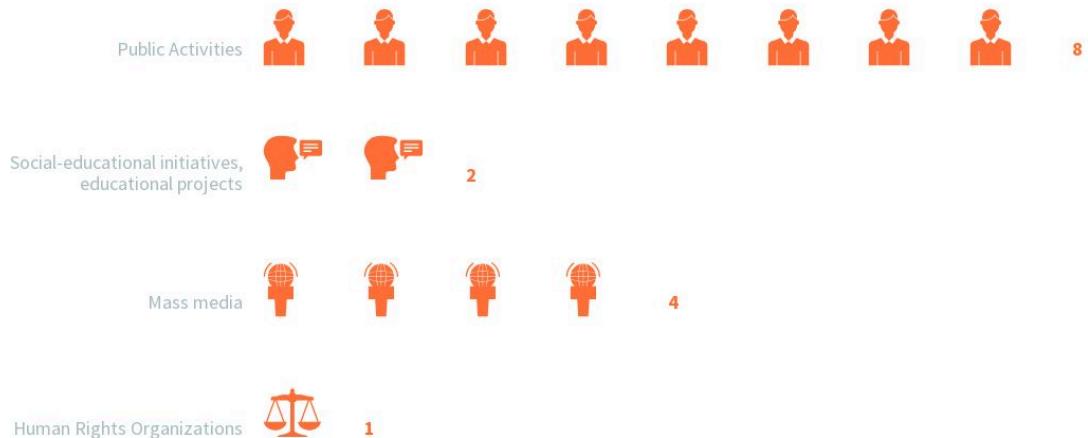
In October the lower house of parliament **passed** in the first reading a draft law on criminalizing criticism directed at the National Guard of the Russian Federation. The authors of the document propose to expand the scope of the articles on «fake facts» and discrediting the Russian army, and also prohibit giving any assistance to the investigations against security officers by international courts which Russia is no longer member of. In addition, the State Duma **adopted** the bill allowing it to block websites containing calls for donations to Ukrainian armed forces or instructions on how to transfer money to Ukrainian organizations and funds.

Deputies and senators also submitted two repressive draft laws: one **banning** «undesirable organizations» from being a founder of non-profit organizations and social movements, and on **prosecuting** Russian citizens outside the country under administrative articles on discrediting the Russian army and incitement to separatism.

## **«FOREIGN AGENTS» AND «UNDESIRABLE ORGANISATIONS»**

# «Foreign Agents»

15 new “foreign agents” were added to the registry in October, 2023

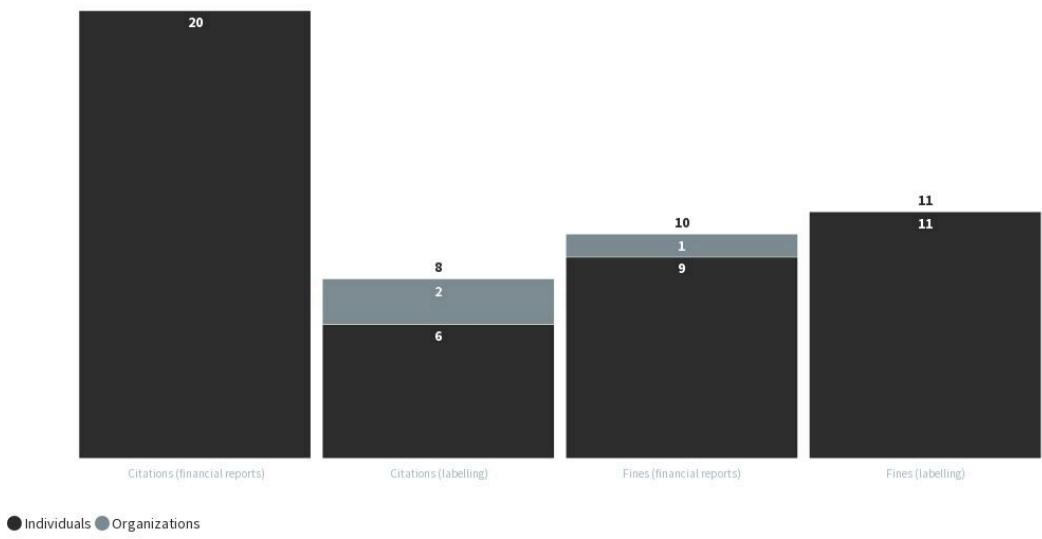


Data [Inoteka](#) • As of 31 October 2023

Made with Flourish • Create your own

On 13 and 20 October the Ministry of Justice updated the registry of «foreign agents». In the Republic of Tatarstan Alsu Kurmasheva, editor of Radio Liberty, was **indicted** in a criminal case based on failing to put herself on the registry. She was then detained awaiting trial. Investigators believe that she was collecting information about military activities which foreign sources could use against national security. Hence she should have submitted information to the Ministry for inclusion in the registry.

