



COI QUERY

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COI QUERY RESPONSE – Russian Federation

Treatment of protesters, journalists, and human rights defenders by state authorities since the invasion of Ukraine, including legislation related to freedom of assembly and expression; treatment by police and judicial authorities such as reports of arrest, detention, and prosecution (February 2022 – April 2022)

1. Context

On 24 February 2022, Russia started a large-scale military invasion of Ukraine, targeting Kyiv as well as Kharkiv, Dnipro, Mariupol,¹ and Odesa.² Putin labelled the invasion a ‘special military operation’,³ aimed at the protection of the self-proclaimed ‘Donetsk People’s Republic’ (DPR) and ‘Luhansk People’s Republic’ (LPR).⁴ The UN General Assembly deemed the Russian invasion to be an act of aggression,⁵ creating the largest refugee crisis in Europe since World

¹ BBC, Ukraine conflict: Russian forces attack from three sides, 24 February 2022, [url](#); International Crisis Group, War in Europe: Responding to Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine, 24 February 2022, [url](#)

² International Crisis Group, War in Europe: Responding to Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine, 24 February 2022, [url](#)

³ BBC, Ukraine: Ukraine: Putin announces special military operation in TV declaration, 24 February 2022, [url](#)
International Crisis Group, War in Europe: Responding to Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine, 24 February 2022, [url](#)

⁴ TASS, Russian troops launch special military operation to defend Donbass republics — top brass, 24 February 2022, [url](#)

⁵ UN, As Russian Federation’s Invasion of Ukraine Creates New Global Era, Member States Must Take Sides, Choose between Peace, Aggression, General Assembly Hears, 1 March 2022, [url](#); Al Jazeera, UN Resolution against Ukraine invasion: full text, 3 March 2022, [url](#)



War Two.⁶ On 3 March, the International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecutor launched an investigation into possible war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide, committed by any part in Ukraine from 21 November 2013 [the start of the Maidan protest movement⁷] onwards.⁸

In recent years, opposition-organised demonstrations and rallies were frequently prohibited, ‘including under pretext of public health restrictions’; protesters, who took part in rallies or single-person pickets, were reported to have been facing arbitrary arrests and administrative and criminal charges.⁹ Russia has passed ‘increasingly severe restrictions under arbitrary laws’ against the media,¹⁰ and this ‘restrictive web of laws’ have targeted what Russian authorities perceive to be ‘fake news’ or who ‘show blatant disrespect’ to the state, with media sites being blocked and prescribing punishments of fines and prison time under the law.¹¹ There have been numerous cases of journalists fined for offences in 2020¹² and 2021,¹³ as well as journalists and media organisations curtailing coverage or leaving Russia as a result.¹⁴

With the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, censorship efforts by the state were reported to have accelerated.¹⁵ On 24 February, the day the invasion began, the Russian Federal Service for Supervision of Communications, Information Technology and Mass Media (Roskomnadzor) released a statement reminding the media that for any coverage of the ‘special operation’ they are obliged to use information only from official Russian sources, or risk penalties of having websites blocked and being fined up to five million rubles for disseminating false information under Article 13.15 [informal translation] ‘Abuse of Freedom of Mass Media’ of the Code of Administrative Offences.¹⁶ After 24 February 2022, there were multiple reports of journalists being detained or pressured by security officials for providing

⁶ New York Times (The), Putin knows what he’s doing with Ukraine’s refugees, 1 April 2022, [url](#)

⁷ The Maidan protest movement (The Maidan revolution/uprising or Euromaidan) began 21 November 2013 when the Ukrainian government announced it was withdrawing plans to join the EU, causing three months of protests by Ukrainians and violent attacks on protesters by police that resulted in about 100 deaths mainly by police snipers. Then-President Yanukovich who was seen as responsible, was forced out and a new president elected. In the months afterwards, Russia seized Crimea and in April 2013, Donbas region broke out into fighting the support of Russian forces backing the ‘separatist’ movement there. Pifer, S., Ukraine: Looking forward, five years after the Maidan Revolution, Brookings Institute, 22 February 2019, [url](#)

⁸ ICC, Statement of ICC Prosecutor, Karim A.A. Khan QC, on the Situation in Ukraine: Receipt of Referrals from 39 States Parties and the Opening of an Investigation, 2 March 2022, [url](#)

⁹ AI, Russian Federation 2021, n.d., [url](#); see also HRW, Russia – Events of 2019, [url](#)

¹⁰ Partner organisations to the Council of Europe Platform to Promote the Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists, Annual Report 2022 – Defending Press Freedom in Times of Tension and Conflict, April 2022, [url](#), p. 5; see also: AI, Russia: Ten urgent human rights tasks for the new Duma, September 2021, [url](#)

¹¹ IPI, Russia: IPI condemns move to criminalize “false information” on armed forces”, 2 March 2022, [url](#); see also: AI, Russia: Ten urgent human rights tasks for the new Duma, September 2021, [url](#)

¹² IPI, Russian journalists face fines and probes amid creeping censorship, 25 June 2020, [url](#); IPI, New ‘fake news’ law stifles independent reporting in Russia on COVID-19, 8 May 2020, [url](#);

¹³ IPI, With new foreign agent labels, Russia steps up attack on independent media, 24 August 2021, [url](#)

¹⁴ Partner organisations to the Council of Europe Platform to Promote the Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists, Annual Report 2022 – Defending Press Freedom in Times of Tension and Conflict, April 2022, [url](#), p. 6

¹⁵ IPI, Russia: IPI condemns move to criminalize “false information” on armed forces”, 2 March 2022, [url](#); see also: IPI, Russian journalists face fines and probes amid creeping censorship, 25 June 2020, [url](#)

¹⁶ Russia, Roskomnadzor, Вниманию средств массовой информации и иных информационных ресурсов [To the attention of the media and other information resources], 24 February 2022, [url](#)



coverage of anti-war rallies.¹⁷ As reported by Human Rights Watch on 24 March, Russian authorities have ‘cracked down’ on journalists, human rights defenders and activists ‘in an effort to silence any criticism of the war in Ukraine.’¹⁸

Following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, anti-war protests broke out in many Russian cities and towns.¹⁹ Many public figures were reported to have called the government to stop the war, while members of political opposition and human rights activists called on people to join anti-war protests.²⁰ The anti-war protests were frequently met with police violence;²¹ and arbitrary detentions of protesters, activists,²² and journalists were reported across the country.²³ The Russian human rights group OVD-Info²⁴ keeps an updated tally since 24 February of the number of people who have been detained due to their engagement in anti-war activities. When the website was checked on 2 June 2022, the number had reached 15 446 people since 24 February.²⁵

On 16 March, Russia was excluded from the Council of Europe (CoE).²⁶ As a result, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) will stop accepting applications from Russian nationals as of 16 September 2022.²⁷ As of April 2022, there were about 18 000 pending cases from Russian nationals.²⁸

2. Legislation related to freedom of assembly

2.1 Protest-related offences

In September 2021, Amnesty International (AI) reported that in recent years, legislative amendments ‘have created a “legal labyrinth” for organisers and participants of peaceful protests.’ In the same report, AI remarked that under the law:

‘In the past 10 years, the number of protest-related “offences” has increased from three to 17, while respective penalties have increased more than a hundred-fold. In

¹⁷ IPI: Russia: journalists reporting on Ukraine war face censorship and detentions, 25 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸ Human Rights Watch, Russia: Arrests, Harassment of Ukraine War Dissidents, 24 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁹ RFE/RL, Police Break Up Anti-War Protests in Russia, 24 February 2022, [url](#); Guardian (The), Anti-war protests across Russia – in pictures, 25 February 2022, [url](#)

²⁰ Human Rights Watch, Russia Criminalizes Independent War Reporting, Anti-War Protests, 7 March 2022, [url](#)

²¹ Civil Rights Defenders, “Human rights are practically seen as an “enemy’s value.”, 23 March 2022, [url](#); RFE/RL, Police Break Up Anti-War Protests in Russia, 24 February 2022, [url](#); DW, Cracking down on peace: How Russian anti-war protesters face persecution, 20 April 2022, [url](#)

²² Human Rights Watch, Russia Criminalizes Independent War Reporting, Anti-War Protests, 7 March 2022, [url](#);

Human Rights Watch, Russia: Arrests, Harassment of Ukraine War Dissidents, 24 March 2022, [url](#)

²³ Human Rights Watch, Russia: Arrests, Harassment of Ukraine War Dissidents, 24 March 2022, [url](#)

²⁴ OVD-Info was founded by in 2011 and has a core staff of 70 employees, receiving also information from more than 3 000 volunteers and 300 lawyers across Russia. The organisation runs also a hotline for calls to receive legal advice. Irish Times (The), Russian crackdown: Why it takes tremendous courage to protest, 7 May 2022, [url](#)

²⁵ OVD-Info, [url](#), accessed 2 June 2022. The number is updated daily.

²⁶ COE, The Russian Federation is excluded from the Council of Europe, 16 March 2022, [url](#)

²⁷ Washington Post (The), The Council of Europe expelled Russia. That hurts people, not Putin, 12 April 2022, [url](#); SWP, Russia on the Road to Dictatorship, 30 April 2022, [url](#), p 3

²⁸ SWP, Russia on the Road to Dictatorship, 30 April 2022, [url](#), p 3



2014, Article 212.1 (so-called “Dadin’s article”) of the Criminal Code made four consecutive administrative offences, however insignificant, a criminal offence if committed within 180 days. The Constitutional Court prohibited its application to peaceful protests; however it continues to be applied, with alarming increase. Spontaneous protest is banned altogether, in violation of international human rights norms, including binding judgments of the European Court of Human Rights.’²⁹

As explained by Jonathan Wiersema, a researcher at Wilson Center, in April 2021: ‘Article 212.1 makes it a crime “to repeatedly violate the established procedure for organizing or holding meetings, rallies, demonstrations, marches, or pickets.” Punishment for violating the law varies widely, depending on the judge’s discretion: a fine of 600,000 to 1 million rubles (roughly \$8,000 to \$14,000 USD); 2 to 3 years’ salary; 480 hours of compulsory work; 1 to 2 years of correctional work; up to 5 years of forced labor; or up to 5 years imprisonment.’³⁰

Protests or peaceful demonstrations require permission from authorities and are often refused.³¹ Rallies against the Ukraine war that saw thousands taking part on 6 March 2022 were described as ‘unauthorized’ by authorities.³²

For the legislation used against protesters after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, please see the chapter 4 of this query.

