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The words «NO WAR» written by Ivan Zhizhnevsky on the snow in Kirov on December 9, 2023. Zhizhnevsky was charged with discrediting the army / Photo by Ivan Zhizhnevsky.

10.01.2024

Persecution of the anti-war movement report. December 2023

[Русская версия](#)

Twenty-two months ago, Russia launched a full-scale war against Ukraine. Immediately following the anti-war protests in the initial days of the invasion, an unprecedented wave of repression unfolded in Russia.

OVD-Info continues to gather and analyze data on the persecution of anti-war expression in Russia and the annexed Republic of Crimea.

RESTRICTIONS ON THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

19847

detentions for anti-war stance between 24 February 2022 and 17 December 2023

Since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, we have registered **19,143** detentions at anti-war demonstrations. **329** times, people have been detained after the actual protest, and **375** times — for publications and reactions on the Internet, demonstration of symbols, or conversations.

Количество задержаний за антивоенную позицию по регионам



REPRESSION AT THE LEGISLATIVE LEVEL



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In December, the State Duma passed in the third and final reading a law expanding criminal liability under articles on military «fakes» and discrediting the army, which now includes statements about members of the National Guard of the Russian Federation (Rosgvardiya). The lawmakers claimed that they had developed the law because Rosgvardia officers are involved in the invasion of Ukraine and perform tasks «similar to those of the Defense Ministry.»

On December 15, a **law** was passed in the third reading that bans organizations recognized as «undesirable» in Russia from becoming founders of NPOs or public associations. A procedure of exclusion from the governing body of NPOs is established for persons against whom a court decision under an administrative or criminal «extremist» article has come into force.

In total, **49** repressive laws have been introduced since the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

CRIMINAL CASES

801

defendants in criminal lawsuits against anti-war activity since 24 February 2022

This month, we learned about 27 new defendants.

Clarification: we had been aware about at least one of these cases before, but only found sufficient justification to include it in the list of «anti-war» cases this month.

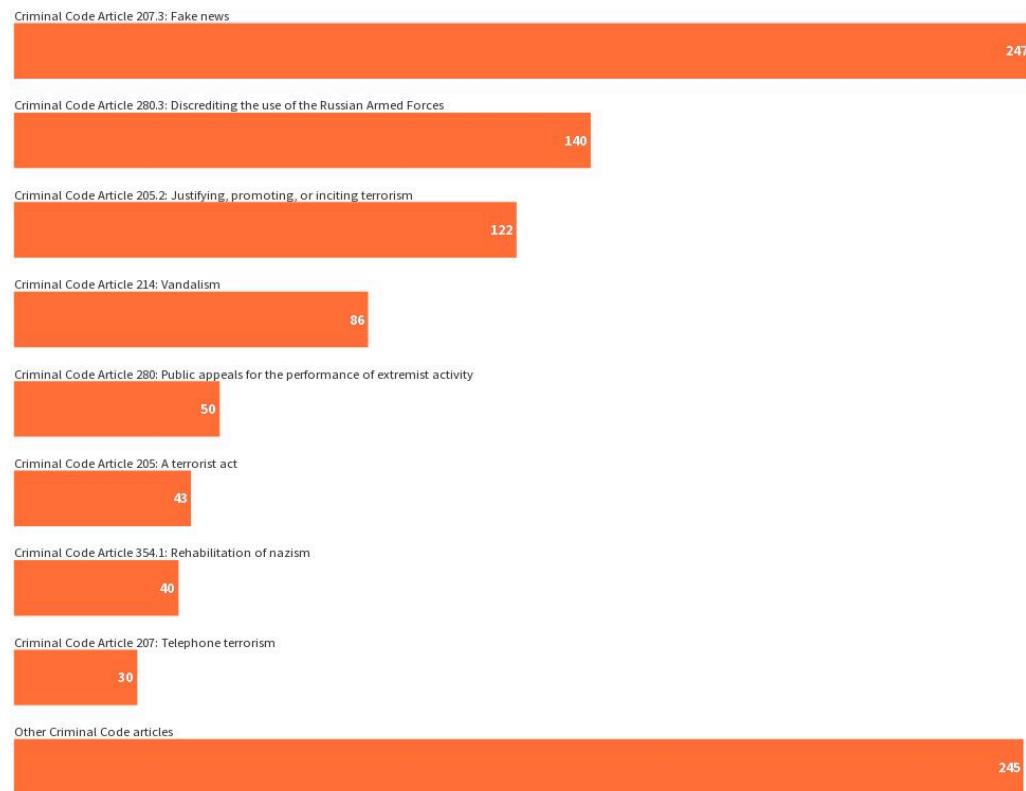
One of these new defendants is the singer Sharlot.

