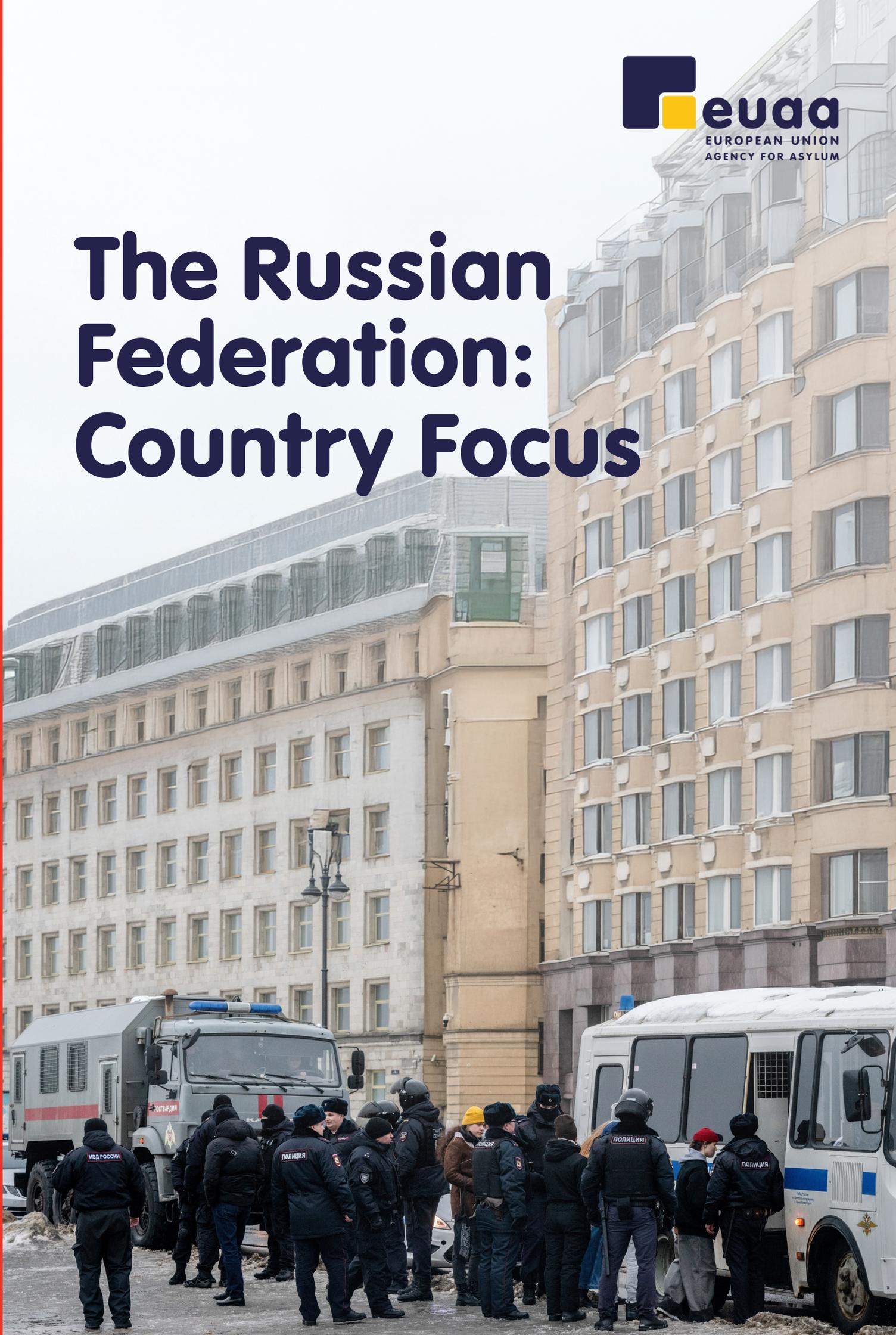


# The Russian Federation: Country Focus



# **The Russian Federation: Country Focus**

## **Country of Origin Information Report**

**December 2025**



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Cover photo/illustration: Police detain people after laying flowers at a monument to victims of political repression to honor Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, Andrei Bok © Getty Images, 2024, [Police detain people after laying flowers at a monument to victims of... News Photo - Getty Images](#)

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## Disclaimer

This report was written according to the [EUAA COI Report Methodology \(2023\)](#). The report is based on carefully selected sources of information. All sources used are referenced.

The information contained in this report has been researched, evaluated and analysed with utmost care within a limited timeframe. However, this document does not claim to be exhaustive. If a particular event, person or organisation is not mentioned in the report, this does not mean that the event has not taken place or that the person or organisation does not exist.

Furthermore, this report is not conclusive as to the determination or merit of any particular application for international protection. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

'Refugee', 'risk' and similar terminology are used as generic terminology and not in the legal sense as applied in the EU Asylum Acquis, the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees.

Neither EUAA nor any person acting on its behalf may be held responsible for the use which may be made of the information contained in this report.

On 19 January 2022, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) became the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA). All references to EASO, EASO products and bodies should be understood as references to the EUAA.

The drafting of this report was finalised on 3 November 2025. Any event taking place after this date is not included in this report. More information on the reference period for this report can be found in the methodology section of the [Introduction](#).





## Glossary and abbreviations

Term	Definition
<b>ACLED</b>	Armed Conflict Location & Event Data project
<b>ACF</b>	The Anti-Corruption Foundation established by Alexei Navalny (Russian: <i>Fond borby s korrupciey</i> , FBK)
<b>AWOL</b>	Absent without leave, an unauthorised absence from a military unit without an intention to desert
<b>FSB</b>	Federal Security Service
<b>MoD</b>	Ministry of Defence
<b>MoJ</b>	Ministry of Justice
<b>Oblast</b>	Administrative and territorial division, equivalent to a region.
<b><i>Rosfinmonitoring</i></b>	The Federal Service for Financial Monitoring
<b><i>Rosgvardiya</i></b>	National Guard
<b><i>Roskomnadzor</i></b>	The Russian federal agency in charge of media supervision





# Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide relevant information for the assessment of applications for international protection, including refugee status and subsidiary protection.

The report covers the period between 1 November 2024 to 1 November 2025.

The report is to be partly read as an update to the previous EUAA COI reports: [Russian Federation: Political Dissent and Opposition](#) and [Russian Federation: Military Service](#), both published in December 2022 and several EUAA COI [queries](#) published since then.

## Methodology

This report was drafted by EUAA and reviewed by EUAA and national COI departments in EU+ countries, as mentioned in the [Acknowledgements](#) section.

This report is produced in line with the EUAA COI Report Methodology (2023)<sup>1</sup> and the EUAA COI Writing and Referencing Style Guide (2023).<sup>2</sup>

## Defining the terms of reference

The terms of reference (ToR) of this report were defined by EUAA based on discussions held with and input received from COI experts in the EUAA COI specialist network on the Russian Federation. The ToR also build on previous EUAA COI reports on the Russian Federation. The Terms of Reference for this report can be found in [Annex 2: Terms of Reference](#).

## Collecting information

The information gathered is a result of research using public, specialised paper-based and electronic sources until 1 November 2025. Some limited additional information was added during the finalisation of this report in response to feedback received during the quality control process, until 15 November 2025.

## Quality control

To ensure that the authors respected the EUAA COI Report Methodology and that the Terms of Reference were comprehensively addressed, a review was carried out by COI specialists from the countries and organisations listed as reviewers in the [Acknowledgements](#) section. All comments made by the reviewers were taken into consideration and most of them were implemented in the final draft of this report, which was finalised on 15 November 2025. EUAA also performed the final quality review and editing of the text.

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<sup>1</sup> EUAA, EUAA Country of Origin Information (COI) Report Methodology, February 2023, [url](#)

<sup>2</sup> EUAA, Writing and Referencing Guide for EUAA Country of Origin Information (COI) Reports, February 2023, [url](#)



The review carried out by the mentioned departments, experts or organisations contributes to the overall quality of the report, but it does not necessarily imply their formal endorsement of the final report, which is the full responsibility of EUAA.

## Sources

In accordance with the EUAA COI Report Methodology, the content of this report relies on a range of different open-source material, as well as interviews and email communication with oral sources. Information was mainly gathered from public reports by international organisations; reports produced by various bodies of the United Nations; civil society, advocacy groups, humanitarian organisations and NGOs; COI reports of national asylum administrations; media, specialised academic publications and think tanks.

In addition to publicly available sources, interviews with experts were conducted to supplement information gaps and/or to further corroborate specific findings. Some experts interviewed by the EUAA preferred to remain anonymous for security reasons. Experts were selected and assessed according to their expertise, reputability, and current knowledge of the situation on the ground. All the public and oral sources referenced in this report are cited and described in [Annex 1: Bibliography](#).

## Structure of the report

The report consists of four main chapters. The first chapter provides an overview of the political system and governance in Russia, detailing recent political developments, state control over media, the internet and digital platforms, and mechanisms of population surveillance.

The second chapter outlines major legal developments, focusing on the scope and implementation of legislation on ‘undesirable organisations’, ‘foreign agents’, the dissemination of ‘false’ information about the Russian military and government and their ‘discreditation’, and high treason, as well as anti-extremism and anti-terrorism laws against individuals expressing dissent to the government and the war in Ukraine.

The third chapter examines the treatment of various political and social groups by the authorities. It covers political opponents, protesters, environmental activists, journalists, human rights defenders and lawyers, religious minorities, LGBTIQ persons and women, focusing both on legal frameworks and practical application as well as regional differences and societal attitudes where relevant.

The fourth chapter provides detailed information on military service. It outlines the structure of the Russian military forces, the concepts of reserve and mobilisation, conscription into compulsory military services, contract service, regional recruitment practices, and penalties for desertion.