3. Legislation related to freedom of expression

3.1 ‘Foreign Agent’ law and ‘Undesirable organizations’ law

Russia adopted ‘Foreign Agent Law’ in 2012 as one of the means ‘to exclude external influences after a wave of post-election protests in 2011’. Since then, the scope of this law ‘has been progressively expanded to include media and individual activists as well as NGOs.’³³ In 2019, the law was expanded to broaden the legal definition of who is considered a foreign agent, and according to Deutsche Welle (DW), it includes ‘any private individual or group who receives any amount of foreign funding, whether from foreign government, organizations, or even citizens,’ and publishes materials in print, audio, visual, or other means.³⁴

The ‘Foreign Agent Law’ was strengthened in March 2021 which contributed to the silencing of independent media critical of the government and which requires media outlets disclose their sources of funding and publish their materials with a ‘foreign agent’ disclaimer or face

²⁹ AI, Russia: Ten urgent human rights tasks for the new Duma, September 2021, [url](#)

³⁰ Wiersema, J., Protest in Peril? Russia’s Constitutional Court Upholds Article 212.1, Wilson Center, April 2021, [url](#), p. 2

³¹ AI, Russia: Ten urgent human rights tasks for the new Duma, September 2021, [url](#)

³² RFE/RL, Thousands detained at anti-war protests across Russia 6 March 2022, [url](#)

³³ Think Tank European Parliament, ‘Foreign agents’ and ‘undesirables’: Russian civil society in danger of extinction?, 8 March 2022, [url](#)

³⁴ DW, What is Russia’s foreign agent law? 3 February 2022, [url](#)



finances, charges, or publication bans for failure to comply.³⁵ The first uses of the law were in October 2021, against the leader of a Russian NGO and a prominent human rights activist.³⁶

In March 2022, the authorities announced a plan ‘to create a register of persons linked to so-called “foreign agents”’. According to the initiative, the registry will be maintained by the Ministry of Justice and include anyone with links to ‘foreign agents’. People included into the registry would be required to include ‘a lengthy boilerplate text on all published materials, including social media posts.’³⁷

The foreign agent law has been used to target journalists, activists, and human rights defenders³⁸ as well as ordinary citizens.³⁹ Designated ‘foreign agents’ – individuals as well as media outlets and NGOs that receive funding from abroad⁴⁰ – face fines up to 300 000 rubles or prison terms of two to five years, with repeated violations potentially leading to criminal charges.⁴¹ In May 2022, the New York Times reported that the number of people and legal entities designated as ‘foreign agents’ has reached 400 since the introduction of ‘Foreign Agent Law’ in 2012.⁴²

The 2015 law on ‘undesirable organizations’ gives powers to the Russian prosecutor general to designate any foreign or international organisation that it deems is ‘harming’ Russia as an ‘undesirable’ organisation that is blacklisted and forced to cease all activities in Russia. As a result, critics are silenced and local Russian groups and activists are unable to access foreign partners.⁴³ On 27 May 2022, Human Rights Watch reported that an activist was punished by ‘20 months of custodial sentence’ and ordered ‘to pay civil damages of 100 000 rubles’ after the court ‘found him affiliated with an “undesirable organization”’ which made him ‘the first person who may serve prison time for these charges.’⁴⁴

3.2 Legislation on ‘fake news’ and ‘abuse of freedom of mass information’

³⁵ IPI, With new foreign agent labels, Russia steps up attack on independent media, 24 August 2021, [url](#)

³⁶ RFE/RL, ‘Sword of Damocles’: With first legal charges, Russia’s ‘Foreign Agent’ law bares its teeth, 22 October 2021, [url](#)

³⁷ Moscow Times (The), Russia to Create Register of People Linked to ‘Foreign Agents’, 10 March 2022, [url](#)

³⁸ DW, What is Russia’s foreign agent law? 3 February 2022, [url](#); NPR, Russia’s ‘Foreign Agent’ Law targets journalists, activists, even ordinary citizens, 31 July 2021, [url](#); HRW, Submission on Russia by Human Rights Watch to the Human Rights Committee, 15 February 2022, [url](#)

³⁹ NPR, Russia’s ‘Foreign Agent’ Law targets journalists, activists, even ordinary citizens, 31 July 2021, [url](#); HRW, Submission on Russia by Human Rights Watch to the Human Rights Committee, 15 February 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁰ Moscow Times (The), Russia to Create Register of People Linked to ‘Foreign Agents’, 10 March 2022, [url](#)

⁴¹ RFE/RL, ‘Sword of Damocles’: With first legal charges, Russia’s ‘Foreign Agent’ law bares its teeth, 22 October 2021, [url](#)

⁴² New York Times (The), Anti-Putin Russians Are Leaving, With a Push From the Kremlin, 5 May 2022, updated 10 May 2022, [url](#)

⁴³ HRW, Submission on Russia by Human Rights Watch to the Human Rights Committee, 15 February 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁴ HRW, Russia: Authorities Double Down on Persecuting ‘Undesirables’, 27 May 2022, [url](#)



Article 13.15 ('Abuse of freedom of mass information') of the Code of Administrative Offences, which is known as 'law on fake news'⁴⁵ stipulates fines up to five million rubles for media and other information resources that are 'knowingly publishing false information'.⁴⁶ As reported by AI in September 2021, several sections of Article 13.15 as well as Articles 207.1 and 207.2 of the Criminal Code – the legislation defined by AI as "anti-fake news" legislation adopted 'in the context of Covid-19 pandemic' – made "public dissemination of knowingly false information" punishable under administrative and criminal liability with penalties up to five years' imprisonment. AI stated that the language used within the legislation leaves it open to 'wide interpretation and abuse'.⁴⁷

On 5 April 2021, President Putin amended Article 13.15 by supplanting it with a provision on 'publicly insulting the memory of defenders of the Fatherland or publicly disparaging the honour and dignity of a veteran of the Great Patriotic War, including through mass media or information and telecommunications networks (including the internet)' punishable by a fine.⁴⁸

3.3. Amended legislation of the Code of Administrative Offences and the Criminal Code⁴⁹

On 4 March 2022, Russian authorities made amendments to the Code of Administrative Offences and to the Criminal Code. The amendments punish dissemination of what the Russian authorities consider 'false information' about Russian military operations (Article 207.3 of the Criminal Code), public discreditation of the Russian Armed Forces (Article 20.3.3 of the Code of Administrative Offences and Article 280.3 of the Criminal Code),⁵⁰ and calls for sanctions against Russian legal entities and citizens (Article 20.3.4 of the Code of Administrative Offences and Article 284.2 of the Criminal Code).⁵¹ Dissemination of 'knowingly

⁴⁵ Rights in Russia, Law of the Week: Article 13.15 of the Russian Code of Administrative Offences – the 'Law on Fake News', 31 October 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁶ Interfax, Media outlets required to use info from official Russian sources in covering special operation in Donbas – Roskomnadzor, 24 February 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁷ AI, Russia: Ten urgent human rights tasks for the new Duma, September 2021, [url](#), p. 2

⁴⁸ Russia, President of Russia, Legislative amendments concerning punishment for insulting war veterans, 5 April 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁹ The Code of Administrative Offences and the Criminal Code were amended on 25 March and 16 April respectively. An English language version of the amended legislation was not available among the sources consulted. Russian language versions of the Code of Administrative Offences (2001/amended on 16 April 2022) and the Criminal Code (1996/amended 25 March 2022) are available on the website of the Government of the Russian Federation (pravo.gov.ru).

⁵⁰ Interfax, Duma approves Criminal Code amendments penalizing fake news about military operations, discrediting of Russian Armed Forces, calls for sanctions, 4 March 2022, [url](#); HRW, Russia Criminalizes Independent War Reporting, Anti-War Protests, 7 March 2022, [url](#); Agora and Network Freedoms, Россия: права человека на военном положении [Russia: Human Rights under the Martial Law: The first month of the armed conflict in Ukraine], March 2022, [url](#), pp. 6-7

⁵¹ HRW, Russia Criminalizes Independent War Reporting, Anti-War Protests, 7 March 2022, [url](#); Agora and Network Freedoms, Россия: права человека на военном положении [Russia: Human Rights under the Martial Law: The first month of the armed conflict in Ukraine], March 2022, [url](#), pp. 6-7;



false information’ about the Russian army ‘automatically’ constitutes a criminal offence and carries penalties of up to 15 years’ imprisonment.⁵²

The amendments have been described by Russia-based NGOs as ‘military censorship laws’.⁵³ AI reported that the amendments ‘severely limited the rights of freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly.’⁵⁴ Human Rights Watch and AI report that the laws violate Russia’s obligations to preserve these rights under international human rights law⁵⁵ and the Russian Constitution.⁵⁶ Human Rights Watch also reported that the new legislation ‘criminalize independent war reporting and protesting the war’ as well as making it illegal to spread what authorities deem to be ‘fake news’ about the Russian military, call for an end to the use of deployed Russian troops, or to support sanctions against Russia.⁵⁷

3.3.1 Public dissemination of ‘false Information’ about Russian Armed Forces and the State Institutions

According to Human Rights Watch, Article 207.3, which was added to the Criminal Code on 4 March 2022:

‘penalizes “public dissemination of deliberate false information about the use of Russian Armed Forces,” with penalties ranging from large fines to imprisonment of up to three years. Those who allegedly disseminate such false information using their “official position” or as part of an organized group or accompanied by “artificial creation of evidence for prosecution;” or “guided by greed, or motivated by political, ideological, race, ethnic or religious hatred or hatred against a social group” could face five to ten years in prison. In the event of “grave consequences” the penalty is imprisonment from 10 to 15 years with a ban on carrying out a profession or certain activities for up to 5 years. Russian criminal law does not contain an exhaustive list of what constitutes “grave consequences” and depending on the specific crime, law enforcement and courts have interpreted it to include significant financial loss and bodily harm or death. What might constitute a grave consequence of disseminating alleged false information, is therefore essentially at the discretion of the prosecution.’⁵⁸

The legislation was further amended on 25 March to punish dissemination of ‘false news’ on any activities of Russian authorities and institutions in the country and abroad,⁵⁹ such as the

⁵² Meduza, ‘Holding people liable for stating the facts’ Condemning the Kremlin’s war against Ukraine is a criminal offense in Russia. Here’s how investigators are building their cases, 26 May 2022, [url](#). See also Reuters, Russia fights back in information war with jail warning, 4 March 2022, [url](#)

⁵³ Agora and Network Freedoms, Россия: права человека на военном положении [Russia: Human Rights under the Martial Law: The first month of the armed conflict in Ukraine], March 2022, [url](#), pp. 6-7

⁵⁴ AI, Russian Federation: End Censorship on Voices Against the War, 14 March 2022, [url](#), p. 1

⁵⁵ Human Rights Watch, Russia Criminalizes Independent War Reporting, Anti-War Protests, 7 March 2022, [url](#); AI, Russian Federation: End Censorship on Voices Against the War, 14 March 2022, [url](#), p. 1

⁵⁶ AI, Russian Federation: End Censorship on Voices Against the War, 14 March 2022, [url](#), p. 2

⁵⁷ Human Rights Watch, Russia Criminalizes Independent War Reporting, Anti-War Protests, 7 March 2022, [url](#); See also: Agora and Network Freedoms, Россия: права человека на военном положении [Russia: Human Rights under the Martial Law: The first month of the armed conflict in Ukraine], March 2022, [url](#), pp. 6-7

⁵⁸ Human Rights Watch, Russia Criminalizes Independent War Reporting, Anti-War Protests, 7 March 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁹ AI, Russia: Authorities launch witch-hunt to catch anyone sharing anti-war views, 30 March 2022, [url](#)



National Guard (Rosgvardiya), Russian embassies, the Prosecutor's office and other state, military law enforcement and judicial bodies.⁶⁰ According to the amended Article 207.3, 'public dissemination of deliberately false information' about 'state bodies of the Russian Federation performing their duties outside the territory of the Russian Federation' is punishable in the same way 'as similar actions committed with regard to the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation.'⁶¹

3.3.2 Public actions that 'discredit' the Russian Armed Forces and the State Institutions

Article 20.3.3 of the Code of Administrative Offences and Article 280.3 of the Criminal Code in their version of 4 March 2022 made it illegal to take "public actions aimed at discrediting" the Russian Armed Forces", such as, as explained by Human Rights Watch, publicly advocating the withdrawal of Russian troops, or ending fighting.⁶² According to Human Rights Watch:

'The "offences" under both administrative and criminal codes are almost identical, with first-time offenders to be prosecuted under the administrative code subject to a maximum fine of 50,000 rubles (approx. US\$450) for individuals or 500,000 rubles (approx. \$4,500) for legal entities.

If an accused has at least one prior administrative conviction for the same charge within one year, they can be indicted under the Criminal Code and face up to three years in prison.

If there are "aggravating circumstances," which involves creating a risk of death, or harm to health, or damage to property, or mass violation of public order, or interruption of the working of various infrastructure, including transportation and financial credit institutions, fines imposed for an administrative offence can be doubled. In the case of a criminal prosecution, if there is actual death by negligence, harm to health, damage to property, mass violation of public order, or interruption to the work of various infrastructure, including transportation and financial credit institutions, imprisonment can be increased to five years.'⁶³

On 25 March, both Articles were amended to include 'liability for public actions aimed at discrediting' the actions of 'state bodies of the Russian Federation outside the Russian Federation.'⁶⁴ Similar with its application in regard to public actions discrediting the Russian army, the amended Article 280.3 of the Criminal Code becomes applicable if the public

⁶⁰ Politico, Russia expands laws criminalizing 'fake news', 22 March 2022, [url](#)

⁶¹ Russia, President of Russia, Federal law to protect Russia's state bodies performing their duties abroad, 26 March 2022, [url](#)

⁶² Human Rights Watch, Russia Criminalizes Independent War Reporting, Anti-War Protests, 7 March 2022, [url](#)

⁶³ Human Rights Watch, Russia Criminalizes Independent War Reporting, Anti-War Protests, 7 March 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁴ Russia, President of Russia, Vladimir Putin signed the Federal Law On Amendments to Articles 8.32 and 20.33 of the Code of Administrative Offences of the Russian Federation, 26 March 2022, [url](#); Russia, President of Russia, Federal law to protect Russia's state bodies performing their duties abroad, 26 March 2022, [url](#)



actions aimed at discrediting state institutions are ‘committed by a person who was previously brought to account for a similar act within a period of one year’.⁶⁵

Article 20.3.3 of the Code of Administrative Offences prescribes punishments by fine ranging from 30 000 to 1 million rubles.⁶⁶

3.3.3 Actions in support of sanctions against Russia

Under the new amendments made 4 March, it is both an administrative and criminal offense for Russians to ‘call for sanctions against Russia, its nationals, or Russian legal entities’. According to Human Rights Watch,

‘The new provision in the Code of Administrative Offences (article 20.3.4) covers calls on foreign states, their entities, or intergovernmental organizations or unions, to introduce or implement political or economic sanctions. The penalty is identical to that for “discreditation” of Armed Forces, up to 50,000 rubles (approx. US\$ 450) for individuals and 500,000 rubles (approx. \$4,500) for legal entities.

The corresponding criminal offence (article 284.2 [of the Criminal Code]) targets “repeat offenders,” that is Russian nationals who within a year prior were sentenced on the same charges for an administrative offence. The penalties range from a fine, to up to three years in prison and a fine.⁶⁷

4. Treatment of protesters and war opponents

4.1. Anti-war protests

Anti-war protests started across Russia since the invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022.⁶⁸ On 2 March 2022, Alexey Navalny called Russians via his Twitter account, published on his behalf by his assistant, to organise daily protests against Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.⁶⁹ On 24 February and on 3 March, the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation urged Russians against organising of and participating in anti-war protest rallies, stating that such actions could cause ‘negative legal consequences’, including criminal liability.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Russia, President of Russia, Federal law to protect Russia’s state bodies performing their duties abroad, 26 March 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁶ Agora and Network Freedoms, Россия: права человека на военном положении [Russia: Human Rights under the Martial Law: The first month of the armed conflict in Ukraine], March 2022, [url](#), pp. 6-7

⁶⁷ Human Rights Watch, Russia Criminalizes Independent War Reporting, Anti-War Protests, 7 March 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁸ Human Rights Watch, Russia Criminalizes Independent War Reporting, Anti-War Protests, 7 March 2022, [url](#); OVD-info, Протест против войны с Украиной: истории задержанных [Protest Against the War with Ukraine: Stories of Detainees], 2 March 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁹ Reuters, Russia’s Navalny calls Putin insane and urges anti-war protests, 2 March 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁰ RG, СК предупредил об ответственности за проведение и участие в несанкционированных акциях [The Investigative Committee warned of responsibility for holding and participating in unsanctioned rallies], 24 February 2022, [url](#) and RG, СК предупредил об ответственности за проведение и участие в несанкционированных акциях [The Investigative Committee warned of responsibility for holding and participating in unsanctioned rallies], 24 February 2022, 3 March 2020, [url](#)



As noted in a joint report by Human Rights Advocacy Group Agora and the Project Net Freedoms (in Russian: Setevye Svobody), published in March 2022, anti-war protests since the Ukraine invasion have included solitary pickets, demonstrations, spontaneously organised rallies, or in individual actions, such as wearing anti-war symbols or putting anti-war slogans on clothing and bags. Protest actions were recorded in cities across the country: in Magadan, Vladivostok, Khabarovsk, Chita, Irkutsk, Novosibirsk, Tomsk, Omsk, Krasnoyarsk, Ulan-Ude, Yekaterinburg, Perm, Tumen, Petrozavodsk, Belgorod, Nizhniy Novgorod, Ufa, Kazan, Moscow, St. Peterburg, and other cities and towns.⁷¹

According to the same report, in anti-war actions, people were gathering spontaneously on central squares of the cities and towns or walked the streets or used the public transport with anti-war posters and symbols.⁷² While there were some attempts to gain permissions from the local authorities to hold rallies, in accordance with the law, these requests were refused, usually under the pretext of anti-Covid restrictions. Requests to organise demonstrations in support of the actions of the Russian army in Ukraine were also refused.⁷³

4.2. Treatment of protestors and war opponents by the authorities

Russian high-level officials labelled people expressing anti-war opinions as ‘traitors’,⁷⁴ with President Putin saying in his speech on 16 March that people ‘will always be able to distinguish the true patriots from the scum and traitors’ – the ‘so-called fifth column’ used by the West – and that ‘this natural and necessary self-cleansing of society’ will only strengthen Russia.⁷⁵ Activists were reported to have faced harassment by unknown perpetrators,⁷⁶ including receiving insults and seeing paintings of the letter ‘Z’, which became a symbol of the state propaganda regarding the invasion of Ukraine, on their apartment doors.⁷⁷ Activists and people expressing their anti-war views were reported to have received official warnings and visits by security forces, as well as to have faced dismissals from teaching positions⁷⁸ and state-controlled media.⁷⁹

⁷¹ Agora and Network Freedoms, Россия: права человека на военном положении [Russia: Human Rights under the Martial Law: The first month of the armed conflict in Ukraine], March 2022, [url](#), p. 4

⁷² Agora and Network Freedoms, Россия: права человека на военном положении [Russia: Human Rights under the Martial Law: The first month of the armed conflict in Ukraine], March 2022, [url](#), p. 6