On November 24, three criminal cases **were brought** against him: two under the article on the rehabilitation of Nazism (part 4 of article 354.1 of the Criminal Code) and one under the article on insulting the feelings of believers (article 148 of the Criminal Code). On December 14, a new case was added: the singer is **accused** of burning his passport (part 1 of article 325 of the Criminal Code).

Another one of the new defendants is Denis Kamalyagin, editor-in-chief of «Pskovskaya Gubernia». A case was **opened against** him for discrediting the army repeatedly. Yet another case **was opened** against the writer Boris Akunin for «fakes» and justification of terrorism, after a conversation with him was published by pro-Kremlin pranksters. The publishing house «Zakharov», which publishes Akunin's work, was **searched** on December 19.

Number of Defendants in “Anti-War” Cases Prosecuted Under Each of the Articles

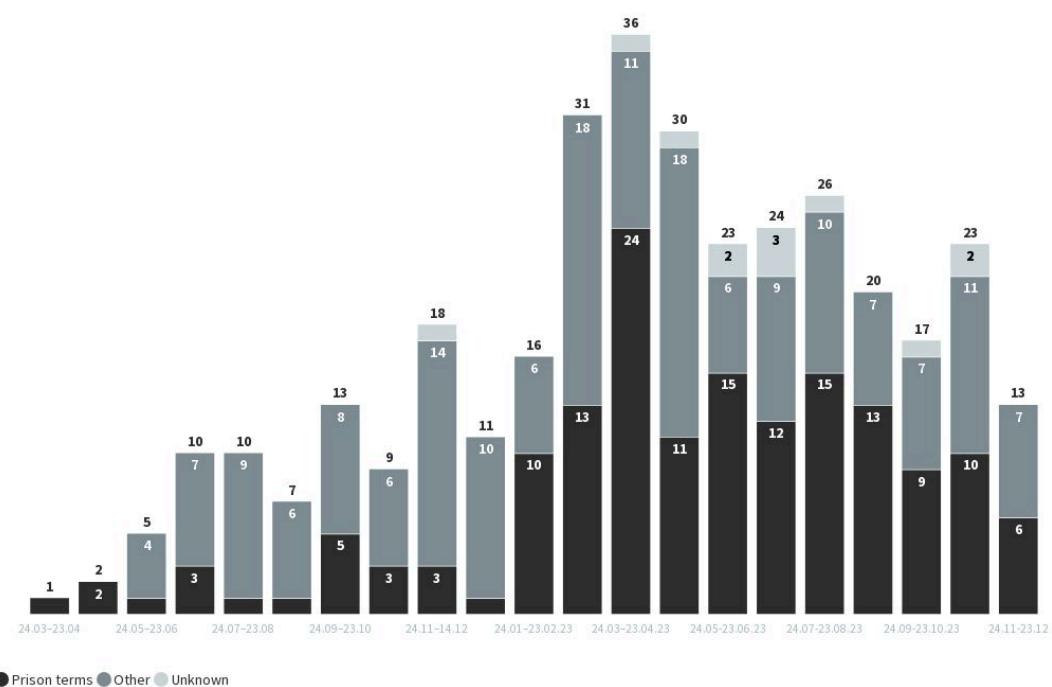
Defendants prosecuted under several articles are added to a column of each article