# Maps



Map 1. The Russian Federation<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> UN Geospatial, Map No. 3840 Rev.3, January 2004, [url](#)

# 1. Political system and governance

## 1.1. Political developments

Russia has an authoritarian political system, with power heavily ‘concentrated in the hands of President Vladimir Putin’, who was re-elected in March 2024<sup>4</sup> with over 87 % of the vote.<sup>5</sup> The election was widely criticised amid widespread censorship, lack of opposition candidates, and electoral fraud.<sup>6</sup> Constitutional changes adopted in 2020 allow Vladimir Putin to seek two additional consecutive terms, potentially extending his presidency to 2036.<sup>7</sup>

Russia has a multiparty system, but opposition parties are tightly controlled by the Kremlin and do not present a credible challenge to the ruling government.<sup>8</sup> Russia’s parliament, the Federal Assembly, consists of two chambers, the Council of the Federation (upper chamber) and the State Duma (lower chamber).<sup>9</sup> In the 2021 State Duma elections, the ruling United Russia party won 324<sup>10</sup> out of 450 seats,<sup>11</sup> despite numerous reports of voting violations.<sup>12</sup> In the local elections held between 12 and 14 September 2025, determining over 45 000 seats across the country, ‘including 19 governorships, 11 regional legislatures, and 25 city councils,’ candidates from United Russia won the majority of the vote.<sup>13</sup>

As noted by Freedom House, Russia’s leadership uses security agencies to enforce tight societal control and suppress opposition to the regime and relies on loyal business elites, which allows President Putin and his allies in the security and business sectors to control parliamentary decision-making.<sup>14</sup> Reporters Without Borders (RSF) noted that, since the Covid-19 pandemic, and particularly after the February 2022 invasion of Ukraine, President Putin has become ‘increasingly isolated’ and is surrounded by ‘a small inner circle.’ According to RSF, traditional decision-making bodies, such as the Security Council, have lost their influence, while the Parliament largely functions to legitimise Kremlin decisions or to display loyalty through repressive legislation.<sup>15</sup>

The opposition in Russia has been severely weakened as the leaders of the opposition have been imprisoned, killed, or forced into exile, while supporters of the opposition inside the country have either left the country for safety reasons or stopped public criticism of the

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<sup>4</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World, 28 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>5</sup> Election Guide, Russian Federation, 8 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>6</sup> Zavadskaya, M., Russia’s presidential election: Signalling repression and demobilizing opposition, FIIA, May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>7</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World, 28 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>8</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World, 28 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>9</sup> IPU Parline, Russian Federation, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>10</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World, 28 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>11</sup> IPU Parline, Russian Federation, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>12</sup> DW, Reports of voting violations mar Russia elections, 18 September 2021, [url](#); Freedom House, Freedom in the World, 28 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>13</sup> Moscow Times (The), Pro-Kremlin Incumbents Sweep to Victory in Russia’s Regional Elections, 15 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>14</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World, 28 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>15</sup> RSF, Russia, n.d., [url](#)



government due to fear of arrest.<sup>16</sup> Following the death of opposition leader Alexey Navalny in February 2024 while serving a 19-year sentence in an Arctic penal colony,<sup>17</sup> Russia's opposition has faced significant setbacks.<sup>18</sup> Opposition groups abroad are divided<sup>19</sup> and lack a clear strategy,<sup>20</sup> common goals, and political legitimacy,<sup>21</sup> frequently engaging in mutual accusations and competing for influence.<sup>22</sup>

Since the beginning of 2024, the Kremlin has sought to promote persons who participated in Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine into a new elite<sup>23</sup> through the federal level<sup>24</sup> management programme 'Time of Heroes'.<sup>25</sup> As of June 2025, 45 of the first 83 selected applicants were reportedly appointed to various posts.<sup>26</sup> In total, the programme received over 60 000 applications.<sup>27</sup> As noted by researcher Miłosz Bartosiewicz<sup>28</sup> in October 2025, the positions allocated to the graduates of the programme 'have largely been at the regional or local level' and carry limited authority and influence.<sup>29</sup>

In a September 2025 report on the human rights situation in Russia, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Mariana Katzarova, noted that the Russian authorities rely on 'a consolidated ideology centred on "traditional" values and external threats' which is 'used to justify aggression abroad and repression at home'.<sup>30</sup> This ideology is supported by the Russian Orthodox Church<sup>31</sup> and is spread through state-controlled media<sup>32</sup> and public education.<sup>33</sup> As noted by Amnesty International (AI), patriotic indoctrination intensified in 2024, notably through mandatory 'Conversations about

<sup>16</sup> RFE/RL, 3 Years In: How Moscow's War In Ukraine Has Reshaped Life in Russia, 23 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>17</sup> AP, Russian journalist sentenced to 12 years over ties to opposition group, 29 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>18</sup> AP, A year after Navalny's death, the Russian opposition struggles without its charismatic leader, 16 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>19</sup> Meduza, 'Nothing good will come of this'. Three years into the full-scale war, Russia's exiled opposition is in crisis – leaving anti-war Russians feeling disillusioned and unrepresented, 12 February 2025, [url](#); AP, A year after Navalny's death, the Russian opposition struggles without its charismatic leader, 16 February 2025, [url](#); RFE/RL, Who's Who in The Fractured Russian Opposition Fighting Against Putin, 9 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>20</sup> AP, A year after Navalny's death, the Russian opposition struggles without its charismatic leader, 16 February 2025, [url](#); Ponomarev, I., Russia Future Watch – I. Russian Opposition and Russian Resistance: The Landscape Before the Battle for Power, The Jamestown Foundation, Eurasia Daily Monitor, 30 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>21</sup> Ponomarev, I., Russia Future Watch – I. Russian Opposition and Russian Resistance: The Landscape Before the Battle for Power, The Jamestown Foundation, Eurasia Daily Monitor, 30 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>22</sup> AP, A year after Navalny's death, the Russian opposition struggles without its charismatic leader, 16 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>23</sup> Bartosiewicz, M., Regional elites in wartime Russia, OSW, 3 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>24</sup> ISW, Russian Force Generation And Technological Adaptations Update June 18, 2025, 18 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>25</sup> Russia, Vysshaya shkola gosudarstvennogo upravleniya, Vremya Geroev [The Time of Heroes], n.d., [url](#); Bartosiewicz, M., Regional elites in wartime Russia, OSW, 3 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>26</sup> ISW, Russian Force Generation And Technological Adaptations Update June 18, 2025, 18 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>27</sup> ISW, Russian Force Generation And Technological Adaptations Update June 18, 2025, 18 June 2025, [url](#); Bartosiewicz, M., Regional elites in wartime Russia, OSW, 3 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>28</sup> Miłosz Bartosiewicz is a research fellow at the Russian Department of the Poland-based Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW), whose research interests include Russia's regional politics. See, OSW, Miłosz Bartosiewicz, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>29</sup> Bartosiewicz, M., Regional elites in wartime Russia, OSW, 3 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>30</sup> 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. 64

<sup>31</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World, 28 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>32</sup> RSF, Russia, n.d., [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. 4

<sup>33</sup> 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. 4



important things’ classes in schools, first introduced in 2022.<sup>34</sup> Pro-war and patriotic content has also been made compulsory in universities,<sup>35</sup> including through a mandatory ‘Foundations of Russian Statehood’ course, developed by the presidential administration and introduced in 2023.<sup>36</sup> The course on ‘Conversation about important things’ was also reportedly introduced in kindergartens on 1 September 2025.<sup>37</sup>

As noted by the UN Special Rapporteur, the spread of state-sponsored ‘nationalist ideology’ has led to the normalisation of ‘identity-based discrimination and violence’ against women and girls, LGBTIQ persons, ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples, and migrants. At the same time, the state uses the narrative of enemies inside and outside the country ‘to justify and reinforce broader repression,’ while diverting attention ‘from the war on Ukraine and government corruption.’<sup>38</sup>

Russia was excluded from the Council of Europe on 16 March 2022, which it had joined in 1996.<sup>39</sup> On 16 September 2022, Russia ceased to be party to the European Convention on Human Rights. The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) remains competent to examine applications against Russia concerning actions or omissions that occurred up to that date.<sup>40</sup> On 29 September 2025, President Putin signed the law on Russia’s withdrawal from the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.<sup>41</sup>

## 1.2. State control over information and media

Since the start of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Russian authorities have increased restrictions imposed on media.<sup>42</sup> In February 2022, *Roskomnadzor* – the Russian federal executive agency in charge of media supervision<sup>43</sup>– instructed media outlets to avoid using the terms ‘attack’, ‘invasion’, and ‘war’<sup>44</sup> and to use solely information from the Russian Ministry of Defence (MoD).<sup>45</sup> Officially, the Russian government refers to the full-scale invasion

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<sup>34</sup> RFE/RL, 3 Years In: How Moscow’s War In Ukraine Has Reshaped Life in Russia, 23 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>35</sup> 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. 65

<sup>36</sup> Kortukov, D. and Waller J. G., ‘The DNA of Russia’: Ideology and Patriotic Education in Wartime Russia, *Russia.Post*, 30 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>37</sup> Insider (The), Brainwashing 101: How state propaganda hijacked Russian education, 22 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>38</sup> 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. 3

<sup>39</sup> COE, The Russian Federation is excluded from the Council of Europe, 16 March 2022, [url](#)

<sup>40</sup> COE, Russia ceases to be party to the European Convention on Human Rights, 16 September 2022, [url](#)

<sup>41</sup> EEAS, Russia: Statement by the spokesperson on the withdrawal from the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, 30 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>42</sup> CPJ, Russia's repression record, 21 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>43</sup> Bloomberg, Federal Service for Supervision of Communications Information Tech & Mass Media, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>44</sup> IPI, Roskomnadzor threatens to block media and bans use of “war” and “invasion” in reporting, 26 February 2022, [url](#)