⁷³ Agora and Network Freedoms, Россия: права человека на военном положении [Russia: Human Rights under the Martial Law: The first month of the armed conflict in Ukraine], March 2022, [url](#), p. 4

⁷⁴ Reuters, Kremlin: many people in Russia are behaving like traitors, 17 March 2022, [url](#); Human Rights Watch, Russia: Arrests, Harassment of Ukraine War Dissidents, 24 March 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁵ Reuters, Putin warns Russia against pro-Western ‘traitors’ and scum, 16 March 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁶ Washington Post (The), Putin’s purge of ‘traitors’ scoops up pensioners, foodies, and peaceniks, 26 March 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁷ Economist (The), Russian propagandists turn on pro-Western “traitors”, 19 March 2022, [url](#); BBC, War in Ukraine: Anti-war Russians intimidated on their doorsteps, 28 March 2022, [url](#); New York Times (The), Shaken at First, Many Russians Now Rally Behind Putin’s Invasion, 1 April 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁸ AI, Russia: Educators fired, students indoctrinated — academia is the latest victim of the ongoing crackdown, 12 May 2022, [url](#); SWP, Russia on the Road to Dictatorship, 30 April 2022, [url](#), pp. 4-5

⁷⁹ SWP, Russia on the Road to Dictatorship, 30 April 2022, [url](#), pp. 4-5



As reported by independent media outlet Meduza on 26 May, in the most cases, Russian law enforcement agencies, such as Federal Security Service (FSB) and Anti-Extremism Center (Center E) find information that can lead to prosecution under the amended legislation ‘by monitoring social media.’ In some instances, the criminal and administrative cases were initiated in the result of ‘tips from concerned citizens.’⁸⁰ On 2 June, OVD-info reported on searches conducted at homes of activists.⁸¹

On 17 March, police conducted searches at homes of at least nine activists, including three members of the opposition political party Yabloko, suspected of ‘inciting mass riots.’⁸² A month later, the leader of Yabloko in Pskov region, said via his Telegram channel that he and his wife received charges under the newly introduced legislation and were facing administrative liability (Article 20.3.3).⁸³

4.2.1. Arrests and detentions

Sources reported on numerous arrests and detentions during anti-war rallies and gatherings.⁸⁴ OVD-Info reported that in the period from 24 February to 2 March, 6 835 people were detained across the country.⁸⁵ According to the same source, 4 989 protesters, including at least 113 minors, were detained on 6 March at anti-war protests in 69 cities and towns.⁸⁶ According to the data of OVD-Info, on 13 March 2022, 864 people were detained in 37 cities and towns.⁸⁷ Referring to OVD-Info, RFE/RL reported that 125 people were detained on 9 May, when Russia celebrated Victory Day, stating that ‘eighty-two people were reported detained for displaying anti-war slogans or images, while 43 were detained for previous anti-war protests or because the police believed they intended to protest.’⁸⁸ According to the data of OVD-Info, 15 442 people were detained due to their engagement in anti-war activities as of 15 May and 15 446 as 2 June.⁸⁹

⁸⁰ Meduza, ‘Holding people liable for stating the facts’ Condemning the Kremlin’s war against Ukraine is a criminal offense in Russia. Here’s how investigators are building their cases, 26 May 2022, [url](#)

⁸¹ OVD-Info, В Москве проходят массовые обыски по делу о «фейках» про армию [In Moscow mass searches are conducted related to army fake news], 2 June 2022, [url](#)

⁸² Human Rights Watch, Russia: Arrests, Harassment of Ukraine War Dissidents, 24 March 2022, [url](#)

⁸³ Moscow Times (The), Opposition Politician Accused of ‘Discrediting’ Russian Military, 15 April 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁴ Human Rights Watch, Russia: Arrests, Harassment of Ukraine War Dissidents, 24 March 2022, [url](#); Agora and Network Freedoms, Россия: права человека на военном положении [Russia: Human Rights under the Martial Law: The first month of the armed conflict in Ukraine], March 2022, [url](#), p. 7; Washington Post (The), Putin’s purge of ‘traitors’ scoops up pensioners, foodies, and peaceniks, 26 March 2022, [url](#); DW, Cracking down on peace: How Russian anti-war protesters face persecution, 20 April 2022, [url](#); Irish Times (The), Russian crackdown: Why it takes tremendous courage to protest, 7 May 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁵ OVD-info, Протест против войны с Украиной: истории задержанных [Protest Against the War with Ukraine: Stories of Detainees], 2 March 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁶ OVD-Info, Cracked Heads and Tasers: Results of the March 6th Anti-War Protests, 7 March 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁷ OVD-Info, 18-й день войны и протестов: задержания 13 марта [The 18th Day of War and Protests: Detentions on 13 March], 13 March 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁸ RFE/RL, Breaking Russia’s ‘Spiral Of Silence’: Dozens Detained Protesting Ukraine War On Victory Day, 10 May 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁹ OVD-Info, [url](#), accessed on 15 May 2022 and 1 June 2022. OVD-Info publishes also the lists of detained people by date.



The Russia-based human rights NGO Committee Against Torture on 23 March reported that the instances of violence by police officers against people participating in anti-war rallies had increased and the committee received ‘many reports of ill-treatment and beatings in police departments.’⁹⁰

4.2.2. Administrative charges

AI reported that most charges against protesters who were detained on 6 March, the day when around 5 000 people were detained according to the data by OVD-Info⁹¹, were pressed under the following articles of the Code of Administrative Offences:

- Article 20.2 (5) ‘Violation by a participant in a public event of the established procedure for holding a meeting, rally, demonstration, march or picketing’,
- Article 20.2 (2) ‘Organization of a public event without submitting a notification’,
- Article 20.2 (8) ‘Repeated violations of the rules of participation in a public assembly’, and
- Article 19.3 ‘Disobedience to the lawful order of a police officer’.⁹²

In the aftermath of the protests of 13 March 2022, OVD-Info, in addition to the abovementioned Articles, listed also:

- Article 20.2.2 [informal translation] ‘Organization of a mass gathering and (or) movement of citizens in public places, resulting in violation of public order’ and
- Article 20.6.1. [informal translation] ‘violation of epidemic restrictions.’⁹³

Differently from newly introduced Article 20.3.3, which stipulates only a punishment by a fine, Articles 20.2.2, 20.2 [informal translation] ‘Violation of the rules of participation in a demonstration’, and 19.3 [informal translation] ‘On failure to comply with orders of police officers’ allow for an arrest for up to 15 days. In March 2022, the application of the abovementioned Articles against protesters were reported by lawyers in St. Petersburg, Krasnodar, Volgograd, Ufa, Barnaul, Samara, Kazan, and Yekaterinburg.⁹⁴

4.2.3. Implementation of Article 20.3.3

The authorities started applying Article 20.3.3 of the Code of Administrative Offences to charge people who had participated in protests on 6 March 2022.⁹⁵ As reported by NGO

⁹⁰ Civil Rights Defenders, “Human rights are practically seen as an “enemy’s value.”, 23 March 2022, [url](#)

⁹¹ OVD-Info, Cracked Heads and Tasers: Results of the March 6th Anti-War Protests, 7 March 2022, [url](#)

⁹² AI, Russian Federation: End Censorship on Voices Against the War, 14 March 2022, [url](#), p. 2

⁹³ OVD-Info, 18-й день войны и протестов: задержания 13 марта [The 18th Day of War and Protests: Detentions on 13 March], 13 March 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁴ Agora and Network Freedoms, Россия: права человека на военном положении [Russia: Human Rights under the Martial Law: The first month of the armed conflict in Ukraine], March 2022, [url](#), pp. 7-8

⁹⁵ Novaya Gazeta, «Возбуждено как минимум 60 дел.» Правозащитник Павел Чиков – о начале применения статьи о «дискредитации действий российской армии» из-за мининтов против «спецоперации» [“At least 60 cases were initiated,” Human rights defender Pavel Chikov – about the start of the use of Article “on discreditation of the actions of the Russian forces” due to protests against “the special operation”], 7 March 2022, [url](#); OVD-Info, Cracked Heads and Tasers: Results of the March 6th Anti-War Protests, 7 March 2022, [url](#); DW, Cracking down on peace: How Russian anti-war protesters face persecution, 20 April 2022, [url](#)



Agora and Net Freedoms Project, 60 cases were initiated only on this day.⁹⁶ Seven cases reportedly resulted in fines ranging from 30 000 to 60 000 rubles [approximately from 440 to 880 EUR].⁹⁷ Fine amounting to 30 000 rubles is a minimum penalty which Article 20.3.3 stipulates for an individual.⁹⁸

The Russian authorities were reported to have interpreted anti-war civil actions as broadly as possible.⁹⁹ The reasons for detentions and arrests included wearing clothing in colours of the Ukrainian flag,¹⁰⁰ wearing green ribbons as anti-war symbols,¹⁰¹ distributing anti-war flyers, drawing graffiti,¹⁰² holding blank posters,¹⁰³ and being near an anti-war gathering.¹⁰⁴ Several teachers and a university lecturer were reported to have been fined under the same Article.¹⁰⁵

As reported by a media group RBC, based on the data of the State Automated System (GAS) 'Justice', Russian courts received 610 cases under Article 20.3.3 of the Code of Administrative Offences in the period from 4 March to 11 April. The regions with the highest number of cases were Kaliningrad (77 cases), St. Petersburg (55), the illegally-annexed Crimea (37), Amur (27), Perm (26), Yaroslavl (21), Kostroma (19), and Volgograd (18). Courts of the republics of Chechnya, Ingushetia, Dagestan, North Ossetia, and Tyva were reported to have received no cases related to Article 20.3.3 in this period.¹⁰⁶ As noted by Net Freedom Project, the GAS figures do not include data on Moscow; according to the source, in the same period, Moscow courts received 158 cases.¹⁰⁷ According to the press office of the Yaroslavl Regional Court, all the defendants under Article 20.3.3, were found guilty and fined 30 000 rubles each.¹⁰⁸

