

4.5.3. Informal punishments

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Refusal to continue military service as a contract soldier[973] as well as refusal to comply with military orders[974] can also be punished informally.[975] The UN Special Rapporteur, Mariana Katzarova, noted that individuals have been subjected to torture, ill-treatment, starvation, and death threats to 'enforce discipline,' while 'so-called "torture pits" were created at training grounds to punish' those why try to leave the war.[976] According to *Prizyv k sovesti*, there have been cases where individuals faced violence in response to expressing conscientious objections or refusing to participate in the war, particularly in the occupied territories and in combat zones, which are characterised by pervasive arbitrariness. Since 2024, arrests on the frontlines can be carried out without a court order, with detainees often held in harsh conditions and being subjected to beating and threats.[977]

In an interview with EUAA, Huseyn Aliyev noted that illegal measures against individuals refusing to serve were particularly widely applied in 2024, with no difference regardless of wether the contract had been signed voluntarily or on the person's behalf. While there were many reports about individuals being held in informal detention sites, such as basements, and subjected to torture and other forms of inhumane treatment, in 2025, such reports became less frequent. The expert suggested that this may reflect the institutionalisation of these practices, with soldiers being now fully aware of the severe consequences of refusing to obey orders.[978]

According to Verstka, soldiers who refused to fight and disobeyed orders – such as to take part in 'meat assaults' – were executed irrespectively of the reason for non-compliance. The source also noted on the existence of barrier troops to prevent retreat. According to witnesses interviewed by Verstka, executed persons were officially recorded as 'missing' or 'gone AWOL', which also allowed the authorities to deny compensation to their families. In another forms of punishment, soldiers who refused to fight were reportedly sent on assault missions or ordered to clear minefields.[979]

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  Huseyn Aliyev, Online interview with EUAA, 7 October 2025

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  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. 92

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  Cherta, Как покинуть армию и перестать воевать? Масштабное исследование-обзор «Призыва к совести» [How to leave the army and stop fighting? Large-scale research by ‘Appeal to Conscience’], 22 May 2025, url; 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. 92; Huseyn Aliyev, Online interview with EUAA, 7 October 2025

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  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. 92

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  Huseyn Aliyev, Online interview with EUAA, 7 October 2025

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  Verstka, «Им похуй, кого обнулять». Как казнят в российской армии [‘They don't give a fuck about whom to “nullify” ’ How executions are carried out in the Russian army], 28 October 2025, url,

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