<sup>45</sup> RSF, Russian regulator censors Ukraine war coverage, reporters told to toe Kremlin line, 1 March 2022, [url](#)



of Ukraine as a ‘special military operation’ (Russian: *SVO*),<sup>46</sup> even after the authorities have acknowledged that ‘it became a war’ in February<sup>47</sup> and March 2024.<sup>48</sup>

Independent reporting from Russia has become increasingly restricted due to laws criminalising criticism of the military<sup>49</sup> and the government.<sup>50</sup> Many independent media outlets and human rights groups have been closed or designated as ‘foreign agents’ or ‘undesirable organisations’.<sup>51</sup> The authorities have continued to tighten online censorship,<sup>52</sup> blocking ‘thousands of websites’ – including those of independent media, human rights organisations, and opposition politicians – for allegedly violating the legislation on online activity.<sup>53</sup> In July 2025, as reported by Reuters, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov defended the censorship, acknowledging it as ‘unprecedented’ for Russia but justified due to the war in Ukraine. According to Reuters, Peskov ‘noted the closure of many media outlets and the emigration of some reporters, stating that ‘the war is going on in the information space too.’<sup>54</sup>

As of early August 2025, the Russian NGO that monitors internet freedom, *Roskomsvoboda*,<sup>55</sup> reported that over 25 000 websites and links have been blocked due to ‘war censorship’, according to the national blacklist registry, with about 5 000 sources added since August 2024. This list includes both Russian and international media sources.<sup>56</sup> In September 2025, the UN Special Rapporteur noted that *Roskomnadzor* monitors ‘online content to identify shifting political opinions, track dissent and suppress political activity,’ reporting that in 2025 the authorities blocked 410 online resources linked to ‘undesirable organisations’ and 87 linked to ‘foreign agents’.<sup>57</sup> For information about ‘undesirable organisations’ and ‘foreign agents’, see chapter [Legislation on undesirable organisations and foreign agents](#).

In line with the political agenda, books, films, theatre, and television productions were censored or withdrawn for addressing same-sex relationships and other prohibited topics, or due to authors’ designations as ‘foreign agents’.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, media outlets frequently use self-censorship, avoiding topics like homosexuality and religion to align with the state’s conservative stance.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World, 28 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>47</sup> Reuters, Putin addresses Russia’s parliament, 29 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>48</sup> Reuters, Explainer: Why is Russia changing its language about the war?, 22 March 2024, [url](#); Meduza, ‘We are at war’: Putin spokesman says invasion of Ukraine has grown beyond ‘special military operation’, 22 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>49</sup> Reuters, Kremlin says wartime censorship is justified, 11 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>50</sup> CPJ, Russia’s repression record, 21 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>51</sup> AP, Putin signs a bill punishing online searches for information deemed ‘extremist’, 31 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>52</sup> HRW, Russia – Events of 2024, 17 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>53</sup> HRW, Disrupted, Throttled, and Blocked. State Censorship, Control, and Increasing Isolation of Internet Users in Russia, 30 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>54</sup> Reuters, Kremlin says wartime censorship is justified, 11 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>55</sup> Roskomsvoboda is a Russian ‘public organisation’ established in 2012, which monitors ‘the legislative activities of government agencies in the field of Internet regulation as well as its enforcement’, see Roskomsvoboda, About us, [url](#)

<sup>56</sup> Roskomsvoboda, 25 000 блокировок — новый рекорд военной цензуры [25 000 blockings – a new record for military censorship], 5 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>57</sup> 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. 69

<sup>58</sup> AI, Russia 2024, 28 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>59</sup> RSF, Russia, n.d., [url](#)



### 1.3. State control over the internet and digital platforms

According to Human Rights Watch, in 2024, the authorities increasingly used internet shutdowns during ‘peaceful protests, elections, or other political events’,<sup>60</sup> including in the vicinity of Alexey Navalny’s funeral on 1 March 2024.<sup>61</sup>

Since early May 2025, mobile internet disruptions were reported across Russia, with regional authorities attributing them to efforts to prevent attacks by Ukrainian drones,<sup>62</sup> which have reportedly relied on local mobile networks for navigation.<sup>63</sup> However, the investigative media outlet The Insider and the Internet monitoring project *Na Svyazi* (‘In Touch’) found that only around 40 % out of the recorded 200 mobile internet shutdowns between 1 May 2025 and 18 June 2025 coincided with actual drone attacks.<sup>64</sup> Some sources suggested that the authorities may be using anti-drone measures as a pretext to restrict information access, and particularly the access to messaging apps.<sup>65</sup>

According to *Na Svyazi*, internet disruptions were also reported in the regions far from Ukraine, such as Primorye, Sakhalin, and Kamchatka in Russia’s Far East,<sup>66</sup> with nearly 2 100 internet shutdowns, most of which affected certain parts of the cities, recorded in July 2025.<sup>67</sup> By October 2025, mobile internet shutdowns were reportedly ‘routine’, with regional authorities expanding public Wi-Fi networks instead.<sup>68</sup> On 30 October 2025, according to NGO Runet Monitor which tracks daily internet connectivity in Russia,<sup>69</sup> mobile internet shutdowns were reported in 65 regions,<sup>70</sup> declining to 54 regions in mid-November 2025.<sup>71</sup> On 11 November 2025, authorities of Ulyanovsk region in central Russia,<sup>72</sup> which is ‘home to military-linked factories’,<sup>73</sup> implemented Russia’s first permanent mobile internet shutdown, covering parts of the region. As noted by independent media outlet The Moscow Times,

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<sup>60</sup> HRW, *Disrupted, Throttled, and Blocked. State Censorship, Control, and Increasing Isolation of Internet Users in Russia*, 30 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>61</sup> Meduza, *Burying Navalny Live updates as Muscovites bid farewell to Alexey Navalny*, 1 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>62</sup> Insider (The), *Russia shut down mobile internet 200 times in May and June due to “drone attacks,” but none took place in 26 of the affected regions*, 27 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>63</sup> Washington Post (The), *Russians confront wartime internet cuts with public shrug, private fury*, 15 November 2025, [url](#); Monitor Runeta, Telegram, 12 November 2025, [url](#)

<sup>64</sup> Insider (The), *Russia shut down mobile internet 200 times in May and June due to “drone attacks,” but none took place in 26 of the affected regions*, 27 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>65</sup> Insider (The), *Russia shut down mobile internet 200 times in May and June due to “drone attacks,” but none took place in 26 of the affected regions*, 27 June 2025, [url](#); Access Now, *Russia’s record war on connectivity*, 28 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>66</sup> Moscow Times (The), *Russia Expands Free Public Wi-Fi as Mobile Internet Blackouts Spread*, 16 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>67</sup> Meduza, *Russia saw record 2,099 mobile Internet shutdowns in July, researchers say*, 1 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>68</sup> Forbes, *Russia Is Shutting Down Its Own Internet To Stop Ukrainian Drones*, 9 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>69</sup> Washington Post (The), *Russians confront wartime internet cuts with public shrug, private fury*, 15 November 2025, [url](#)

<sup>70</sup> Monitor Runeta, Telegram, 31 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>71</sup> Monitor Runeta, Telegram, 15 November 2025, [url](#)

<sup>72</sup> Moscow Times (The), *Ulyanovsk Region Imposes First Permanent Mobile Internet Blackout*, 11 November 2025, [url](#)

<sup>73</sup> Washington Post (The), *Russians confront wartime internet cuts with public shrug, private fury*, 15 November 2025, [url](#); Monitor Runeta, Telegram, 12 November 2025, [url](#)



based on regional reports, the outage was ordered by the federal authorities and affected areas surrounding 'sensitive government and military facilities.'<sup>74</sup>

The authorities have blocked access to major foreign social media platforms,<sup>75</sup> such as Facebook and Instagram (blocked in March 2022)<sup>76</sup> and several messaging applications (apps), such as Signal (blocked in August 2024) and Viber (blocked in December 2024).<sup>77</sup> Streaming services, such as YouTube,<sup>78</sup> have been slowed down.<sup>79</sup> Internet users must rely on Virtual Private Network (VPN) services to access blocked platforms<sup>80</sup> and restricted news websites.<sup>81</sup> Authorities have also restricted access to VPN services<sup>82</sup> and, since March 2024, they made advertising of VPN services illegal. The use of VPN services is not penalised.<sup>83</sup>

In March 2025, messaging app Telegram was blocked in Dagestan and Chechnya after a warning by the law enforcement that it was 'often used by enemies',<sup>84</sup> for example, during the 2023 anti-Israel riots at the Makhachkala airport, the capital of Dagestan.<sup>85</sup> In August 2025, *Roskomnadzor* announced restrictions on voice calls via 'foreign' messaging apps WhatsApp and Telegram, citing claims from law enforcement that they were used for criminal purposes,<sup>86</sup> such as making scam calls to extort money or inciting sabotage and terrorist activities.<sup>87</sup>

The announcement followed the launch of MAX, a multi-functional app developed by social media company VK (formerly *Vkontakte*),<sup>88</sup> which integrates messaging, government, payment, and other services.<sup>89</sup> A new law requires preinstallation of MAX on all smartphones,

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<sup>74</sup> Moscow Times (The), Ulyanovsk Region Imposes First Permanent Mobile Internet Blackout, 11 November 2025, [url](#)