⁹⁶ Agora and Network Freedoms, Россия: права человека на военном положении [Russia: Human Rights under the Martial Law: The first month of the armed conflict in Ukraine], March 2022, [url](#), p. 7

⁹⁷ Novaya Gazeta, «Возбуждено как минимум 60 дел.» Правозащитник Павел Чиков – о начале применения статьи о «дискредитации действий российской армии» из-за митингов против «спецоперации» [“At least 60 cases were initiated,” Human rights defender Pavel Chikov – about the start of the use of Article “on discreditation of the actions of the Russian forces” due to protests against “the special operation”], 7 March 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁸ Russia, Oficialny internet-portal pravovoy informacii [Official Internet Portal of Legal Information], Code of Administrative Offences of the Russian Federation, 2001 (amended on 26 March 2022), [url](#)

⁹⁹ OVD-Info, Cracked Heads and Tasers: Results of the March 6th Anti-War Protests, 7 March 2022, [url](#); OVD-Info, 18-й день войны и протестов: задержания 13 марта [The 18th Day of War and Protests: Detentions on 13 March], 13 March 2022, [url](#); Agora and Network Freedoms, Россия: права человека на военном положении [Russia: Human Rights under the Martial Law: The first month of the armed conflict in Ukraine], March 2022, [url](#), p. 4; Irish Times (The), Russian crackdown: Why it takes tremendous courage to protest, 7 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰ DW, Cracking down on peace: How Russian anti-war protesters face persecution, 20 August 2022, [url](#); Agora and Network Freedoms, Россия: права человека на военном положении [Russia: Human Rights under the Martial Law: The first month of the armed conflict in Ukraine], March 2022, [url](#), p. 7

¹⁰¹ DW, Cracking down on peace: How Russian anti-war protesters face persecution, 20 August 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰² DW, Cracking down on peace: How Russian anti-war protesters face persecution, 20 August 2022, [url](#); Agora and Network Freedoms, Россия: права человека на военном положении [Russia: Human Rights under the Martial Law: The first month of the armed conflict in Ukraine], March 2022, [url](#), p. 7

¹⁰³ DW, Viral protests: Russians continue to denounce war, risking imprisonment, 16 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁴ Irish Times (The), Russian crackdown: Why it takes tremendous courage to protest, 7 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁵ Business Insider, Russian teachers are being punished for making anti-war comments after their own students reported them, 7 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶ RBC, В суды поступило более 600 административных дел по дискредитации армии [Courts received more than 600 administrative cases to discredit army], 14 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷ Setevye Svobody, Telegram, 14 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁸ RBC, В суды поступило более 600 административных дел по дискредитации армии [Courts received more than 600 administrative cases to discredit army], 14 April 2022, [url](#)



Several reports of a dismissal of a case by a court of the first instance or a dismissal of a decision of a court of the first instance by a higher court were found. On 27 April, the Krasnoyarsk Regional Court dismissed the decision of the Krasnoyarsk Central District Court of 6 March on administrative punishment under Article 20.3.3.¹⁰⁹ The district court found a woman guilty and fined her 30 000 rubles because she had written ‘No to War’ (in Russian: Net Voyne) on the snow at the foot of a statue of Vladimir Lenin during an anti-war gathering.¹¹⁰ In April, a court in Krasnoyarsk dismissed the case against a lawyer, charged under Article 20.3.3 due to his post on YouTube.¹¹¹ On 4 and 5 May, the Kuibyshevsky District Court of St. Petersburg dismissed two separate cases against two men who were tried under Article 20.3.3 because of their participation in solitary pickets in April, during which they held posters with words that could be understood as an allusion to the war in Ukraine.¹¹²

Based on the data up to 22 May, NGO Agora reported that Russian courts had heard almost 2 030 cases related to Article 20.3.3 on public discreditation of Russian Armed Forces since the legislation was introduced on 4 March; 352 of these cases were heard in Moscow. According to the same source, during the same period, courts in Russia were reported to have heard only four cases under Article 20.3.4 (calls for sanctions): two cases in Gorno-Altaysk, one case in Tolyatti, and one case in Moscow.¹¹³

4.2.4. Criminal charges

According to OVD-Info, 20 cases were initiated under eight Articles of the Criminal Code in the period between 24 February and 7 March against protesters. The charges were pressed under the following articles:

- Article 318 ‘Use of violence against a state agent’ and Article 318.1 ‘Using non-life-threatening violence against a state agent’,
- Article 213 ‘Hooliganism’,
- Articles 214.1 ‘Vandalism’ and 214.2 ‘Vandalism motivated by ideological, political, racial, national or religious hatred’
- Article 207.2 ‘Making knowingly false statements about terrorist activities’,
- Article 207.1 ‘Spreading knowingly false information about circumstances which pose a threat to the life and safety of citizens’,
- Article 280 ‘Calling for extremist activities’,
- Article 159.1 ‘Fraud’.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ Interfax, Суд отменил штраф жительнице Красноярска по статье о дискредитации ВС РФ [The court cancelled the fine of Krasnoyarsk resident under Article on discrediting the Armed Forces of RF], 27 April 2022, [url](#); Setevye Svobody, Telegram, 27 April 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁰ Setevye Svobody, Telegram, 6 March 2022, [url](#); VOA, Fines, Fear, Self-Censorship: Russia’s New Ukraine Law Casts Chill, 11 March 2022, [url](#)

¹¹¹ Benyash, Telegram, 16 May 2022, [url](#)

¹¹² Interfax, Суд в Петербурге прекратил дело задержанного из-за плаката с антонимами [A court in St. Petersburg dismissed the case of a person detained over a poster with antonyms], 4 May 2022, [url](#); Interfax, Суд в Петербурге прекратил еще одно дело о дискредитации российской армии, [A court in St. Petersburg dismissed another case on discrediting of the Russian army], 5 May 2022, [url](#)

¹¹³ Pavel Chikov, Telegram, 22 May 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁴ OVD-Info, Cracked Heads and Tasers: Results of the March 6th Anti-War Protests, 7 March 2022, [url](#)



AI reported in its 30 March 2022 report, referring to NGO Agora, that at least 60 criminal cases were initiated against protesters in the first month of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which were investigated under 14 separate articles of the Criminal Code: at least 46 people were reported to have been facing various criminal charges, with nine of them being taken into custody and three placed under house arrest.¹¹⁵

At least four cases under Article 280.3 of the Criminal Code (on public actions discrediting the Russian military and the state Institutions) were initiated in the period between 4 March and 22 May. These cases were initiated against people who had been previously punished for a similar offence under the Code of Administrative Offences; the cases were initiated in Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, Blagoveshchensk, Kemerovo, and Nalchik.¹¹⁶

4.2.5 Examples of cases brought under Article 207.3 of the Criminal Code

AI reported on 10 May on the use of Article 207.3 of the Criminal Code (on public dissemination of 'false Information' about Russian military and institutions) by the authorities that 'the article's intentionally broad and vague definitions allow arbitrary application and serve to silence public debate around the war in Ukraine.'¹¹⁷

As reported by NGO Agora, Article 207.3 of the Criminal Code the most frequently used legislation to initiate criminal charges for anti-war expressions and actions in the period between 24 February and 20 April, followed by Articles on vandalism and violence against police personnel.¹¹⁸

In the period from 4 March to 18 April, criminal cases under Article 207.3 were reported to have been initiated against 32 persons. The highest number of cases under Article 207.3 were initiated against journalists and bloggers, activists, and social media users. Eight of the defendants, including one woman, were put under pre-trial detention for the period of the investigation.¹¹⁹ On 24 May, NGO Agora reported that the number of cases initiated under Article 207.3 reached 53. The source further noted that these cases were investigated in 27 regions of the Russian Federation, and 13 defendants were placed under pre-trial detention.¹²⁰

The instances in which charges were pressed under various subchapters of Article 207.3 include the following:

- The first two criminal cases under Article 207.3 were initiated in the Tomsk region on 16 March 2022.¹²¹ Criminal charges were pressed against a retired woman from the

¹¹⁵ AI, Russia: Authorities launch witch-hunt to catch anyone sharing anti-war views, 30 March 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁶ Pavel Chikov, Telegram, 22 May 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁷ AI, Russia: Political activist Vladimir Kara-Murza is a prisoner of conscience who must be released immediately and unconditionally, [url](#), pp. 1-2

¹¹⁸ Pavel Chikov, Telegram, 20 April 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁹ Pavel Chikov, Telegram, 7 April 2022, [url](#) and Pavel Chikov, Telegram, 18 April 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁰ Pavel Chikov, Telegram, 24 May 2022, [url](#), accessed 25 May 2022

¹²¹ Mediazona, В Томской области возбудили первые два уголовных дела о «ложной информации» про российскую армию, [The first two criminal cases on "false information" about the Russian army were opened in the Tomsk region], 16 March 2022, [url](#)



town of Seversk for posting information, which she had allegedly received from Ukrainian sources, in her Telegram channel,¹²² and a man from Tomsk city, who committed a similar offence. As reported by independent Russian online news outlet Mediazona, both cases were initiated based on evidence obtained from the regional directorate of the Federal Security Service (FSB). According to the source, both suspects' homes were searched by police, and both received 'a ban on certain activities' as a pre-trial measure.¹²³

- 'A ban on certain activities' was imposed on a retired woman from Petrozavodsk, who had posted information criticising the actions of Russia in Ukraine on her page in the Russian social media site VKontakte (VK).¹²⁴
- A man from Novokubansk was placed under pre-trial detention for his posts on Telegram and YouTube;¹²⁵ in Kiselevsk, the court applied pre-trial detention against a political activist due to his posts about the war in Ukraine on social media.¹²⁶
- Cases related to social media posts or comments were initiated also against a priest from Kirov, a school student from Novosibirsk, a woman from Magas (Ingushetia), a man from Kopeysk,¹²⁷ an activist and a member of the Teachers' Alliance Union from Novosibirsk¹²⁸, a 61-year-old climate activist from Sterlitamak (Bashkortostan),¹²⁹ and a man from Ussuriysk.¹³⁰
- In Kirov, a couple was brought to charges for publishing pictures and videos from Bucha, Ukraine on social media.¹³¹
- A case was initiated against an employee of the administration in Elista (Kalmykia) and owner of 'Volny Ulus' Telegram channel, where he posted information on war in Ukraine.¹³²

