

3.4. Journalists

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Since February 2022, authorities have intensified the suppression of independent journalism through a wide range of legislative tools.³⁷² These include ‘war censorship’ laws, anti-terrorism and anti-extremism legislation, as well as criminal prosecution for non-compliance with a ‘foreign agent’ obligations and participation in ‘undesirable organisations.’³⁷³ State-imposed pressure led to the closure of many independent media outlets, the loss of funding³⁷⁴ and the exile of hundreds of journalists.³⁷⁵ In its 2025 Index, RSF ranked Russia 171st out of 180 countries, down from 162nd place in 2024, noting that nearly all independent media in Russia are either banned, blocked, or labelled as ‘foreign agents’ or ‘undesirable organisations’, while those that remain work under ‘military censorship.’³⁷⁶

Journalists face arrests, surveillance, and threats to the safety of their families as well as the need to navigate ‘the shifting boundaries of state censorship.’³⁷⁷ Between 24 February 2022 and 24 July 2025, OVD-Info documented 1 386 instances of ‘pressure on journalists and media workers,’ comprising blocking, closure, or deprivation of registration, legal prosecution, police searches, detention and arrests, threats, and physical violence.³⁷⁸

As of 31 October 2025, RSF Barometer recorded 49 journalists and media workers in detention in Russia.³⁷⁹ Among them, as of 29 September 2025, were 26 Ukrainian journalists.³⁸⁰ The UN Special Rapporteur, Mariana Katzarova, noted that between July 2024 and July 2025, based on data from the Mass Media Defence Centre, 42 Russian journalists were sentenced to prison terms of up to 12 years. Furthermore, new criminal cases were initiated against 89 journalists, compared to 23 in 2023.³⁸¹ In September 2024, Ukrainian journalist Viktoriya Roschina died in detention in Russia,³⁸² after going missing in August 2023 while reporting from the occupied Zaporizhzhia region,³⁸³ with reports indicating signs of torture.³⁸⁴

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