

3.2. Protesters

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Although the Russian constitution guarantees its citizens the right ‘to assemble peacefully’ and to conduct rallies, demonstrations, marches and pickets,[341] the authorities have effectively suppressed the freedom of assembly.[342] They have continued to undermine the right to peaceful assembly by using Covid-19 restrictions to prevent[343] or disperse opposition protests, while allowing pro-government gatherings.[344] In 2024, there were several spikes in protest activity,[345] including mid-January 2024 protests in Ufa, the capital of Bashkortostan, over the arrest of Bashkir activist Fail Alsynov,[346] gatherings and protests at Alexei Navalny memorials in February 2024,[347] and protests by the wives of men who were drafted into the army in September 2022.[348]

In 2025, street protests remained prohibited in practice,[349] with authorities in some regions detaining protesters for violating Covid-19 measures.[350] In March 2025, local authorities of Krasnoyarsk city in Siberia denied the organisation of a protest, stating that ‘public events are not allowed during the special military operation’.[351]

As noted by the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Mariana Katzarova, protests in Russia became increasingly replaced by ‘online or symbolic forms of dissent.’[352] In June 2025, Novaya Gazeta Europe reported that ‘military censorship’ and ‘a violent crackdown on street protests’ in 2022 made Russians ‘unwilling’ to take part in street protests. Consequently, civic activism has shifted toward local non-political issues, such as deforestation, problems with public transport, utility networks, urban planning, landfills, condition of educational facilities, healthcare, and protection of animal rights.[353]

Between 1 November 2024 and 17 October 2025, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED) project[354] recorded 420 protests in various regions across Russia, with the highest number of protests held in Moscow (43), Krasnodar (32), Moscow oblast (28), Novosibirsk (28), Saratov (18), Altai republic (17), Krasnoyarsk (14), Dagestan (13), and Altai territory (11).[355]

According to independent media outlet 7x7, based on media reports, there were 365 protests in Russia in 2024, including 152 appeals to the authorities, such as collecting signatures for petitions, written and video appeals to the president, the Investigative Committee, and various state agencies, followed by protest actions (95), gatherings (61), and solitary pickets (45). This source noted that most protests were linked to non-political regional or local issues.[356] As noted by OVD-Info, sporadic protests continued to take place but became increasingly rare. The source noted that most protests are solitary pickets, which is the only form of protests that can be

organised without prior approval from the authorities. Nevertheless, detentions occur also during these solitary actions, with the authorities claiming that they acquire a ‘mass’ character when passers-by stop to watch them.357 On 24 February 2025, the third anniversary of the full-scale war in Ukraine, people in different cities across Russia ‘held small protests and laid flowers at memorials.’358

According to Novaya Gazeta Europe, most protests (85 %) that took place from January 2022 to March 2025 were ‘organised by local people’. The focus of the protests organised by political parties, such as the Communist Party and the Liberal Democratic Party, was on local non-political issues. There were also protests by ultra-patriotic groups like the National Liberation Movement (NLM), supporting the war in Ukraine and demanding the restoration of the USSR. As noted by Novaya Gazeta Europe, ‘in some cities, such as Irkutsk, NLM activists protest every week and are never detained.’359

In 2024, Novaya Gazeta Europe recorded 6 rallies advocating for ‘pacifism,’ compared to 223 in 2022. At the same time, the number of ecology-related rallies remained consistent at around 60 between 2022 and 2024.360 OVD-Info noted that a non-political character of a protest does not guarantee tolerance by the authorities, as detentions also occur during environmental and other protests. Regarding detention practices, OVD-Info noted that if police decide not to pursue charges, detained protests are typically released within several hours, as the main objective of the police is to take them away from the protest site. When charges are brought, the duration of detention depends on their type: in some cases, they can be put under administrative arrest for several days.361

According to the UN Special Rapporteur, Mariana Katzarova, 295 people were arrested during protests between mid-2024 and mid-2025. The source also noted that, overall, at least 3 905 persons were ‘convicted on administrative or criminal charges for peaceful dissent.’362 Among them, at least 80 prosecutions were initiated in relation to ‘the peaceful protests in Bashkortostan’, resulting in the conviction of 48 people to prison terms of up to eight and a half years revealing ‘a pattern of mass criminalization of peaceful dissent under the guise of targeting “public disorder” and “violence”’363

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