<sup>75</sup> AP, How Russia reins in the internet by blocking websites and isolating it from the rest of the world, 5 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>76</sup> Garina, N., Social Media in Russia: What Is Allowed, What Is Not, and How the Law, Monitoring Techniques and Technologies Are Evolving, Russia.Post, 11 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>77</sup> AI, Russia 2024, 28 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>78</sup> Epifanova, A., Throttling of YouTube Shows That Russia Is Getting Better at Online Censorship, 12 February 2025, Carnegie Politika, [url](#); HRW, Disrupted, Throttled, and Blocked. State Censorship, Control, and Increasing Isolation of Internet Users in Russia, 30 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>79</sup> HRW, Disrupted, Throttled, and Blocked. State Censorship, Control, and Increasing Isolation of Internet Users in Russia, 30 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>80</sup> HRW, Disrupted, Throttled, and Blocked. State Censorship, Control, and Increasing Isolation of Internet Users in Russia, 30 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>81</sup> Garina, N., The Cat and Mouse Game of Internet Censorship and Circumvention in Russia, Russia.Post, 27 June 2025, [url](#); AP, How Russia reins in the internet by blocking websites and isolating it from the rest of the world, 5 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>82</sup> Novaya Gazeta, Russia blocks nearly 200 VPN services while spending billions purchasing VPNs for government use, 24 October 2024, [url](#); TechRadar, "A clear escalation in Russia's crackdown on digital privacy tools" – experts warn against recent VPN disappearances in Russia, 16 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>83</sup> Garina, N., The Cat and Mouse Game of Internet Censorship and Circumvention in Russia, Russia.Post, 27 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>84</sup> Garina, N., Social Media in Russia: What Is Allowed, What Is Not, and How the Law, Monitoring Techniques and Technologies Are Evolving, Russia.Post, 11 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>85</sup> Reuters, Two Russian regions block Telegram app over security fears, 8 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>86</sup> Mediazona, No country for calls. Russian censorship agency confirms throttling voice calls on WhatsApp and Telegram to "fight crime", 13 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>87</sup> RFE/RL, Russian Regulators Restrict WhatsApp, Telegram In Latest Internet Crackdown, 14 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>88</sup> RFE/RL, Russian Regulators Restrict WhatsApp, Telegram In Latest Internet Crackdown, 14 August 2025, [url](#); Moscow Times, Everything You Need to Know About Max, Russia's State-Backed Answer to WhatsApp, 28 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>89</sup> AP, How Russia reins in the internet by blocking websites and isolating it from the rest of the world, 5 August 2025, [url](#); RFE/RL, Russian Regulators Restrict WhatsApp, Telegram In Latest Internet Crackdown, 14 August 2025, [url](#)



tablets, computers, and smart TVs sold in Russia from 1 September 2025.<sup>90</sup> According to media sources, the user terms of MAX explicitly permit the app to share user data with government institutions.<sup>91</sup> According to VK, as of October 2025, more than 45 million users have registered MAX accounts, with 18 million people using it daily.<sup>92</sup> On 30 October 2025, some Russian mobile carriers reportedly began preventing new user registrations on WhatsApp and Telegram by blocking verification SMS messages and voice calls.<sup>93</sup>

Moreover, the authorities reportedly increased oversight or control over domestic platforms, such as Yandex, VK, and Mail.ru.<sup>94</sup> In an interview with the EUAA, a human rights lawyer who preferred to remain anonymous due to security reasons noted that law enforcement agencies have access to all social media platforms administered by Russian companies — such as VK, *Odnoklassniki*, and the new messenger MAX — as well as to email services like Yandex and Mail.ru. According to the source, there are numerous criminal cases in which private email correspondence has been used as evidence.<sup>95</sup>

## 1.4. Surveillance of the population

In an interview with the EUAA, a human rights lawyer noted that the spread of surveillance technologies in Russia has significantly accelerated since the Covid-19 pandemic. The country's surveillance system has become largely automated due to the widespread use of facial recognition technology and an extensive camera network operating in major cities. According to the source, this technological expansion has been actively supported by the Russian business sector, with banks and transportation companies actively adopting new technologies.<sup>96</sup> For example, facial recognition technology is integrated into the Face Pay biometric payment system, which allows passengers to link their photo with their bank and metro cards to pay for travel.<sup>97</sup> First launched in Moscow's underground in October 2021,<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Moscow Times, Everything You Need to Know About Max, Russia's State-Backed Answer to WhatsApp, 28 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>91</sup> AP, How Russia reins in the internet by blocking websites and isolating it from the rest of the world, 5 August 2025, [url](#); Moscow Times, Everything You Need to Know About Max, Russia's State-Backed Answer to WhatsApp, 28 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>92</sup> New York Times (The), Russia Pushes a State-Controlled 'Super App' by Sabotaging Its Rivals, 21 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>93</sup> Cyber Insider, Russia Blocks New User Registration on Telegram and WhatsApp, 31 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>94</sup> RFE/RL, Russian Regulators Restrict WhatsApp, Telegram In Latest Internet Crackdown, 14 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>95</sup> Human rights lawyer, Online interview with EUAA, 23 October 2025

<sup>96</sup> Human rights lawyer, Online interview with EUAA, 23 October 2025

<sup>97</sup> Lithuania, National Threat Assessment, State Security Department of the Republic of Lithuania, March 2025, [url](#), p. 26

<sup>98</sup> Reuters, Moscow says it is first to launch large-scale metro facial ID payment system, 15 October 2021, [url](#)



Face Pay was introduced between August 2024 and March 2025 in several other cities, including Kazan, Nizhny Novgorod,<sup>99</sup> Yekaterinburg,<sup>100</sup> Samara,<sup>101</sup> and St. Petersburg.<sup>102</sup>

The Russian authorities have used closed-circuit television surveillance cameras (CCTV) to identify and detain individuals participating in anti-government protests, as well as journalists covering them.<sup>103</sup> On 4 July 2023, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) noted in a case regarding the arrest of a solo protestor identified through social media and CCTV in the Moscow underground that facial-recognition technology installed in Moscow violated Article 8 (right to respect for private life) of the European Convention on Human Rights and Article 10 (freedom of expression) of the European Convention.<sup>104</sup>

In July 2024, the media outlet Eurasianet reported that, according to the Ministry of Digital Development, Russia had more than one million CCTV cameras installed in various cities, including around 230 000 cameras in Moscow, with one third connected to a facial recognition system.<sup>105</sup> Several people who attended the funeral of Alexei Navalny on 1 March 2024 were detained in the days following the event, reportedly after being identified through CCTV footage or online videos of the memorial.<sup>106</sup>

According to a human rights lawyer, surveillance is more extensive in large cities and wealthier regions with the resources to invest in the necessary infrastructure. For instance, the Republic of Tatarstan has long been a leader in adopting surveillance technologies. Along with Moscow, Tatarstan operates the Safe City program, which integrates video surveillance into a unified system, including the cameras installed at the entrances of residential buildings. In contrast, poorer regions of Russia have fewer technological capabilities for surveillance.<sup>107</sup> The Safe City program is also operational in St. Petersburg, which has 102 000 CCTV cameras.<sup>108</sup> As reported by The Insider, in August 2025, around 50 000 cameras in the city were equipped with an ethnicity recognition function, which the city authorities aim to use to 'monitor gatherings of immigrants.'<sup>109</sup>

In August 2024, the Citizen Lab at the University of Toronto and international non-profit organisation Access Now reported that since 2022<sup>110</sup> hackers linked to Russian intelligence had been engaged in a global phishing email campaign against prominent opposition figures

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<sup>99</sup> RFE/RL, 'Significant Risk As Facial Recognition In Russia's Subways Goes Regional, 13 September 2024, [url](#); ID Tech, Moscow Aims to Deploy Face Pay at All Metro Turnstiles by End of Year, 17 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>100</sup> Russia, Informacionny portal Sverdlovskoy oblasti, Оплатить поездку в метро при помощи улыбки можно на всех станциях Екатеринбурга [You can pay for your metro journey with a smile at all stations in Yekaterinburg], 11 November 2025, [url](#)

<sup>101</sup> Russia, Obyedinennaya transportnaya karta, Оплата улыбкой доступна [Payment by smile is available], n.d., [url](#)

<sup>102</sup> RBC, В петербургском метро запустили новый вид оплаты проезда [A new type of fare payment has been launched in the St. Petersburg metro], 4 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>103</sup> RFE/RL, 'Significant Risk As Facial Recognition In Russia's Subways Goes Regional, 13 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>104</sup> ECHR, Use of facial-recognition technology breached rights of Moscow underground protestor, 4 July 2023, [url](#)

<sup>105</sup> Eurasianet, Russia: How the Kremlin is using AI to enhance video surveillance, 4 July 2024, [url](#)

<sup>106</sup> Meduza, Russian authorities using video footage to identify and arrest people who attended Navalny's funeral, 5 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>107</sup> Human rights lawyer, Online interview with EUAA, 23 October 2025

<sup>108</sup> Moscow Times (The), St. Petersburg to Introduce Ethnicity Recognition Software CCTV Cameras, 20 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>109</sup> Insider (The), St. Petersburg rolls out cameras allegedly capable of recognizing the "ethnic affiliation" of passersby, 26 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>110</sup> Reuters, Russia's critics targeted with global hacking campaign, rights group says, 14 August 2024, [url](#)





in exile, as well as international NGOs and media, using malicious emails to steal credentials.<sup>111</sup> Inside Russia, the law requires internet service providers (ISPs) to install equipment that enables security services to monitor internet traffic in real time and share users' geolocation data.<sup>112</sup>