Citations and fines for "foreign agents" due to lack of proper labeling or reporting



● Individuals ● Organizations

Data [OVD-Info](#) • As of 31 October 2023

Made with Flourish • Create your own

## «Undesirable Organisations»

6

new “undesirable organization” became known  
in October 2023

In October the prosecutor general's office recognized two more academic institutions as an undesirable organization: **Center for East European Studies and International Studies** (ZOiS) (Germany) and the **Central European University** (Austria). In addition, it became known from the list of «undesirable organizations» of the Ministry of Justice that earlier similar decisions were made with respect to the **Hudson Institute** and the **Foundation for Democratic Development** (USA), non-profit organizations **UnKremlin** (Germany) and the **Committee-2024** (Poland).

Large-scale raids **took place** in Moscow in connection with the case of the Ukrainian spiritual center «Vozrozhdenie»

(Revival). The center became an «undesirable organization» in November 2022. Later, two people suspected of organizing the activity of the center were **sentenced** to house arrest, and another was sent to a pre-trial detention center.

## «EXTREMIST ORGANISATIONS»

In Oryol, Jehovah's Witnesses Vladimir Melnik, Artur Putintsev and Vladimir Piskarev were **sentenced** to six years in a penal colony each, and their **fellow believer** from Pskov region Alexei Khabarov was sentenced to two and a half years. In addition, believers **Zinaida Minenko** (Stavropol Krai) and **Andrei Sazonov** (Ugra) were sentenced to large fines, and **Vladimir Baykalov** and **Yuri Chernykh** (Kemerovo Oblast) were given suspended sentences and forced labor respectively. In October, it also became known that new criminal cases were initiated against Jehovah's Witnesses from **Crimea** and **Karachay-Cherkessia**, and a resident of Adler was **arrested** for 10 days for posting a link to the denomination's website.

In Mari El, a criminal case was **initiated** on involvement in the movement of deniers of the collapse of the USSR; in **Tatarstan** a case was initiated on «coordination of participants of the Artpodgotovka»; in Mordovia mass searches were **conducted** in the case of the institute of representative bodies of the Erzya people Kirdiyur. Mahmud Ibadulayev, a «citizen of the USSR» from Dagestan, was **sentenced** to two years and two months in a penal colony.

A resident of Moscow Alexey Malyarevsky, was **sent** to pre-trial detention as a suspect in participating in an unnamed extremist organization. Previously, he made statements in defense of Alexey Navalny.

# FREEDOM OF SPEECH-RELATED PERSECUTION

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

8 new criminal cases under articles of calls for terrorism, extremism or anti-state activities due to negative statements about the Russian authorities

As reported by OVD-Info in October 2023



● Statements related to the war in Ukraine ● Criticism of security forces and governments officials ● Else

Data [OVD-Info](#) • As of 31 October 2023

Made with Flourish • Create your own

«Everything that belongs to Putin, is used by Putin, should burn!» these words in a comment were the reason Andrei K., who emigrated to the United States, **became** involved in a case of calls for terrorism. Activist Olga Misik **faced** criminal prosecution under the same article because of her comment about the death of military correspondent Vladlen Tatarsky.