¹²² Agora and Network Freedoms, Россия: права человека на военном положении [Russia: Human Rights under the Martial Law: The first month of the armed conflict in Ukraine], March 2022, [url](#), p. 8

¹²³ Mediazona, В Томской области возбудили первые два уголовных дела о «ложной информации» про российскую армию, [The first two criminal cases on "false information" about the Russian army were opened in the Tomsk region], 16 March 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁴ Chikov, P, 21 уголовное дело о дискредитации Вооруженных сил РФ [21 criminal cases on discrediting the Armed Forces of the RF], 7 x7, 7 April 2022, [url](#); Pavel Chikov, Telegram, 7 April 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁵ Chikov, P, 21 уголовное дело о дискредитации Вооруженных сил РФ [21 criminal cases on discrediting the Armed Forces of the RF], 7 x7, 7 April 2022, [url](#); Pavel Chikov, Telegram, 7 April 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁶ Sibir.Realii, Жителя Кузбасса Булата Шумекова посадили в СИЗО за посты о войне с Украиной [Bulat Shumekov, a resident of Kuzbass, was put in jail for his posts about the war with Ukraine], 20 April 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁷ Chikov, P, 21 уголовное дело о дискредитации Вооруженных сил РФ [21 criminal cases on discrediting the Armed Forces of the RF], 7 x7, 7 April 2022, [url](#); Pavel Chikov, Telegram, 7 April 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁸ Sibir.Realii, "Ворвались человек 10 в бронезилетах". Первое уголовное дело за комментарий под постом ["Ten men in bulletproof vests burst in." The first criminal case for a post comment], 9 April 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁹ Idel.Realii, Защитницу Куштау Раису Болдову обвинили в распространении фэйков о войне РФ [Raisa Boldova, defender of Kushtau, was accused of spreading fakes about the war], 17 April 2022, [url](#)

¹³⁰ UssurMedia.ru, Уголовное дело возбудили за фейки о военных на жителя Уссурийска [A criminal case was opened for fakes about army personnel against a resident of Ussuriysk.], 15 April 2022, [url](#); Pavel Chikov, Telegram, 22 April 2022, [url](#)

¹³¹ Pavel Chikov, Telegram, 22 April 2022, [url](#)

¹³² Ria.Kalmykia, В Элисте задержали сотрудника Администрации города за распространение фэйков [A city administration employee was detained in Elista for spreading fakes], 13 April 2022, [url](#); Kavkaz.Realii, В Калмыкии на чиновника завели дело по новой статье о "фейках" [In Kalmykia, an official was prosecuted under a new article on "fakes"], 13 April 2022, [url](#)



- At the end of March, a criminal case was initiated against a deputy of the Omsk City Council for allegedly spreading ‘false information’ about the military, for which authorities accused him of supporting ‘Nazism’.¹³³ RFE/RL reported that the person was detained due to his online posts about the war in Ukraine.¹³⁴ The court detained the person for 7 days and placed on them further a ban on certain activities, such as communication with persons involved in the case, use of means of communication, attendance of public meetings, and issuing media statements related to the criminal case until 28 May 2022.¹³⁵
- On 27 April, Moscow municipal deputy, was detained until 25 June 2022 as a pre-trial measure in a case initiated against him for calling the ‘special operation’ a ‘war in Ukraine’ and for having a moment of silence for the war victims during a municipal meeting.¹³⁶ The person and another person working at the same municipality were accused of using their official position “to discredit the army personnel”.¹³⁷
- The first case in Moscow was initiated against a technician of the reserve control station of Moscow headquarters of the Ministry of Internal Affairs¹³⁸, who was allegedly discussing military actions of the Russian army in Ukraine over a phone conversation.¹³⁹ The person was detained for two months on the request of the investigator prior the trial.¹⁴⁰
- Two persons were reported to have been up under the trial for replacing price labels in supermarkets with anti-war messages.¹⁴¹ One of them was placed under pre-trial detention for a month and a half.¹⁴² According to the prosecution, the person’s ‘supermarket activism’ ‘was an act of “political hostility”, punishable by up to 10 years’ imprisonment.¹⁴³ On 30 May, a district court in St. Petersburg ruled to prolong the person’s pre-trial detention until at least 1 July 2022.¹⁴⁴

¹³³ Kommersant, Депутат горсовета Омска, обвиняемый в дискредитации вооруженных сил РФ, арестован на семь суток за пропаганду нацизма [Omsk City Council deputy accused of discrediting the Russian Armed Forces arrested for seven days for propaganda of Nazism], 7 April 2022, [url](#)

¹³⁴ RFE/RL, Municipal lawmaker in Siberian city detained over his posts about war in Ukraine, 29 March 2022, [url](#)

¹³⁵ Kommersant, Депутат горсовета Омска, обвиняемый в дискредитации вооруженных сил РФ, арестован на семь суток за пропаганду нацизма [Omsk City Council deputy accused of discrediting the Russian Armed Forces arrested for seven days for propaganda of Nazism], 7 April 2022, [url](#)

¹³⁶ Interfax, Московского мундепа Горинова арестовали по делу о фейках об армии [Moscow Municipal Deputy Gorinov arrested in a case on fakes about the army], 27 April 2022, [url](#)

¹³⁷ Radio Svoboda, Московского муниципального депутата Алексея Горинова отправили в СИЗО [Moscow municipal deputy Aleksei Gorinov was sent to a pre-trial detention center], 27 April 2022, [url](#)

¹³⁸ BBC, В России арестован первый фигурант уголовного дела о "военных фейках" [The first person involved in the criminal case of "military fakes" arrested in Russia], 22 March 2022, [url](#)

¹³⁹ Pavel Chikov, Telegram, [url](#), 7 April 2022

¹⁴⁰ Setevye Svobody, Telegram, 22 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴¹ Pavel Chikov, Telegram, 7 April 2022, [url](#); Guardian (The), Russian artist faces jail over peace protest using supermarket price labels, 13 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴² Guardian (The), Russian artist faces jail over peace protest using supermarket price labels, 13 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴³ Al UK, Russia: feminist activist could be jailed for ten years for putting anti-war slogans on supermarket labels, 13 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴⁴ RFE/RL, Detention Extended For Russian Artist Who Used Price Tags For Anti-War Protest, 31 May 2022, [url](#)



- In Alushta, the Russia's illegally annexed Crimea, the charges were pressed against a man, who was placing anti-war leaflets across his neighbourhood.¹⁴⁵
- In April, a case was initiated against a schoolteacher in Penza, who was criticising Russia in a conversation with their students, who taped the conversation.¹⁴⁶
- On 11 April, political activist and journalist Vladimir Kara-Murza was arrested on charges under Article 207.3. As reported by AI, the basis for the criminal charges 'was his speech at the Arizona House of Representatives (in the USA) on 15 March, in which he criticized Vladimir Putin's policies, denounced what he called the West's "appeasement" of the Kremlin and highlighted the importance of the protest movement in Russia.'¹⁴⁷
- In May, an activist of the Peaceful resistance movement was charged under Article 207.3 and sent for two months to 'pretrial jail'. As reported by RFE/RL, the person was one of five activists of the organisation, who were interrogated and whose homes were searched by the police.¹⁴⁸

On 30 May, a first guilty verdict under Article 207.3 was announced by a court in Russia. The verdict was handed down by a district court in the Zabaikalsky region against a person accused 'of falsifying unspecified Russian Defense Ministry documents, as well as posting "knowingly false" videos in a social media chat he moderated in March.' The person was reported to have pledge guilty to the charges and punished by a fine of one million rubles.¹⁴⁹

5. Treatment of journalists

5.1. Background

The World Press Freedom Index for 2022, released by Reporters Without Borders (Rapporteurs sans frontières, RSF) on 3 May, ranked Russia 150 out of 180 countries, which is five points down from 2021.¹⁵⁰

On 24 February 2022, the Federal Service for Supervision of Communications, Information Technology and Mass Media of the Russian Federation (Roskomnadzor) demanded that Russian media outlets to use solely information from official Russian sources for their reporting on the military 'operation' in Ukraine, under the threat of fines and having their websites blocked.¹⁵¹ Media was banned from using the terms 'war', 'invasion', or 'assault' when

¹⁴⁵ Russia, Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation for the Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol, Житель Алушты обвиняется в публичном распространении ложной информации о Вооруженных силах Российской Федерации [A resident of Alushta is accused of publicly spreading false information about the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation], 13 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴⁶ Guardian (The), Russian teacher 'shocked' as she faces jail over anti-war speech pupils taped, 6 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴⁷ AI, Russia: Political activist Vladimir Kara-Murza is a prisoner of conscience who must be released immediately and unconditionally, 10 May 2022, [url](#), pp. 1-2

¹⁴⁸ RFE/RL, 'We Are Fighting Against Evil': Four St. Petersburg Women Face Prison As Russia Intensifies Crackdown On Dissent, 16 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴⁹ Moscow Times (The), Russia Issues First Criminal Conviction for Ukraine 'War Fakes', 1 June 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵⁰ RSF, Russia, accessed 15 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵¹ OSCE, Media Freedom Representative strongly denounces Russian authorities' restriction on freedom of the media and freedom of information, 24 February 2022, [url](#); Russia, Roskomnadzor, Вниманию средств массовой



describing the situation in Ukraine.¹⁵² On 26 February 2022, Roskomnadzor demanded the removal of materials published by the newspaper Novaya Gazeta, independent media outlet Mediazona, and TV Rain (Dozhd TV), and others.¹⁵³ In the following days, independent media was fined in case of reporting against the official narrative on the Russian military aims and actions in Ukraine and access to them was blocked.¹⁵⁴ Frontline Defenders reported on 19 April, more than 200 media platform in Russia had been blocked since the end of February 2022.¹⁵⁵ In an interview to the Irish Times, published on 7 May 2022, the head of OVD-Info Daniel Beilinson said that 1 500 websites had been blocked since 24 February, ‘including those of 180 media and virtually all human rights groups.’¹⁵⁶