Russian nationals returning to Russia from abroad reportedly face questioning upon crossing the border.<sup>113</sup> As noted by Ivan Pavlov, founder of Department One<sup>114</sup> and several other human rights groups, in an interview with the EUAA, individuals returning to Russia 'are of interest to the special services.' The source noted that if a person has been away for an extended time, border officials may question them upon arrival at the airport, checking also mobile phones, banking apps, and social media accounts.<sup>115</sup> In an interview with EUAA, a representative of independent human rights project OVD-Info<sup>116</sup> noted that border guards 'seem to have some kind of databases and lists,' but OVD-Info does not have information about their content. The source further noted several potential 'risk factors', such as holding Ukrainian citizenship or having an activist background. They added that some criminal cases seem to have been initiated after officials inspected individual's mobile phone at the border – for instance, when financial transactions to funds possible associated with Ukraine were discovered.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Guardian (The), Russia launching more sophisticated phishing attacks, new report finds, 14 August 2024, [url](#)

<sup>112</sup> Freedom House, Freedom on the Net 2024, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>113</sup> DW, Russia intensifies border scrutiny for dissidents, 14 March 2024, [url](#); OVD-Info, Online interview with EUAA, 21 October 2025

<sup>114</sup> Department one (Russian: *Pervy otdel*) is a community of lawyers and journalists in Russia who report on court cases and provide legal aid, see, Pervy otdel, Kto my takie [Who we are], [url](#)

<sup>115</sup> Ivan Pavlov, Online interview with EUAA, 10 October 2025

<sup>116</sup> OVD-Info is an independent human rights project, which was founded in 2011 and works on the ground in Russia, providing legal aid, engaging in advocacy, and collecting data on political repressions in the country, see OVD-Info, About us, n.d., [url](#). The person interviewed by EUAA preferred to remain anonymous for security reasons and is referred to as OVD-Info.

<sup>117</sup> OVD-Info, Online interview with EUAA, 21 October 2025





## 2. Legal developments

### 2.1. Use of judicial system against government critics

Since February 2022, Russian authorities have increased their efforts to stifle dissent and opposition in the country.<sup>118</sup> Reporting on events of 2024, AI noted that the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and association remained ‘severely restricted’, with dissenters facing ‘arbitrary prosecutions, unfair trials, heavy fines and lengthy prison terms.’<sup>119</sup> The authorities have systematically criminalised peaceful civic activity, labelling political opponents, activists, journalists, human rights defenders, lawyers, and people expressing dissent as ‘existential security threats’ and ‘enemies of the State’.<sup>120</sup>

The use of the criminal justice system<sup>121</sup> and criminal prosecution is reportedly ‘the most dynamic form of political pressure’ in Russia and in the illegally annexed Crimea.<sup>122</sup> In an interview with the EUAA, a human rights lawyer noted that, by 2025, criminal prosecution has become the primary tool of repression, replacing administrative punishments such as fines and short-term arrest used before.<sup>123</sup> As summarised by researcher Aram Terzyan<sup>124</sup> in December 2024, the ‘weaponization of justice’ by the Russian state has three key patterns: selective prosecution, which can be used against prominent opposition figures as well as ordinary citizens; legal ambiguity, which enables arbitrary enforcement of laws; and performative repression, where trials of opposition figures are used to ‘intimidate the population and legitimise state actions.’<sup>125</sup>

In July 2025, Alexander Verkhovsky, founder of the SOVA Research Centre<sup>126</sup>, noted that the authorities mainly rely on laws specifically designed to prosecute actions perceived by the state – and often by the society – as politically or ideologically driven. These legal instruments range from anti-terrorism and anti-extremism laws to explicitly politicised laws on ‘foreign agents’ and ‘undesirable organisations.’<sup>127</sup> Government critics also face prosecution on

<sup>118</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World, 28 February 2025, [url](#); BBC News, Russian hairdresser jailed over neighbour claim of spreading fake news, 15 April 2025, [url](#); AP, Russian journalist sentenced to 12 years over ties to opposition group, 29 July 2025, [url](#); AP, Putin signs a bill punishing online searches for information deemed ‘extremist’, 31 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>119</sup> AI, Russia 2024, 28 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>120</sup> 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. 2

<sup>121</sup> Terzyan, A., Weaponized Justice: Patterns of Repression in Russia, 24 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>122</sup> OVD-Info, Repression in Russia in 2024: OVD-Info Overview, 12 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>123</sup> Human rights lawyer, Online interview with EUAA, 23 October 2025

<sup>124</sup> Aram Terzyan is a research director of US-based Centre for East European and Russian Studies. See, Modern Diplomacy, Aram Terzyan, n.d. [url](#)

<sup>125</sup> Terzyan, A., Weaponized Justice: Patterns of Repression in Russia, 24 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>126</sup> SOVA Research Center is a group of researchers formed after the closure of SOVA Center for Information and Analysis in August 2023, which focuses on issues on nationalism and anti-extremism policies and their implementation in Russia, see SOVA Research Center, About us, 31 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>127</sup> 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](#); 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. 31





charges of spreading ‘false’ information about and ‘discrediting’ Russian military,<sup>128</sup> treason, espionage, and rehabilitation of Nazism.<sup>129</sup> People expressing anti-war positions have been prosecuted for social media posts and comments.<sup>130</sup> In an interview with the EUAA, a human rights lawyer highlighted two notable trends in criminal prosecutions. The first is the simplification and acceleration of proceedings from the initiation of a criminal case to the court decision. The second trend is the imposition of harsher punishments: with prison terms ranging from eight to nine years, and sometimes exceeding ten, compared to the two to five years in previous years.<sup>131</sup>

According to OVD-Info, 1 802 persons were imprisoned as a result of politically motivated criminal prosecution as of 1 November 2025: 1 185 of them were serving prison sentences and 617 were in pre-trial detention or in custody pending the court decision. When categorised by the type of violation of civil liberties, 623 cases concerned freedom of association, 534 were related to freedom of conscience, 484 to freedom of expression, and 112 to freedom of assembly. Another 623 cases did not fall into these specific categories.<sup>132</sup>

As noted by Alexander Verkhovsky, authorities view people who publicly support Ukraine as a ‘fifth column’ and take measures to suppress it.<sup>133</sup> According to OVD-Info, as of 1 November 2025, over 1 288 individuals faced criminal prosecution for expressing an ‘anti-war stance’. The largest number of charges was initiated for dissemination of ‘false’ information about Russian armed forces (440 persons), public incitement to terrorism or justification of terrorism (279 persons), discrediting the Russian armed forces (260 persons), vandalism (204 persons), public appeals for the performance of extremist activity (85 persons), rehabilitation of Nazism (53 persons), public calls for activities against state security (43 persons), organising an extremist community (40 persons).<sup>134</sup>

Sources also noted that citizens often report neighbours, acquaintances,<sup>135</sup> or colleagues<sup>136</sup> for expressing anti-war sentiments in private settings, leading to criminal prosecutions for those being reported.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> MJRC (Media & Journalism Research Center), Media Regulation, Government and Policy in Russia, 11 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>129</sup> 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. 31

<sup>130</sup> AP, Putin signs a bill punishing online searches for information deemed ‘extremist’, 31 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>131</sup> Human rights lawyer, Online interview with EUAA, 23 October 2025

<sup>132</sup> OVD-Info, Criminal repression in Russia, [url](#), accessed 1 November 2025

<sup>133</sup> Verkhovsky, A., Russia’s Politicized Law Enforcement and its Evolution, Academic Policy Paper Series No. 12, The Russia Program, The George Washington University, [url](#)

<sup>134</sup> OVD-Info, Anti-war criminal cases, n.d., [url](#), accessed 1 November 2025

<sup>135</sup> RFE/RL, 3 Years In: How Moscow’s War In Ukraine Has Reshaped Life in Russia, 23 February 2025, [url](#); BBC News, Russian hairdresser jailed over neighbour claim of spreading fake news, 15 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>136</sup> BBC News, Russian hairdresser jailed over neighbour claim of spreading fake news, 15 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>137</sup> BBC News, Russia’s targeting of ‘enemies within’ evokes ghosts of the Soviet past, 13 September 2024, [url](#); RFE/RL, 3 Years In: How Moscow’s War In Ukraine Has Reshaped Life in Russia, 23 February 2025, [url](#)





### 2.1.1. Trials in absentia

Numerous politically motivated court proceedings, including against opposition politicians<sup>138</sup> and journalists<sup>139</sup> as well as for violations of ‘foreign agents’ or ‘undesirable organisations’ legislation have been conducted in absentia.<sup>140</sup> In 2024, over a third of criminal cases related to ‘foreign agent’ laws and spreading of ‘false’ information about the Russian army and government were reportedly initiated against people who had already left Russia.<sup>141</sup>

According to Ivan Pavlov, the legislation has been amended to expand the range of offences allowing for trials in absentia. While previously trials in absentia were limited to grave and especially grave crimes punishable with prison sentences of over six years, the law now allows such trials for ‘political crimes’ – the crimes of non-grave and moderate severity – such as failure to fulfil the duties of a ‘foreign agent.’ At the same time, the source noted that trials in absentia for treason remain rare.<sup>142</sup> According to a human rights lawyer, Russian authorities use criminal cases in absentia – along with other means, such as confiscations of assets, blocking sources of income in Russia, or accumulating debts arising from fines due to various bans, such as restrictions on advertising – against Russian nationals living outside the country but remaining engaged ‘in some kind of public activity.’<sup>143</sup>

According to OVD-Info, the cases against individuals abroad are often initiated because of their social media posts, leading to charges for discrediting the Russian army or extremism, such as glorifying terrorism. Exiled individuals designated as ‘foreign agents’ may also face prosecution for non-compliance with ‘foreign agents’ obligations. The source also noted that surveillance efforts particularly concern high-profile individuals.<sup>144</sup> Sources interviewed by EUAA also noted that there have been cases where individual persons with a pending criminal case have had their passport applications denied at Russian consulates abroad.<sup>145</sup>