Data [OVD-Info](#) • As of 24 December

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Number of sentences for defendants in the anti-war case by month



● Prison terms ● Other ● Unknown

Data [OVD-Info](#) • As of 22.12.2023
We consider real prison terms to be: imprisonment in a colony-settlement; imprisonment in a general regime colony (including in absentia); imprisonment in a maximum security colony; compulsory treatment. Other types of punishment include: fine; restriction of freedom; suspended imprisonment; forced labor; correctional labor; including probation; compulsory work.

This month, more people received prison sentences for their statements on the Internet. Urzhum local court in Kirov Oblast **sentenced** Andrey Etkeev, a local resident, to five years in a general regime colony for spreading «fakes» motivated by political hatred about the Russian army. Dmitry P., a resident of Syktyvkar, was **sentenced** to three years in prison for three comments regarding the explosion at the Crimean Bridge.

We also recorded a series of new incidents involving extrajudicial pressure and violence towards the defendants in «anti-war» cases. For example, Dmitry Ivanov, owner of the Telegram channel «Protestniy MGU» convicted in one such case, **shared** that he was not allowed to see his mother.

Wife of Nikolay Murnev, a resident of the town of Essentuki accused of preparing a terrorist attack after somebody had planted Molotov cocktails in his garage, **reported** another violent incident. She alleges that her husband was tortured during his arrest. According to the wife, the officers dragged Murnev into the service car and put a bag over his head. During the interrogation, officers kicked and tased Murnev trying to force him to confess to his involvement with the Ukrainian special forces and the Azov regiment as well as to preparing an arson of a military recruiting office and to an attack on the administration and the department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Essentuki. According to Murnev, officers put different objects in his hands and put duct tape on his fingers threatening to come after his family.

In particular, they promised to send his four children to an orphanage and to plant drugs on his wife. This incident was followed by **another**. On December 19, officers beat Murnev again demanding that he confirm in court his earlier testimony, also given under torture, against his friend Sergey Dudchenko.



Nikolai Murnev (right) with Sergei Dudchenko (left) / Photo courtesy of Nikolai Murnev's wife

The lawyer of the former municipal deputy Alexey Gorinov, convicted in the case of spreading «fakes» about the Russian army, reported that his client's health had **deteriorated** significantly. Alexey was **forced** to clear snow while suffering from a fever and cough. After Gorinov's lawyer visited him on December 8, the authorities have been concealing Gorinov's exact location. His support group is **hoping** that he was moved to a hospital.

Igor Baryshnikov, another defendant in an «anti-war» case, has also suffered from a **severe decline** in health. Due to an impaired blood supply, his legs and arms turned blue, and he began to experience constant pain and the urge to urinate. Baryshnikov can neither sleep, nor lie down, nor sit. He could develop sepsis at any time.

The criminal case was sent to the Appeal Court for a new trial. In addition to that, sociologist Boris Kagarlitsky was **sentenced** to a fine of 600,000 rubles in the case of justifying terrorism. The prosecutor requested five and a half years in prison.

The First Court of Cassation **overturned** the sentence of Alexey Moskalev under the article on repeated discrediting of the Russian army.