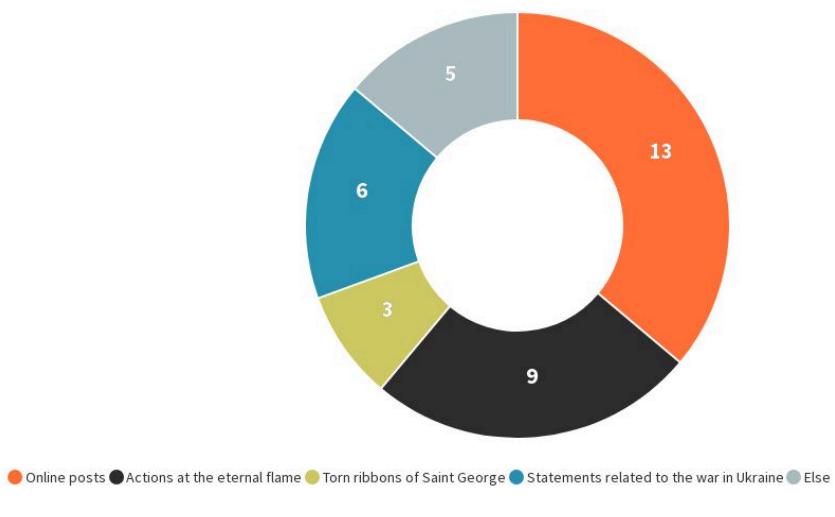
A criminal case was **filed** against Oleg Kuvaev, the author of the animated series «Masyanya», under the article on public calls to carry out activities undermining security of the state, due to the fact that Masyanya in one of the episodes urged Russian soldiers to surrender.

Anadyr resident Dmitry Aritkulov was **sentenced** to five and a half years in prison because, according to the police,

he wrote the comment «Death to the occupiers, freedom to the peoples! Greetings from Chukotka!» The same comment contained a proposal to create a new coat of arms for Russia with a mop, sledgehammer and a rake. Also St. Petersburg resident Marianella Filatova was given a **suspended** sentence under the article on calls to extremism because of a comment about throwing paint at the police car.

## **Cases on «Rehabilitation of Nazism», Desecration of Symbols and Insulting the Religious Feelings**

36 criminal cases under the article on “rehabilitation of Nazism” were opened in Russia in 2023



Made with Flourish • Create your own

**Oryol residents** who painted over a banner with the letter Z, **Samara residents** who «desecrated» a monument to «participants of the Special Military Operation», **anti-war blogger** Sergei Veselov from Ivanovo oblast, who criticized the war with Ukraine on VKontakte, and Ryazan resident **Sergei Bakanov** and local historian **Dmitry Vitushkin**, who discussed the liberation of Leningrad on social networks, all faced persecution under the article on the rehabilitation of Nazism in October.

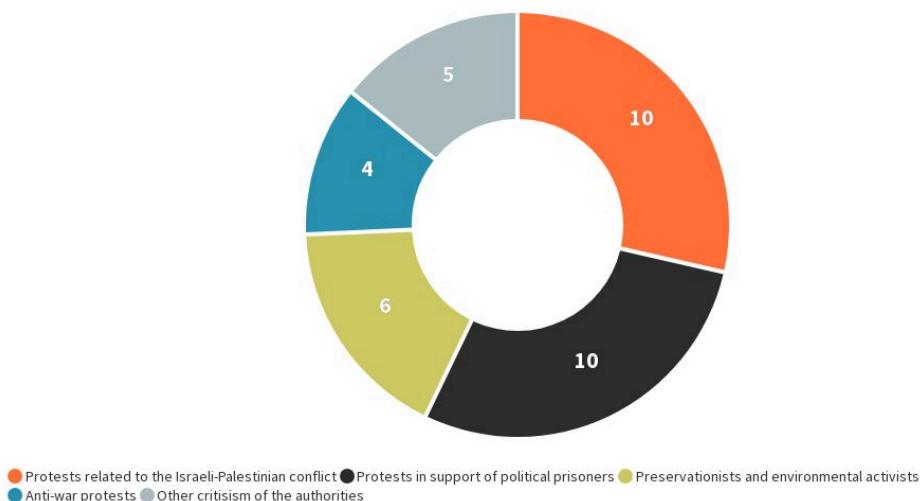
Syktyvkar resident **Vasily Zadorozhny** was sentenced to correctional labor for spilling lemonade on the Eternal Flame monument, and **Islam Bekuev and Karim Daitumov**, who urinated on a similar monument in the Stavropol Territory, were sentenced to a penal colony.

A case was **filed** against Cannes bloggers Roman Kvirkovsky and Nikolai Sosin for insulting the religious feelings because they danced and swore in church during the morning liturgy.