## 2.2. Legislation on undesirable organisations and foreign agents

### 2.2.1. Undesirable organisations

The legislation on ‘undesirable organisations’ was adopted in 2015 to allow the designation of non-government organisations (NGOs) as ‘undesirable’ if the General Prosecutor’s Office found that they undermine ‘the foundations of the Russian constitutional order, defence

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<sup>138</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europe, Tightening the screws. Why the Russian authorities are increasingly cracking down on opposition both at home and abroad, 17 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>139</sup> RSF, Exiled, convicted, surveilled: how Russia has prosecuted nearly 70 journalists beyond its borders, 15 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>140</sup> AI, Russia 2024, 28 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>141</sup> 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](#)

<sup>142</sup> Ivan Pavlov, Online interview with EUAA, 10 October 2025

<sup>143</sup> Human rights lawyer, Online interview with EUAA, 23 October 2025

<sup>144</sup> OVD-Info, Online interview with EUAA, 21 October 2025

<sup>145</sup> OVD-Info, Online interview with EUAA, 21 October 2025; Human rights lawyer, Online interview with EUAA, 23 October 2025





capabilities, or national security of Russia.<sup>146</sup> In August 2024, the legislation was broadened to allow for the designation of any foreign or international organisation as ‘undesirable’<sup>147</sup> if its ‘founders or stakeholders are state bodies of a foreign country.’<sup>148</sup> A register of ‘undesirable organisations’ is managed by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ).<sup>149</sup>

As of October 2025, the register of ‘undesirable organisations’ comprised 269 entities, with 65 organisations added in 2024<sup>150</sup> and 74 in the period between January 2025 and the beginning of October 2025.<sup>151</sup> The register includes prominent independent media outlets and human rights organisations.<sup>152</sup> Among organisations designated as ‘undesirable’ in 2024 were media sources such as Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Belsat, and The Moscow Times and international NGOs such as Freedom House, Article 19, Feminist Anti-War Resistance, and crowdfunding platform Global Giving.<sup>153</sup> In May 2025, Russian authorities added to the list of ‘undesirable organisations’ Amnesty International,<sup>154</sup> in July 2025, the Paris-based Andrei Sakharov Institute and a civil movement, Peace. Progress. Human Rights, both established by prominent human rights advocate Lev Ponomarev,<sup>155</sup> and in August 2025, Reporters without Borders.<sup>156</sup> As of June 2025, 195 organisations on the register were media outlets.<sup>157</sup>

Recognition of an organisation as ‘undesirable’ results in a ban on maintaining offices or conducting projects in Russia, as well as producing or disseminating any content, including online.<sup>158</sup> Involvement with ‘undesirable organisations’ – including distributing their content or making donations to these organisations<sup>159</sup> – is a criminal offence.<sup>160</sup> As noted by Deutsche Welle (DW), this includes ‘the dissemination of quotes and links to the text and videos’ produced by ‘undesirable’ organisations and ‘participation in any of their public events.’<sup>161</sup>

People participating in the activities of an ‘undesirable organisation’ first face administrative liability under Article 20.33 of the Code of Administrative Offences which escalates to criminal

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<sup>146</sup> ECHR, Case of Andrey Rylkov Foundation and Others v. Russia, 18 June 2024, [url](#), para. 1

<sup>147</sup> HRW, Russia – Events of 2024, 17 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>148</sup> DW, Russia tightens ‘undesirable organizations’ law, 27 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>149</sup> ECHR, Case of Andrey Rylkov Foundation and Others v. Russia, 18 June 2024, [url](#), para. 5

<sup>150</sup> OVD-Info, Repression in Russia in 2024: OVD-Info Overview, 12 January 2025, [url](#); AI, Russia 2024, 28 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>151</sup> HRW, UN Special Rapporteur on Russia Extended for Another Year, 8 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>152</sup> AP, Russia outlaws Amnesty International in latest crackdown on dissent and activists, 19 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>153</sup> HRW, Russia – Events of 2024, 17 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>154</sup> AP, Russia outlaws Amnesty International in latest crackdown on dissent and activists, 19 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>155</sup> Meduza, Russia bans Andrei Sakharov Institute as ‘undesirable’ organization, 24 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>156</sup> RSF, RSF listed as “undesirable organisation” in Russia, where Kremlin sees right to information as treat, 14 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>157</sup> 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. 26

<sup>158</sup> ECHR, Case of Andrey Rylkov Foundation and Others v. Russia, 18 June 2024, [url](#), para. 2; Russia, Федеральный закон “О мерах воздействия на лиц, причастных к нарушениям основополагающих прав и свобод человека, прав и свобод граждан Российской Федерации” от 28.12.2012 N 272-ФЗ (последняя редакция) [Federal Law “On Measures to Influence Persons Involved in Violations of Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms, Rights and Freedoms of Citizens of the Russian Federation” dated December 28, 2012 No. 272-FZ (latest edition)], [url](#), Article 3.1

<sup>159</sup> AP, Russia outlaws Amnesty International in latest crackdown on dissent and activists, 19 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>160</sup> CPJ, Russia's repression record, 21 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>161</sup> DW, Russia tightens ‘undesirable organisations’ law, 27 July 2024, [url](#)





liability under Article 284.1 of the Criminal Code if the offence is repeated.<sup>162</sup> While the administrative punishment for individuals involved in the activities of an ‘undesirable organisation’ is a fine ranging from 5 000 [51 euros<sup>163</sup>] to 15 000 rubles [154 euros],<sup>164</sup> the criminal liability can result in up to four years in prison for participation in the activities of an ‘undesirable’ organisation, up to five years for financing such activities, and up to six years for organising them.<sup>165</sup>

As noted by independent media outlet Mediazona, in 2024 courts issued a record-high 178 administrative fines for participation in the activities of ‘undesirable organisations’ (Article 20.33 of the Code of Administrative Offences), compared to around 150 fines issued in 2022 and 2023 combined. Unlike previous years, when most fines were issued for participation in religious organisations, in 2024, the largest number of fines (81) were for involvement with independent media, primarily affecting content contributors such as authors, editors, and experts. However, in some cases readers who reposted content have also been fined.<sup>166</sup> As noted by UN Special Rapporteur, Mariana Katzarova, between mid-2024 and mid-2025, at least 152 administrative cases for participation in ‘undesirable organisations’ were prosecuted. Besides, at least 25 criminal cases were initiated under article 284.1 of the Criminal Code, on involvement with ‘undesirable organisations’, resulting in at least 37 convictions.<sup>167</sup>

## 2.2.2. Foreign agents

The authorities have expanded the scope of the ‘foreign agent’ legislation, initially introduced in 2012, numerous times.<sup>168</sup> Under the 2022 law ‘On control over the activities of persons under foreign influence’,<sup>169</sup> the definition of a ‘foreign agent’ was broadened to include any individual deemed to be ‘under foreign influence’ or receiving any form of foreign support.<sup>170</sup> The amended law also prohibited ‘foreign agents’ from holding public office, financing or organising public events, working in jobs with access to state secrets, teaching in state and municipal educational institutions, and participating in public procurement.<sup>171</sup> In October 2023, the law was further amended to allow the authorities ‘to conduct unscheduled inspections of any party potentially connected to “foreign agents”, based on complaints from any individual

<sup>162</sup> Russia, Уголовный кодекс Российской Федерации от 13.06.1996 N 63-ФЗ (ред. от 31.07.2025) (с изм. и доп., вступ. в силу с 01.09.2025) [The Criminal Code of the Russian Federation of 13.06.1996 N 63-FZ (with amendments and additions, effective from 1.09.2025)], 2025, [url](#), Art. 284.1

<sup>163</sup> For the exchange rate, the exchange rate for October 2025 provided by the European Commission was used. EC, Exchange rate (InforEuro), n.d., [url](#)

<sup>164</sup> Russia, Кодекс Российской Федерации об административных правонарушениях, от 30.12.2001 N 195-ФЗ (с изм. и доп., вступ. в силу с 22.10.2025) [“Code of Administrative Offences of the Russian Federation, of 30.12.2001 No 195 -FZ (with amendments and additions, effective from 22.10.2025), 2025, [url](#), Art. 20.33

<sup>165</sup> Russia, Уголовный кодекс Российской Федерации от 13.06.1996 N 63-ФЗ (ред. от 31.07.2025) (с изм. и доп., вступ. в силу с 01.09.2025) [The Criminal Code of the Russian Federation of 13.06.1996 N 63-FZ (with amendments and additions, effective from 1.09.2025)], 2025, [url](#), Art. 284.1

<sup>166</sup> Mediazona, When journalism is “undesirable”. Russia’s crackdown on independent media results in 81 fines for those “associated” with independent media, 10 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>167</sup> 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. 15

<sup>168</sup> ECHR, Case of Kobaliya and Others v. Russia, 22 October 2024, 22 January 2025, [url](#), para. 3, 17-32

<sup>169</sup> Moscow Times (The), How the Kremlin's 'Foreign Agents' Law Strangled Freedom in Russia, 22 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>170</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World, 28 February 2025, [url](#); Moscow Times (The), Putin Signs Law Making It Easier to Prosecute ‘Foreign Agents’, 16 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>171</sup> ECHR, Case of Kobaliya and Others v. Russia, 22 October 2024, 22 January 2025, [url](#), para. 16



or organization, regardless of nationality.<sup>172</sup> In March 2024, new restrictions prohibited advertising in media labelled as ‘foreign agents,’ aiming to cut off their advertisement-based income.<sup>173</sup> In April 2024, a new law allowed the MoJ to label individuals as ‘foreign agents’ for assisting ‘foreign organisations “acting contrary” to Russia’s interests’ and barred ‘foreign agents’ from participating in any type of teaching activities.<sup>174</sup>