On 10 March, the State Duma ‘adopted legislation to create a uniform registry of people designated as “foreign agents” and those affiliated with them.’¹⁵⁷ On 11 April, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CJP) reported that journalists who were included into the registry face detentions by the police and attacks by unknown perpetrators.¹⁵⁸

Journalists working for independent media reported that their properties were vandalised, including painting of the letter “Z” on doors and entrances of offices and homes.¹⁵⁹

On 7 April, Dmitry Muratov, the editor-in-chief of Novaya Gazeta, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2021, was attacked by an unknown man in a train, in which he was travelling from Moscow to Samara, who threw on him a mixture of red paint and acetone.¹⁶⁰

5.2 Prevention of coverage and detentions during covering protests

Sources reported on prevention of reporting on protests,¹⁶¹ including on officially organised pro-government events in Moscow and St. Petersburg on 18 March, that was faced by journalists, reporters and photographers working for independent media,¹⁶² police visits to homes of journalists, and detentions of journalists during covering protests and gatherings.¹⁶³

информации и иных информационных ресурсов [To the attention of the media and other information resources], 24 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵² DW, Viral protests: Russians continue to denounce war, risking imprisonment, 16 March 2022, [url](#); Frontline Defenders, Escalating Crackdown on human rights defenders and organisations, 19 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵³ Novaya Gazeta, РКН потребовал от «Новой газеты» и других СМИ удалить материалы, где происходящее в Украине называлось «войной» [Roskomnadzor demanded that Novaya Gazeta and other media outlets remove materials which named the situation in Ukraine "war"], 26 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵⁴ Human Rights Watch, Russia Criminalizes Independent War Reporting, Anti-War Protests, 7 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵⁵ Frontline Defenders, Escalating Crackdown on human rights defenders and organisations, 19 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵⁶ Irish Times (The), Russian crackdown: Why it takes tremendous courage to protest, 7 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵⁷ Human Rights Watch, Russia: Arrests, Harassment of Ukraine War Dissidents, 24 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵⁸ CPJ, Russian journalists labeled as ‘foreign agents,’ detained, and attacked while reporting, 11 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵⁹ Human Rights Watch, Russia: Arrests, Harassment of Ukraine War Dissidents, 24 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁰ RFE/RL, Russian Nobel Laureate Muratov Doused With Red Paint by Unknown Attacker, 7 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶¹ Human Rights Watch, Russia: Brutal Arrests and Torture, Ill-Treatment of Anti-War Protesters, 9 March 2022, [url](#);

Human Rights Watch, Russia: Arrests, Harassment of Ukraine War Dissidents, 24 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶² OVD-Info, В разных городах задерживают журналистов, которые освещают митинги в поддержку российских военных [Journalists covering rallies in support of the Russian military are detained in various cities], 18 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶³ Human Rights Watch, Russia: Arrests, Harassment of Ukraine War Dissidents, 24 March 2022, [url](#); Agora and Network Freedoms, Россия: права человека на военном положении [Russia: Human Rights under the Martial



According to OVD-Info, 13 journalists were detained during the protests of 6 March 2022: the detentions took place in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Novosibirsk, Ufa, Nizhny Novgorod, Voronezh, Krasnodar; in many instances, journalists were wearing press vests.¹⁶⁴ On 13 March, nine journalists from various media were reportedly detained on St. Petersburg while covering protests in the city.¹⁶⁵ Commenting on instances on detention of media workers, the Head of Saint Petersburg Police (officially, the Main Administration for Internal Affairs of the City of St. Petersburg and the Leningrad Oblast) said that arrests were conducted to prevent participation of ‘provocateurs’ in unsanctioned rallies.¹⁶⁶

5.3 Examples of treatment of journalists under ‘false information’ legislation

The following examples of criminal cases initiated under various subchapters of Article 207.3 of the Criminal Code, punishing the public dissemination of ‘false information’ about the Russian Armed Forces were found:

- On 21 March, a journalist at RFE/RL’s project Sibir.Realii¹⁶⁷ and online media outlet Tayga.Info.¹⁶⁸ was charged under Article 207.3 and detained over reposting on his account in VK a post by another journalist about the blockade of Mariupol.¹⁶⁹ The same day, criminal charges under various articles of the Criminal Code, including Article 207.3, were initiated against Ukrainian journalist Dmitri Gordon, who, as reported by the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation, called for an armed attack on Russia in a live broadcast on a Ukrainian TV channel and uploaded the same video on YouTube.¹⁷⁰
- On 22 March the criminal case was initiated against one of Russia’s most prominent journalists Alexander Nevzorov,¹⁷¹ who reportedly posted on his Instagram account a news about the strikes at a maternity hospital in Mariupol and a video containing

Law: The first month of the armed conflict in Ukraine], March 2022, [url](#), p. 5; CPJ, Russian journalist Gleb Sokolov briefly detained while covering 1-man protest in Moscow, 29 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁴ OVD-Info, Cracked Heads and Tasers: Results of the March 6th Anti-War Protests, 7 March 2022, [url](#); Human Rights Watch, Russia: Arrests, Harassment of Ukraine War Dissidents, 24 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁵ OVD-Info, 18-й день войны и протестов: задержания 13 марта [The 18th Day of War and Protests: Detentions on 13 March], 13 March 2022, [url](#); Human Rights Watch, Russia: Arrests, Harassment of Ukraine War Dissidents, 24 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁶ Interfax, В МВД Петербурга объяснили задержания журналистов на митингах борьбой с провокаторами [The St. Petersburg Interior Ministry explained the detention of journalists at rallies by the fighting against provocateurs], 16 March 2022, [url](#); Human Rights Watch, Russia: Arrests, Harassment of Ukraine War Dissidents, 24 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁷ CPJ, Russian journalist Andrey Novashov detained, charged with spreading ‘fake’ information, 22 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁸ Agora and Network Freedoms, Россия: права человека на военном положении [Russia: Human Rights under the Martial Law: The first month of the armed conflict in Ukraine], March 2022, [url](#), p. 8

¹⁶⁹ RFE/RL, Pretrial Restrictions Imposed On Former RFE/RL Freelance Correspondent, 23 March 2022, [url](#); Agora and Network Freedoms, Россия: права человека на военном положении [Russia: Human Rights under the Martial Law: The first month of the armed conflict in Ukraine], March 2022, [url](#), p. 8

¹⁷⁰ Russia, The Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation, Возбуждено уголовное дело в отношении украинского журналиста Дмитрия Гордона [A criminal case was opened against Ukrainian journalist Dmitry Gordon], 21 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷¹ RFE/RL, Moscow Court Orders Arrest In Absentia of TV journalist, Kremlin Critic Nevzorov, 6 May 2022, [url](#)



information distributed by the Ukrainian Armed Forces and rejected by the Russian authorities in YouTube.¹⁷² On 22 April, the Ministry of Justice included Nevzorov in the registry of foreign agents; on 4 May, the Ministry of Interior put him on the wanted list.¹⁷³

- On 25 March, a case was initiated against a journalist working at media outlet ‘Fortanga’ in Ingushetia, who had left Russia before the charges.¹⁷⁴ The investigation was reported to have started because of the critique expressed by the journalist about ‘the participation of children in a pro-war rally’ in Magas, the capital of Ingushetia,¹⁷⁵ via their Telegram channel.¹⁷⁶
- On 13 April, the security forces arrested journalist and editor-in-chief of the online journal *Novy Fokus*, in Abakan, Republic of Khakassia, over their reporting on National Guard (Rosgvardiya) officers, who allegedly had refused to go to war to Ukraine, published on 4 April.¹⁷⁷
- On 14 April, the founder and the editor-in-chief of a newspaper L1Stok in Gorno-Altaysk, Republic of Altay, was detained on charges under Article 207.3.¹⁷⁸ As reported by AI, the person was arrested in Moscow and sent to Altay, where a court would ‘decide on [their] their pre-trial detention.’ On the day of the arrest, the person’s home and the newspaper’s office were searched by the authorities; the website of L1Stok has been blocked since March.¹⁷⁹
- On 22 April, a criminal case was initiated against a former publisher of news website Meduza, now based in Latvia.¹⁸⁰ The charges were reportedly related to information posted by the person on his Instagram account and were pressed on 20 April.¹⁸¹ CPJ reported that the person was engaged in war reporting via their personal Instagram account and an account on war evidence in Ukraine.¹⁸²

¹⁷² Interfax, Investigative Committee: journalist Nevzorov faces charges for misinformation about Russia's military activities, 22 March 2022, [url](#); AI, Russia: Authorities launch witch-hunt to catch anyone sharing anti-war views, 30 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷³ TASS, Journalist Alexander Nevzorov wanted by police — Russian Interior Ministry database, 4 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁴ Baza, Telegram, 25 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁵ OC Media, Russia investigates Ingush journalist over invasion coverage, 28 March 2022, [url](#); AI, Russia: Authorities launch witch-hunt to catch anyone sharing anti-war views, 30 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁶ Baza, Telegram, 25 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁷ Guardian (The), Russia: journalist arrested for ‘fake news’ about armed forces, 14 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁸ Sibir.Realii, Главреда газеты "ЛИСток" отправили в СИЗО по обвинению в фейках об армии, [The editor-in-chief of the newspaper L1Stok was sent to the pretrial detention center on charges of fakes about the army], 14 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁹ AI, Russia: Release journalists detained over critical coverage of Ukraine invasion, 14 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁰ SPJ, Russia charges journalists with disseminating ‘fakes’ about the military; reporter Maria Ponomarenko detained, 27 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸¹ Interfax, Илья Красильщик стал фигурантом уголовного дела о фейках о ВС РФ [Ilya Krasilshchik became a defendant in a criminal case about fakes about the Russian Armed Forces], 22 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸² SPJ, Russia charges journalists with disseminating ‘fakes’ about the military; reporter Maria Ponomarenko detained, 27 April 2022, [url](#)