## **FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY-RELATED PERSECUTION**

### **Detentions at Protests and Their Consequences**

>35 politically motivated arrests in October 2023



Data [OVD-Info](#) • As of 31 October 2023

Made with Flourish • Create your own

In October, Russian police continued to detain those who **participated** in protests against the war with Ukraine, **spoke out** in support of political prisoners, and tried to draw attention to issues of **architecture protection** and **ecology**. Moscow resident Irina Zavzhanova was accused of discrediting the Russian army because she held a picket

with a sign against terrorism at the Israeli Embassy. OVD-Info told her story in [detail](#).

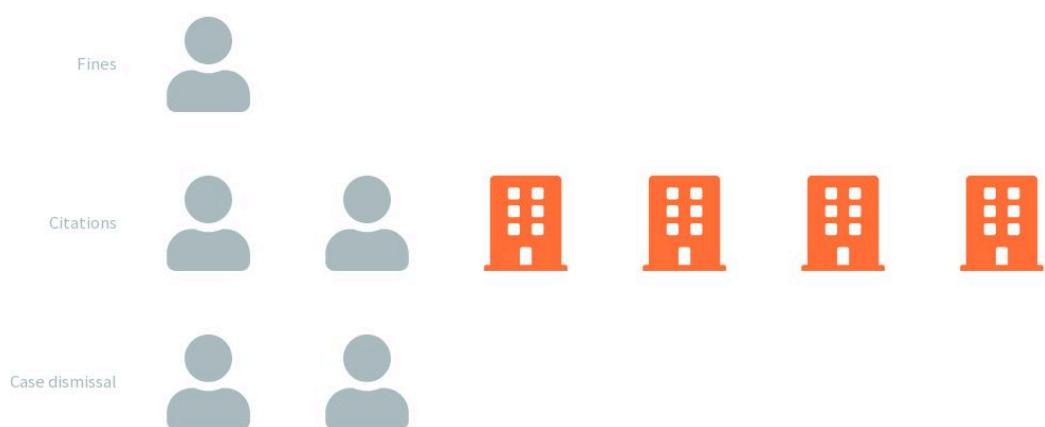
## Refusals to Authorize Rallies

Russian officials, in turn, continued to refuse approval to political actions: in October, [in several cities the officials did not agree](#) to allow the «Returning the Names» event, in Chelyabinsk they did not approve a Palestine solidarity rally, in Kazan — the Tatar People Remembrance Day. Police also conducted searches of activists that wanted to hold a prayer in memory of victims of the 1552 siege of Kazan.

Syktyvkar residents [were not allowed](#) to organize a mass rally in support of the return of direct elections of municipality heads, because the «Young Guard» movement decided to host an event «about the importance of fathers in children's lives» on the same day. Novosibirsk resident Sergei Volkov was [fined](#) 20 thousand rubles (approx. 220 USD) due to his plans to record a group video message in support of journalist Maria Ponomarenko.

## PRESSURE ON THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY

6 new citations and 1 fine under the article on “gay propaganda”  
As Reported to OVD-Info in September 2023



Beauty blogger Igor Sinyak was **fined** 200,000 rubles (approx. 2200 USD) under the article on «gay propaganda» for a **post** with the text «Oleg Gazmanov was seen wearing a Prada down jacket costing 340,000 rubles in Luzhniki with the taped logo, of course». The text of the court ruling does not specify how exactly this publication «propagandized LGBT community». The OpenArt festival was **canceled** in Moscow after accusations of spreading of «gay propaganda».

## **PERSECUTION OF JOURNALISTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS**

Magomed Alamov, a lawyer of the «Team Against Torture», is **threatened** with reprisals by the family of Marina Yandieva, a 27-year-old victim of domestic violence whom he had helped. Journalists Alena Sadovskaya and Lilian Rubtsova, who came to the house of Yandieva's family in Nazran, were **detained** for questioning. Olga Suvorova, a human rights activist from the «Soft Power» movement, was **beaten up** at the police station in Krasnoyarsk when she came there with a complainant in a fraud case.

Three supporters of Vladimir Vorontsov, the author of the «Police Ombudsman» blog — Vasily Fedorov, Yevgeny Moiseyev and Irina Andina — were **sentenced** to prison terms in a case of deliberately false denunciation because they made a movie about falsifications in Vorontsov's case. Vorontsov himself was **released** from the colony in October.

«Orlets» journalists Vladimir Panfilov and Artem Prokhorov were **given** suspended sentences in the case of extortion from a local businessman. The latter denied in court that the journalists had put any pressure on him.

