

2.4. Anti-terrorism and anti-extremism legislation

2.4. Anti-terrorism and anti-extremism legislation

In 2024, the application of anti-terrorism and anti-extremism legislation was expanded.^{[218](#)} The legal instruments used for prosecuting terrorist and extremist cases in Russia are primarily based on the laws ‘On Combating Extremist Activity’ and ‘On Combating Terrorism.’ As noted by Alexander Verkhovsky, under Russian law, a crime is classified as extremist or terrorist if it is motivated by political or ideological hatred, hostility toward a particular group, or the intent to influence the state or society through violence.^{[219](#)}

As noted by Human Rights Watch, the authorities have used anti-extremism and anti-terrorism legislation as a means of censorship.^{[220](#)} According to OVD-Info, although anti-extremism legislation formally addresses violent acts, its broad and vague wording enables courts to treat non-violent actions also as extremist.^{[221](#)} According to the UN Special Rapporteur, the misuse of criminal provisions concerning the display of ‘extremist symbols’ has led to at least 67 convictions since 2022.^{[222](#)}

Since 2022, Russia has seen a ‘quite high’ number of ‘violent attacks against the state’, ranging in the official classification from property damage to terrorism. While some of these attacks had ideological motives, such as support for Ukraine, others were reportedly carried out ‘under the influence of scammers, apparently from Ukraine’, who deceived, blackmailed, or offered money to the perpetrators of these attacks.^{[223](#)} As noted by a human rights lawyer, anti-state actions are prosecuted as terrorist acts’ irrespective of the actual harm caused by them.^{[224](#)}

Convictions for extremism and terrorism carry severe punishments. Penalties for financing extremist activities range from a fine of 300 000 rubles [3 075 euros] to eight years in prison, while organising such activities may result in a ten-year prison sentence. For financing terrorism, the minimum punishment is eight years in prison, while organisers of terrorist activities face life imprisonment. The maximum penalty for terrorism-related charges is life imprisonment. Persons convicted of terrorism are ‘ineligible for parole or reduced sentences.’^{[225](#)} As noted by a human rights lawyer, terrorism-related cases are tried in military courts under expedited procedures, leaving minimal room for judicial discretion. In this type of prosecution, proceedings follow strict templates, giving the authorities more control over the outcome.^{[226](#)}

^{[218](#)}

SOVA Research Center, SOVA Center releases a comprehensive report on the application of the Russian Criminal Code provisions related to extremism, based on data from 2024, 15 July 2025, [url](#)

^{[219](#)}

Verkhovsky, A., Russia's Politicized Law Enforcement and its Evolution, Academic Policy Paper Series No. 12, The Russia Program, The George Washington University, 8 July 2025, [url](#)

[220](#)

Human Rights Watch, Russia: Supreme Court Bans "LGBT Movement" as "Extremist", 30 November 2025, [url](#)

[221](#)

OVD-Info, Criminal repression in Russia, n.d., [url](#)

[222](#)

UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Mariana Katzarova, 15 September 2025, [url](#), para. 89

[223](#)

Verkhovsky, A., Russia's Politicized Law Enforcement and its Evolution, Academic Policy Paper Series No. 12, The Russia Program, The George Washington University, 8 July 2025, [url](#)

[224](#)

Human rights lawyer, Online interview with EUAA, 23 October 2025

[225](#)

Meduza: Explainers: Russia's 'terrorists and extremists' list is now sweeping up journalists and academics. Soon, Navalny donors could face life in prison, 23 October 2025, [url](#)

[226](#)

Human rights lawyer, Online interview with EUAA, 23 October 2025