During this month, OVD-Info defenders participated in 57 criminal cases and advised 74 people. **Support OVD-Info**

ADMINISTRATIVE CASES

8526

cases under Article 20.3.3 (“Discreditation”)

According to Mediazona as of 21.12.2023

Number of cases under Article 20.3.3 of the CAO in Russia and in the annexed Republic of Crimea since March 2022



*OVD-Info collects data on repressions by the Russian authorities in the annexed Crimea, because we have the opportunity to verify these data

Source: Medazona • [Get the data](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

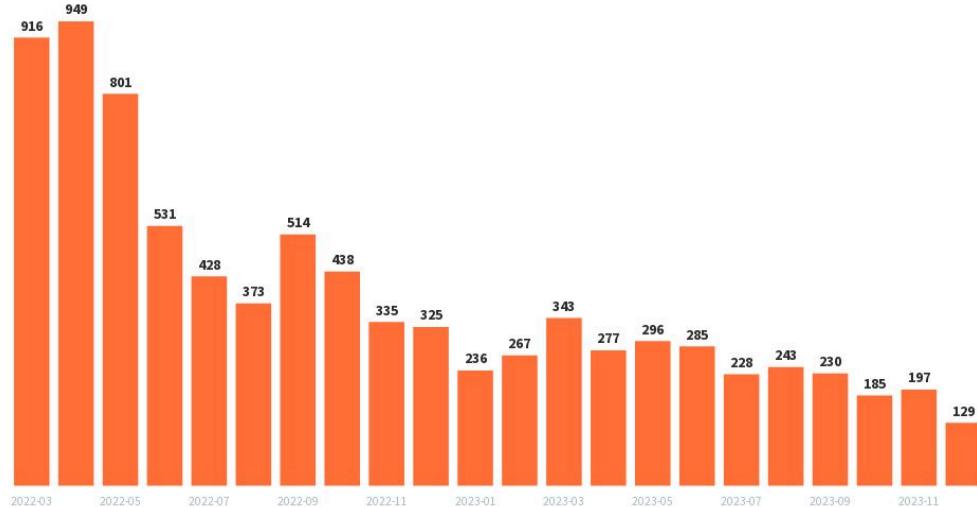
Oleg Melnikov, a resident of the Altai Republic, was fined 15,000 rubles because of a poem, according to Vasily Dubkov, an OVD-Info lawyer who represented Melnikov. Ust'-Koksinsky district court found the man guilty under the article on discrediting the army (part 1 of Article 20.3.3 of the Code of Administrative Offences). The report on Melnikov was drawn up on October 19. The man was charged with a post in VKontakte that contained the poem «Souls and hearts are freezing...».

Gleb Merkushev, a resident of Crimea, was **detained** because of posts on social networks. Reports were drawn up against him on four charges at once: «LGBT propaganda» (Article 6.21 of the Code of Administrative Offences), demonstration of Nazi symbols (Article 20.3), discrediting the Russian army (Article 20.3.3), and dissemination of extremist materials (Article 20.29).

Leonid Spirin, editor-in-chief of the student media »**Groza**«, was fined 30 thousand rubles by the court under the article on discrediting the Russian army (Part 1 of Article 20.3.3 of the Code of Administrative Offences). Konstantin Ishutov,

the author of the Telegram channel «Chuvashia Uncensored», was **charged** with abuse of freedom of the press (Part 9 of Article 13.15 of the Code of Administrative Offences).

Number of Detentions for Anti-War Stance by Month
"Discreditation"



Data: [Mediazona](#) • As of 22.12.2023

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Anatoly Timofeev, a pensioner from the Kozlovsky district of Chuvashia, was **prosecuted** for spreading false information that could incite mass riots (Part 9 of Article 13.15 of the Code of Administrative Offences).

This month, Moscow City Court dismissed the administrative case against the cartoonist Anna Abramova under the article on discrediting the army (Article 20.3.3 of the Code of Administrative Offences), according to her OVD-Info defense representative, Vladimir Zhilkin. The report on Abramova was drawn up because of a walk in Moscow during protests against mobilization.

Our defenders participated in 27 administrative cases this month.