Experts interviewed by the EUAA in October 2025 noted that the list of ‘foreign agents’ continues to grow,<sup>175</sup> highlighting that the ‘foreign agent’ legislation is one of the major methods of repression against government critics<sup>176</sup> and activists.<sup>177</sup> The ‘foreign agent’ label imposes significant legal obligations,<sup>178</sup> including mandatory reports on activities and expenditures and the requirement to add the ‘foreign agent’ label on all publications. Non-compliance can result in prosecution, fines, and imprisonment of up to two years.<sup>179</sup>

On 24 June 2025, President Putin signed a law allowing for the prosecution of ‘foreign agents’ in absentia ‘for administrative offences committed abroad.’<sup>180</sup> The law also increased ‘fines for not complying with the government-mandated labelling requirements for content produced by ‘foreign agents’ from 30 000 to 50 000 rubles [307 - 512 euros] for individuals and from 300 000 to 500 000 rubles [3 075 – 5 125 euros] for legal entities.<sup>181</sup> In October 2025, the ‘foreign agent’ legislation was further tightened, introducing criminal liability after the first administrative offence, whereas previously criminal prosecution had been initiated after two administrative violations within a year,<sup>182</sup> which made criminal prosecution of people added to the list of ‘foreign agents’ easier.<sup>183</sup>

As of 24 October 2025, the register of ‘foreign agents’ maintained by the MoJ, contained nearly 1 099 entries, including the names of people and entities removed from the register.<sup>184</sup> In 2024, 169 individuals and organisations were added,<sup>185</sup> followed by 133 between 1 January 2025 and 18 July 2025.<sup>186</sup> As noted by OVD-Info to the EUAA, for several years, most newly designated ‘foreign agents’ have been individuals rather than NGOs or entities. Moreover, while earlier listings involved high-profile and/or media-affiliated people, many current designations are based on individuals’ ties to certain organisations. For example, many

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<sup>172</sup> PACE, Situation of human rights defenders and whistleblowers in Europe, 24 January 2025, [url](#), para. 44

<sup>173</sup> PACE, Situation of human rights defenders and whistleblowers in Europe, 24 January 2025, [url](#), para. 45; Freedom House, Freedom in the World, 28 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>174</sup> CPJ, Russia's repression record, 21 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>175</sup> Human rights lawyer, Online interview with EUAA, 23 October 2025, OVD-Info, Online interview with EUAA, 21 October 2025

<sup>176</sup> Human rights lawyer, Online interview with EUAA, 23 October 2025

<sup>177</sup> OVD-Info, Online interview with EUAA, 21 October 2025

<sup>178</sup> RSF, Russia, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>179</sup> CPJ, Russia's repression record, 21 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>180</sup> CPJ, Russia's repression record, 21 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>181</sup> Meduza, State Duma approves law to punish ‘foreign agents’ for offenses committed outside Russia, 17 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>182</sup> Moscow Times (The), How the Kremlin's 'Foreign Agents' Law Strangled Freedom in Russia, 22 October 2025, [url](#); Human rights lawyer, Online interview with EUAA, 23 October 2025

<sup>183</sup> OVD-Info, Online interview with EUAA, 21 October 2025

<sup>184</sup> Gogov, Полный список иноагентов на сегодня в 2025 году [Complete list of foreign agents as of today in 2025], 25 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>185</sup> AI, Russia 2024, 28 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>186</sup> 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. 7



members of human rights organisation Memorial were recognised as ‘foreign agents’ in their personal capacity.<sup>187</sup> Besides human rights defenders, journalists are also frequently targeted by the ‘foreign agent’ legislation,<sup>188</sup> with 327 journalists and media outlets designated as ‘foreign agents’ as of October 2025.<sup>189</sup>

In 2024, the authorities significantly increased legal pressure on ‘foreign agents’, with a total of 150 politically motivated criminal cases initiated against them.<sup>190</sup> According to OVD-Info, the same year, there was also ‘a sharp increase’ in criminal prosecutions of ‘foreign agents’ for not complying with evasion of the duties of a ‘foreign agent’ (Article 330.1 of the Criminal Code), with at least 32 people facing charges as of 9 December 2024. Of these, 29 cases were initiated in 2024.<sup>191</sup> In addition, the number of administrative cases under charges for not complying with the obligations of a ‘foreign agent’ (Article 19.34 of the Code of Administrative Offences) rose by 1.5 times compared with 2023.<sup>192</sup>

As noted by a human rights defender in an interview with the EUAA, the authorities have simplified the prosecution of individuals designated as ‘foreign agents.’ Inclusion in the register triggers monitoring of a person’s public activities. According to the source, each professional group – such as writers, artists, musicians, clergy, human rights defenders, political opposition figures, bloggers – is tracked by designated observers within the Federal Security Service (FSB), increasing the likelihood of administrative, and eventually, criminal prosecution. The source further noted that, as of October 2025, 25-30 % of ‘foreign agents’ faced criminal charges, with the number expected to increase further. For example, in September – October 2025, Moscow courts alone registered around 140 new cases against ‘foreign agents’.<sup>193</sup>

As noted by Mediazona, since January 2025, Russian courts have begun issuing fines for mentioning or quoting a ‘foreign agent’ without indicating their status (Article 19.5, part 42 of the Code of Administrative Offences). By mid-April 2025, at least eight people in Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Kazan were fined for posts on Telegram, X, and VK that quoted a person or an entity designated as a ‘foreign agent’. Reportedly, some of those fined received no prior warning from the MoJ, and similar cases have been filed across Russia.<sup>194</sup>

In October 2024, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled that Russia’s ‘foreign agent’ legislation was overly broad and unpredictably applied.<sup>195</sup> The ‘foreign agent’ regulations have led to the closure of numerous independent media organisations and NGOs.<sup>196</sup> At the end of October 2025, Russia’s leading domestic violence support centre

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<sup>187</sup> OVD-Info, Online interview with EUAA, 21 October 2025

<sup>188</sup> OVD-Info, Online interview with EUAA, 21 October 2025

<sup>189</sup> CPJ, Russia's repression record, 21 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>190</sup> 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. 8

<sup>191</sup> OVD-Info, Repression in Russia in 2024: OVD-Info Overview, 12 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>192</sup> OVD-Info, Repression in Russia in 2024: OVD-Info Overview, 12 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>193</sup> Human rights lawyer, Online interview with EUAA, 23 October 2025

<sup>194</sup> Mediazona, Russian courts start fining ordinary citizens for mere mentions of “foreign agents”. Here is how it works, 17 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>195</sup> ECHR, Case of Kobaliya and Others v. Russia, 22 October 2024, 22 January 2025, [url](#), paras. 69, 70

<sup>196</sup> Moscow Times (The), How the Kremlin's 'Foreign Agents' Law Strangled Freedom in Russia, 22 October 2025, [url](#)





*Nasiliu.net* ('No to Violence') announced its closure due to intensifying government pressure and a loss of resources caused by its 'foreign agent' status.<sup>197</sup>

## 2.3. War censorship laws

The war censorship laws consisting of legislation to punish the spreading of 'knowingly false information' about the Russian armed forces and 'discrediting' the actions of the Russian armed forces in Ukraine were first introduced in March 2022.<sup>198</sup> To punish any opinion or actions that contradict the official discourse,<sup>199</sup> the legislation was repeatedly amended and toughened, remaining a key tool for suppressing criticism of the war in Ukraine.<sup>200</sup>

Public dissemination of 'knowingly false information' about Russian armed forces, state authorities, the National Guard, and volunteer formations (Article 207.3 of the Criminal Code) is punishable by up to five years in prison.<sup>201</sup> Experts and media frequently refer to this legislation as 'fake news' law.<sup>202</sup> The first-time offense under charges for discreditation of the above-mentioned institutions (Article 20.3.3. of the Code of Administrative Offences) is punishable with a fine from 30 000 to 50 000 rubles [307 - 512 euros] for individuals and from 300 000 to 500 000 rubles [3 075 – 5 125 euros] for legal entities.<sup>203</sup> In case the offence is repeated within one year it is punishable by up to seven years in prison (Article 280.3 of the Criminal Code).<sup>204</sup>

As noted by Alexander Verkhovsky, the use of the administrative charge for 'discreditation' of the army, which surged in 2022, has declined from nearly 4 500 cases in 2022 to around 2 400 cases in 2023, and around 1 800 cases in 2024.<sup>205</sup> From March 2022 to 24 July 2025, OVD-Info documented 11 591 administrative cases initiated under 'discreditation' charges. Of these, 931 cases were initiated from in the period from 1 January 2024 to 24 July 2025.<sup>206</sup>

As noted by a human rights lawyer, criminal prosecution for spreading 'false' information about or 'discrediting' the Russian military and the state has decreased, with 'only a few dozen' convictions under this legislation in the first half of 2025, compared to 'hundreds' of

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<sup>197</sup> Moscow Times (The), Russian Domestic Violence NGO Nasiliu.Net Closes Amid State Pressure, 22 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>198</sup> HRW, Russia Criminalizes Independent War Reporting, Anti-War Protests, 7 March 2022, [url](#)

<sup>199</sup> MJRC, Media Regulation, Government and Policy in Russia, 11 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>200</sup> HRW, Russia – Events of 2024, 17 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>201</sup> Russia, Уголовный кодекс Российской Федерации от 13.06.1996 N 63-ФЗ (ред. от 31.07.2025) (с изм. и доп., вступ. в силу с 01.09.2025) [The Criminal Code of the Russian Federation of 13.06.1996 N 63-FZ (with amendments and additions, effective from 1.09.2025)], 2025, [url](#), Art. 207.3