A libel case was **opened** against «SOTA» over their statements that animated porn is being distributed through the website of the «Russian Observer», a media registered by Ekaterina Mizulina's Safe Internet League.

Yekaterinburg human rights activist Alexei Sokolov was **arrested** for five days under the article on displaying extremist symbols because of the Facebook logo.

Idris Yusupov, an employee of the «Novoye Delo», was **searched** in Makhachkala: he had been brought in as a witness in the case of riots at the city's airport and all his devices were confiscated on those grounds.

Andrei Shalaev, the creator of the «Immortal Barrack» project, was **detained** at the train station in Tver when he was accompanying French journalists to the «Mednoye» memorial complex. He was held at the police station for two days.

## **REPRESSIONS ON THE TERRITORY OF THE ANNEXED CRIMEA**

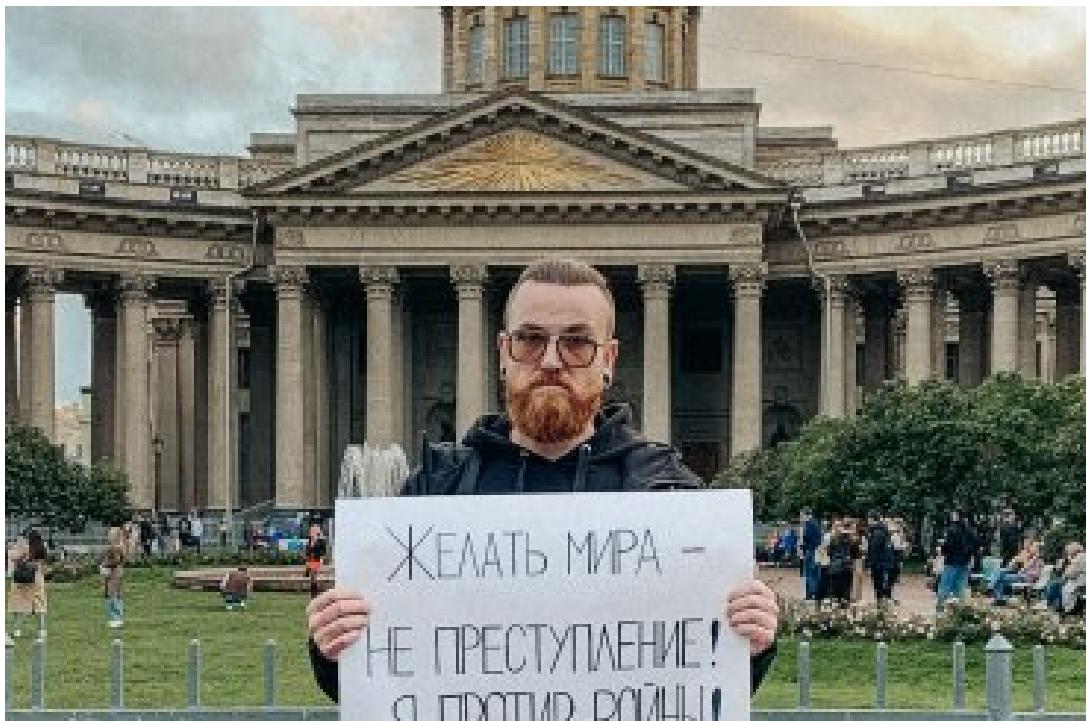
Crimean Tatars **Lutfiya Veliyeva** and **Amet Bairov** had their homes searched in Crimea, and both were released after investigation was complete. Human rights lawyer Alexei Ladin also **faced** a search, after which he was arrested for 14 days because of a five-year-old Facebook post and fined under the article on discrediting the army. Local resident Irina Bobyleva-Smirnova was **forced** to apologize in a video because of a tattoo with the Ukrainian coat of arms and a video with songs in Ukrainian.

### **More to read**



## **The slow-motion collapse of Russian higher education**

Russia was once a frontier of higher education, attracting top teachers and students worldwide. Today, Russian universities are being rapidly militarized while their overall quality has tanked. The fall began with the Kremlin's confused policy of trying to improve university quality, worsened at the 2010s authoritarian turn, and was finally exacerbated by the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.



## **Persecution of the anti-war movement report: October 2023**

Twenty months ago, Russia launched a full-scale war against Ukraine. Immediately after the anti-war protests of the first days of the invasion, an unprecedented