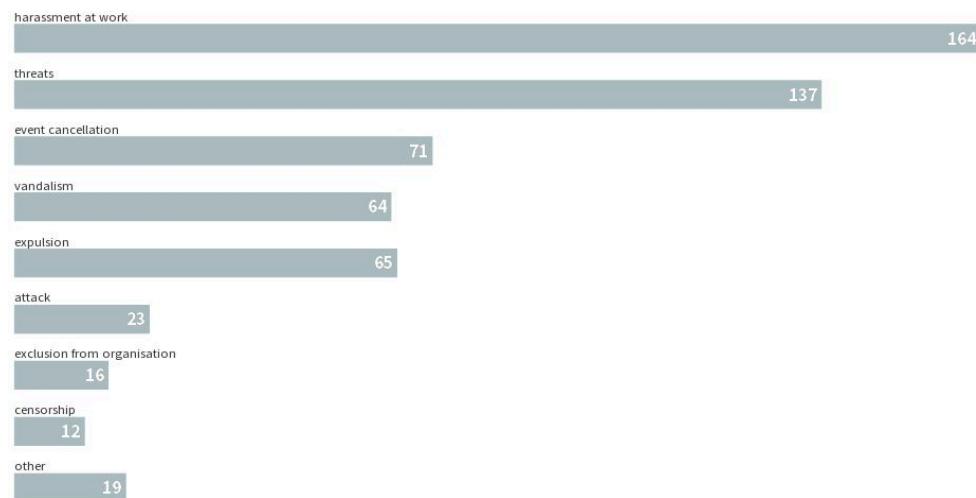
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EXTRAJUDICIAL PRESSURE

571

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

Extrajudicial pressure on people with an anti-war views since 24 February 2022



As of 22 December 2023

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After the criminal cases against Boris Akunin were initiated, many Russian bookstores have begun **withdrawing** his books. Most of the writer's recently available works have disappeared from Wildberries and Ozon. Akunin's books are marked as «temporarily unavailable» in the e-book store Litres and are not available in the official online store of the «Eksmo-AST» publishing house, book24.ru. The literary magazine «Novy Mir» («New World») has removed two plays — "The Seagull" and «Hamlet. A version»—by Akunin from its website, and has also removed his name from the list of authors.

Bookstores in Moscow and Tver have **canceled** meetings with the science journalist Asya Kazantseva because of her anti-war position and «z-haters'» outrage.

Irina Nelson, a resident of the Novgorod Region, who was convicted for anti-war statements, is being **refused employment**. She was refused a job at a Pyaterochka shop after a background check. She was then hired by a children's clothing shop «Kapitoshka», but a week later was asked to resign. «Our local representative Maria Zykova reported on me saying that I worked there and that it was unacceptable for me to spread my anti-political talk while working with people,» said Nelson.

Pavel Kharitonenko, an Irkutsk activist and founder of the movevent «New Russia — Free Country», was **fired** from his job because of an interview with the Swiss TV channel SRF.



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BLOCKING AND CENSORSHIP

7974

resources blocked by Roskomnadzor between
24.11.2023 and 21.11.2023

According to Roskomsvoboda

Access to many Ukrainian websites has been was **blocked** this month in Russia, according to **Roskomsvoboda**. These include the websites of Khmelnytsky City council and the magazine «Karavan istoriy», as well as the portal «Zhurnalco», which is dedicated to the Soviet press.

A Saratov-based media «Svobodnye Novosti» was **forced** to remove the list of residents of the region who were killed in the war in Ukraine. The journalists had been compiling the list since March 2022, relying on official reports from state officials, information from banners, monuments and memorial plaques, as well as data from the «Book of Memory» kept in the Saratov museum of the war in Ukraine. However, the military prosecutor's office considered the list to be «information on personnel losses,» the distribution of which violates the law on state secrets. «Svobodnye Novosti» decided not to wait for the pre-trial blocking of the site and removed the material on its own.

Google was **fined** 4.6 billion roubles for refusing to remove «fakes» about the Russian army and LGBT content.

LINKS TO OTHER OVD-INFO DATA AND REPORTS

- Wartime repression reports. [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.

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