- On 27 April, St. Petersburg court sent journalist, who works for online newspaper RusNews in Barnaul, to pre-trial detention for a period of at least two months.¹⁸³ According to RFE/RL, the journalist was detained in St Petersburg, where they were covering anti-war protests.¹⁸⁴
- On 6 May, a journalist working with the Russian outlet Novaya Gazeta said that the Russian authorities had opened an administrative case against them and that they faced fined of 100,000 rubles for discrediting the army. The person left the country shortly after 24 February.¹⁸⁵
- On 24 May, a court in Moscow issued arrest warrants for a journalist and a conflict analyst; both were reported to have been charged for distributing of ‘false information’ about the Russian Armed Forces.¹⁸⁶

6. Treatment of human rights defenders

After 24 February’s invasion of Ukraine, Russian human rights defenders were reported to have faced increased pressure from the state authorities, with many human rights NGOs – as well as human rights defenders and civil society activists¹⁸⁷ In its report of 24 March, Human Rights Watch reported on cases of harassment by unknown perpetrators on the office of ‘Movement for Human Rights’ and its founder Lev Ponomarev. The Moscow office of the Human Rights Center (HRC) ‘Memorial’ was reported to have been splashed with ‘reeking’ liquid.¹⁸⁸

On 5 April, the First Court Appeal in Moscow upheld the decision of the Moscow City Court of 28 December 2021, which ordered the dissolution of HRC ‘Memorial’ on the grounds of violation of the ‘Foreign Agent’ Law,¹⁸⁹ which stipulates a requirement to insert disclaimer labels about receiving foreign funds in all publications produced by an organisation designated as ‘foreign agent’ and puts such organizations under ‘stringent inspections and reporting requirements’. HRC ‘Memorial’ was designated a ‘foreign agent’ in July 2014 and ‘International Memorial’ in October 2016.¹⁹⁰ In December 2021, the Supreme Court ordered the dissolution of ‘International Memorial’ on the same charges with HRC ‘Memorial’ and rejected the appeal in March 2022.¹⁹¹

¹⁸³ RFE/RL, Russian Journalist Detained For Reports On Mariupol Theater Bombing, 27 April 2022, [url](#); SPJ, Russia charges journalists with disseminating ‘fakes’ about the military; reporter Maria Ponomarenko detained, 27 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁴ RFE/RL, Russian Journalist Detained For Reports On Mariupol Theater Bombing, 27 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁵ France24, Anti-Kremlin reporter faces fine for ‘discrediting army’, 6 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁶ RFE/RL, Russia Issues Arrest Warrant For Self-Exiled Journalist Naki, 24 May 2022, [url](#); Current Time, Суд в Москве заочно арестовал журналиста Майкла Наки по статье о “фейках” про российскую армию [Court in Moscow arrested journalist Michael Knuckey in absentia for “fakes” about the Russian army], 24 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁷ COE, Russian authorities should stop the unprecedented crackdown on freedoms of expression, assembly and association in the country, 7 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁸ Human Rights Watch, Russia: Arrests, Harassment of Ukraine War Dissidents, 24 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁹ OMCT, Russia: Dissolution of Human Rights Center “Memorial”, 5 April 2022, [url](#); RFE/RL, Memorial Human Rights Group Says Court Rejected Appeal Against Forced Closure, 5 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁹⁰ Strasbourg Observers, The ECtHR and the Russian Foreign Agents’ Law – A Devastating Case of Judicial Passivity, 28 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁹¹ RFE/RL, Memorial Human Rights Group Says Court Rejected Appeal Against Forced Closure, 5 April 2022, [url](#)

On 8 April 2022, the Ministry of Justice revoked the registration of Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, along with 13 other foreign NGOs,¹⁹² due to “violations of the current legislation of the Russian Federation”.¹⁹³

Raids and searches by police

Human rights NGOs were reported to be subjected to police raids and searches.¹⁹⁴ As reported by OVD-Info, on 5 and 6 March, police conducted searches at homes of human rights defenders/activists in St. Petersburg, Tumen, and Kazan.¹⁹⁵

On 6 March, police searched the offices of the Civic Assistance Committee, HRC ‘Memorial’, and ‘International Memorial’. As reported by Frontline Defenders, ‘staff members were not allowed to leave offices and lawyers could not access the premises during the raids, which lasted between 12 and 14 hours.’¹⁹⁶ As reported by Human Rights Watch, after the searches, ‘Memorial staff found the letters “Z” and “V” and “Memorial is finished” written on their office walls.’¹⁹⁷

On 12 March, police searched the homes of a lawyer and an activist.¹⁹⁸ According to the lawyer, the raid was conducted in the relation to Article 27 of the Criminal Code ‘Phone terrorism’.¹⁹⁹ It must be noted that the person was a lawyer of a group of 12 members of National Guard from Krasnodar, who had allegedly refused deployment to Ukraine and were dismissed from service.²⁰⁰

On 4 May, searches were reportedly conducted at the homes of three activists of a women’s rights community FemKyzlar in Kazan, Tatarstan.²⁰¹

Detentions and arrests

On 6 March, the head of the Civil Assistance Committee Svetlana Gannushkina and a member of the organizing council for HRC ‘Memorial’ Oleg Orlov were detained in Moscow²⁰² during a

¹⁹² Human Rights Watch, Russia: Government Shuts Down Human Rights Watch Office, 8 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁹³ RFE/RL, Russia Revokes Registrations Of Pro-Democracy, Human Rights Groups, 9 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁹⁴ COE, Russian authorities should stop the unprecedented crackdown on freedoms of expression, assembly and association in the country, 7 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁹⁵ OVD-Info, В нескольких регионах силовики пришли с обысками к правозащитникам, активистам и журналистам [In several regions, law enforcement officers searched the homes of human rights defenders, activists, and journalists], 5 March 2022, updated 8 March 2022, [url](#); see also Human Rights Watch, Russia: Arrests, Harassment of Ukraine War Dissidents, 24 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁹⁶ Frontline Defenders, Escalating Crackdown on human rights defenders and organisations, 19 April 2022, [url](#)

¹⁹⁷ Human Rights Watch, Russia: Arrests, Harassment of Ukraine War Dissidents, 24 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁹⁸ Avtozak LIVE, Telegram, 12 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁹⁹ Activatica, В Краснодаре прошли обыски у активистов [Activists were searched in Krasnodar], 12 March 2022, [url](#)

²⁰⁰ Benyash, Telegram, 24 March 2022, [url](#)

²⁰¹ Idel.Realii, "Предупредительные обыски". Зачем полиция пришла к "ФемКызлар" ["Precautionary searches." Why the police came to FemKyzlar], 4 May 2022, [url](#)

²⁰² OVD-Info, Cracked Heads and Tasers: Results of the March 6th Anti-War Protests, 7 March 2022, [url](#); Human Rights Watch, Russia: Arrests, Harassment of Ukraine War Dissidents, 24 March 2022, [url](#)



protest against the war in Ukraine. Both were charged with Article 20.2 of the Code of Administrative Offences and released after 10 hours of arbitrary detention;²⁰³ on 28 March, the court fined Orlov with 20 000 rubles.²⁰⁴ On 15 March, Svetlana Gannushkina was fined 10 000 rubles for alleged participation in an anti-war rally of 27 February, which she denied.²⁰⁵ In late March 2022, Svetlana Gannushkina and Oleg Orlov were among 11 human rights defenders who signed an open letter to call Russia to stop the war in Ukraine. Among the signatories were also Lev Ponomarev, the founder of the NGO 'For Human Rights', and an employee of HRC 'Memorial'.²⁰⁶

On 20 March, Oleg Orlov was detained during a solitary picket and fined 50 000 rubles under Article 20.3.3 of the Code of Administrative Offences.²⁰⁷ On 10 April, during a solitary picket, Orlov was detained and charged with Article 20.2.²⁰⁸ On 29 April, Oleg Orlov and a former employee at 'International Memorial', were detained during solitary pickets and charged with Article 20.2(5) and 20.3.3 (1) of the Code of Administrative Offences.²⁰⁹

In May, charges for 'discrediting' the army were initiated against a coordinator of 'legal assistance to detainees at anti-war actions' in Krasnodar. As reported by a media outlet Caucasus Watch, the charges were due to a petition created by the person to address to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.²¹⁰

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²⁰³ OMCT, Russia: Judicial harassment against prominent rights defenders Oleg Orlov and Svetlana Gannushkina, 8 March 2022, [url](#)

²⁰⁴ Kavkazsky Uzel, Правозащитник Олег Орлов обвинен в нарушении правил пикетирования [Human rights activist Oleg Orlov accused of violating picketing rules], 10 April 2022, [url](#)

²⁰⁵ OVD-Info LIVE, Telegram, 15 March 2022, [url](#); Human Rights Watch, Russia: Arrests, Harassment of Ukraine War Dissidents, 24 March 2022, [url](#)

²⁰⁶ Guardian (The), Russian activist sign open letter calling for end to war in Ukraine, 25 March 2022, [url](#)

²⁰⁷ Caucasian Knot, Oleg Orlov fined for discrediting Russian army, 30 March 2022, [url](#)

²⁰⁸ Kavkazsky Uzel, Правозащитник Олег Орлов обвинен в нарушении правил пикетирования [Human rights activist Oleg Orlov accused of violating picketing rules], 10 April 2022, [url](#); Caucasian Knot, Rights defender Oleg Orlov accused of violating rules of picketing, 11 April 2022, [url](#)

²⁰⁹ Caucasian Knot, Protocols under article on discrediting army drawn up against human rights defenders for pickets on Red Square, 29 April 2022, [url](#)

²¹⁰ Caucasus Watch, Recent protests and detentions in the North Caucasus, 18 May 2022, [url](#)

AI, Russia: Educators fired, students indoctrinated — academia is the latest victim of the ongoing crackdown, 12 May 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/05/russia-educators-fired-students-indoctrinated-academia-is-the-latest-victim-of-the-ongoing-crackdown/>, 12 May 2022, accessed 20 May 2022

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