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ДОКУМЕНТЫ

Escalation of police brutality

According to the data collected by OVD-Info, during the period between December 4th and March 9th, there were 1756 politically motivated detentions in Moscow alone, the vast majority of which resulted in administrative arrests and fines. During these three months, police took people into custody at authorized protest rallies, as well as during other political events, single-protester pickets, and flash-mobs. Activists handing out political materials and posting leaflets were also subject to detention. After March 5th police began to target those who merely wore a white ribbon, a symbol of the protest movement.

The detentions involve rough use of force and violate procedural norms. Many cases of beatings

are documented, both in police buses and, since March 5th, at police precincts. Standard procedures include refusal to grant defense lawyers and the press access to the detained, denial of urgent medical care, and lack of reasonable confinement conditions, such as cramped and inadequately heated cells, as well as insufficient food and beds.

Moreover, the following instances deserve special mention.

- Several people have been confined to psychiatric institutions against their will: Vera Lavreshina and Nadezhda Nizovkina in February.
- Defense lawyers Nikolai Polozov and Violetta Volkova were forcibly ejected from the Kitai-Gorod precinct.
- Severe beatings took place at the Zamosvorechje precinct on March 5–7 2012; in particular, Tatiana Kadieva was hospitalized in a neurological ward as a result of her treatment.
- Protesters after the March 5th rally on Pushkin and Lobjanka squares were dispersed with the use of electroshock weapons and other painful techniques. Several victims complained of broken arms and concussions.
- On March 5th, people were kept in exhaust-filled buses for several hours — treatment that amounts to torture.

Furthermore, the handling of the court cases does not lend credence to the justice of the verdicts. The accused are regularly denied the

right to call witnesses in their defense. Courts regularly do not admit video evidence that proves the defendants' innocence. Verdicts are issued on the sole basis of police reports and the testimony of police officers claiming to have made the arrests. Members of the press are frequently denied access to courtrooms. In December, a typical court hearing took between 3 and 10 minutes — the time a judge needs to imprison people for days and weeks. Over the three months that OVD-Info has been monitoring the situation, we are aware of only one acquittal.

Another critical area of concern is the abuse of the rights of journalists. On March 5th, Uljana Malashenko, a reporter for the Kommersant-FM radio station, was beaten by police on Lubjanka square. She was later hospitalized with a concussion. At least five journalists were detained with the use of force on the same day: Pavel Nikulin (*Moskovskie novosti*), Maria Klimova (*Ridus*), Andrei Stenin (*RIA Novosti*), Gleb Shchelkunov (*Kommersant*), and Arkadii Babchenko (an independent journalist).

OVD-Info stands by its December assessment with respect to the detentions and administrative arrests of the protesters: political repression we are witnessing today is the most significant since 1993. Judging by the systematic abuse

of human rights, lack of respect for the right to assembly, procedural abuses during arrests, rough treatment at detention and at police precincts, assembly-line convictions, and lack of respect for the press, we must conclude that the government is engaging in a deliberate and aggressive intimidation of our society. Since December 4th, the scale and level of extrajudicial police violence is increasing, which means that it is the government that is escalating the social hostilities.

OVD-Info considers the present situation to be critical. We are convinced that police brutality must be stopped, all convictions overturned, and all cases of beatings and violations of the rights of the defendants and journalists investigated, with consequences for those responsible. If this is not accomplished, Russia will be drawn further into state-sanctioned violence, and ultimately risks sinking into bloodshed.

OVD-Info calls to action all human rights groups, as well as the independent political organizations. At the present time we see no use in appealing to the government, which is responsible for unleashing the violence in the first place, but rather to speak to civic institutions, and directly to the public. Only our society, constantly pressing those in power

in a maximally transparent way, using all legal mechanisms available, including the system of international justice, is capable of putting an end to the violence.

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