<sup>202</sup> Politico, Russia expands laws criminalising 'fake news', 22 March 2022, [url](#); HRW, Russia's Legislative Minefield, 7 August 2024, [url](#)

<sup>203</sup> Russia, Кодекс Российской Федерации об административных правонарушениях, от 30.12.2001 N 195-ФЗ (с изм. и доп., вступ. в силу с 22.10.2025) ["Code of Administrative Offences of the Russian Federation, of 30.12.2001 No 195 -FZ (with amendments and additions, effective from 22.10.2025), 2025, [url](#), Art. 20.3.3, part 1

<sup>204</sup> Russia, Уголовный кодекс Российской Федерации от 13.06.1996 N 63-ФЗ (ред. от 31.07.2025) (с изм. и доп., вступ. в силу с 01.09.2025) [The Criminal Code of the Russian Federation of 13.06.1996 N 63-FZ (with amendments and additions, effective from 1.09.2025)], 2025, [url](#), Art. 280.3

<sup>205</sup> 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](#)

<sup>206</sup> OVD-Info, Prosecution for anti-war views, 24 July 2025, [url](#)





convictions for ‘justifying of terrorism’.<sup>207</sup> According to AI, in 2024, at least 98 new criminal cases initiated under war censorship laws, with 171 persons being sentenced the same year.<sup>208</sup> According to OVD-Info, in some cases, information about prosecution becomes available only long after the start of the proceedings.<sup>209</sup>

The use of war censorship legislation in criminal prosecution includes the following illustrative cases. In November 2024, a 68-year-old paediatrician was convicted for spreading ‘false’ information about the Russian army and sentenced to five years in prison after a patient’s mother accused her of making anti-war remarks during a medical appointment.<sup>210</sup> In April 2025, a 19-year-old activist was sentenced to nearly three years in prison for ‘discrediting’ the Russian army, after she glued a poem by Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko to a monument in St. Petersburg and gave an interview to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL).<sup>211</sup> The same month, a hairdresser from St. Petersburg was sentenced to five years and two months in prison for allegedly posting eight anti-war messages on social media after a neighbour reported her to the authorities.<sup>212</sup>

At the end of October 2025, a street musician was fined 30 000 rubles [307 euros] as a first-time administrative punishment for ‘discrediting’ the Russian army<sup>213</sup> for performing ‘an anti-war song’ written by a ‘foreign agent’.<sup>214</sup> Immediately after the arrest, they and two other musicians of the band served 13-days of administrative detention<sup>215</sup> for organising ‘an unplanned gathering that blocked public access to the metro.’<sup>216</sup> As noted by OVD-Info, with two members of the groups being arrested for the third time on 11 November 2025, the musicians faced so-called ‘carousel arrests: release after the administrative arrest lapses and immediate re-arrest for other charges.’<sup>217</sup>

## 2.4. Anti-terrorism and anti-extremism legislation

In 2024, the application of anti-terrorism and anti-extremism legislation was expanded.<sup>218</sup> 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

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<sup>207</sup> Human rights lawyer, Online interview with EUAA, 23 October 2025

<sup>208</sup> AI, Russia 2024, 28 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>209</sup> OVD-Info, Repression in Russia in 2024: OVD-Info Overview, 12 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>210</sup> RFE/RL, Russian Pediatrician Gets 5 Years for Anti-War Comments To Patients, 12 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>211</sup> RFE/RL, Russian Court Sentences Anti-War Activist Who Glued Poem to Ukrainian Statue, 18 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>212</sup> BBC, Russian hairdresser jailed over neighbour claim of spreading fake news, 15 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>213</sup> Reuters, Russian street musician found guilty of ‘discrediting’ the army after she played anti-Kremlin songs, 28 October 2025, [url](#); Moscow Times (The), St. Petersburg Street Musician Jailed Again Over Viral Anti-Putin Performance, 29 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>214</sup> Moscow Times (The), St. Petersburg Street Musician Jailed Again Over Viral Anti-Putin Performance, 29 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>215</sup> RFE/RL, Russian Singer, Jailed For Antiwar Songs, Gets More Jail Time For Explicit Lyric, 29 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>216</sup> Reuters, Russian street musician found guilty of ‘discrediting’ the army after she played anti-Kremlin songs, 28 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>217</sup> OVD-Info, Email correspondence with EUAA, 12 November 2025

<sup>218</sup> 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](#)



is motivated by political or ideological hatred, hostility toward a particular group, or the intent to influence the state or society through violence.<sup>219</sup>

As noted by Human Rights Watch, the authorities have used anti-extremism and anti-terrorism legislation as a means of censorship.<sup>220</sup> 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.<sup>221</sup> 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.<sup>222</sup>

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.<sup>223</sup> As noted by a human rights lawyer, anti-state actions are prosecuted as terrorist acts’ irrespective of the actual harm caused by them.<sup>224</sup>

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.’<sup>225</sup> 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.<sup>226</sup>

### 2.4.1. Expansion of anti-extremism and anti-terrorism legislation

In June 2024, the Supreme Court of Russia declared the ‘Anti-Russian Separatist Movement’ an extremist organisation,<sup>227</sup> following a similar ruling of November 2023 regarding ‘the international LGBT movement,’<sup>228</sup> even though neither organisation exists in Russia.<sup>229</sup> As

<sup>219</sup> 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](#)

<sup>220</sup> Human Rights Watch, Russia: Supreme Court Bans “LGBT Movement” as “Extremist”, 30 November 2025, [url](#)

<sup>221</sup> OVD-Info, Criminal repression in Russia, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>222</sup> 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

<sup>223</sup> 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](#)

<sup>224</sup> Human rights lawyer, Online interview with EUAA, 23 October 2025

<sup>225</sup> 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](#)

<sup>226</sup> Human rights lawyer, Online interview with EUAA, 23 October 2025

<sup>227</sup> 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

<sup>228</sup> HRW, Russia: Supreme Court Bans “LGBT Movement” as “Extremist”, 30 November 2023, [url](#)

<sup>229</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europe, Russia bans non-existent ‘anti-Russian separatist movement’, 7 June 2024, [url](#)



noted by researchers Stefan Ingvarsson and Ekaterina Kalinina, because these designations do not correspond to any real movement or organisation, the interpretation ‘is entirely arbitrary’, creating uncertainty for LGBTIQ-related initiatives and Russia’s nearly 200 ethnic groups amid unpredictable enforcement.<sup>230</sup> As reported by Novaya Gazeta – Europe, it could also apply to anyone denying that Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine.<sup>231</sup> No information on prosecutions under the ‘Anti-Russian Separatist Movement’ extremist designation was found within the timeframes of this report. For information on the impact of the legislation on the LGBTIQ community, see chapter [3.7 LGBTIQ persons](#).

In December 2024, the authorities expanded the criteria for adding individuals and organisations to the list of extremists, extending it to cases involving ‘fake news’ and actions ‘discrediting’ the army when they were considered to be ‘motivated by hatred.’<sup>232</sup> In July 2025,<sup>233</sup> Alexey Navalny’s posthumous memoir was added to the federal list of extremist materials after a linguistic expertise ordered by a court found that it contained extremist content intended to incite hatred toward the Russian government.<sup>234</sup>

On 31 July 2025, President Putin signed a law to punish online searches for content officially deemed extremist<sup>235</sup> (Article 13.53 of the Code of Administrative Offences) by fines of up to 5 000 rubles [51 euros].<sup>236</sup> The law has further tightened state censorship<sup>237</sup> and control of the internet.<sup>238</sup> Sources noted that the scope of content that could be punished was extensive<sup>239</sup> due to the broad definition of extremist activity.<sup>240</sup>

As of July 2025, the list of extremist materials maintained by the MoJ comprised over 5 400 entries.<sup>241</sup> While the law reportedly intends to target people who ‘knowingly search’ for extremist content,<sup>242</sup> and officials have clarified that law enforcement would need to establish intent in such searches,<sup>243</sup> sources noted that it was unclear how authorities would determine whether someone accessed content intentionally.<sup>244</sup> The law came into force on 1 September

<sup>230</sup> Ingvarsson, S. and Kalinina E., Is Civil Society Still Alive in Russia, SCEEUS Report, No. 12, 2024, 20 September 2024, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>231</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europe, Russia bans non-existent ‘anti-Russian separatist movement’, 7 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>232</sup> 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

<sup>233</sup> Meduza, Russia adds Navalny’s posthumous memoir to list of banned ‘extremist’ materials, 30 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>234</sup> Mediazona, Blacklisted. Alexei Navalny’s memoir “Patriot” banned in Russia as “extremist” for inciting “hatred towards authorities”, 1 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>235</sup> AP, Putin signs a bill punishing online searches for information deemed ‘extremist’, 31 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>236</sup> Reuters, Russia passes law punishing searches for ‘extremist’ content, 22 July 2025, [url](#); Russia, Кодекс Российской Федерации об административных правонарушениях, от 30.12.2001 N 195-ФЗ (с изм. и доп., вступ. в силу с 22.10.2025) [“Code of Administrative Offences of the Russian Federation, of 30.12.2001 No 195 -FZ (with amendments and additions, effective from 22.10.2025), 2025, [url](#), Art. 20.3.3

<sup>237</sup> Reuters, Russia passes law punishing searches for ‘extremist’ content, 22 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>238</sup> AP, Putin signs a bill punishing online searches for information deemed ‘extremist’, 31 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>239</sup> AP, How Russia reins in the internet by blocking websites and isolating it from the rest of the world, 5 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>240</sup> AP, Putin signs a bill punishing online searches for information deemed ‘extremist’, 31 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>241</sup> CPJ, Russia gearing up to prosecute internet users for searching ‘extremist content’, 18 July 2025, [url](#); Euronews, New Russian law criminalises searching for online content deemed extremist, 22 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>242</sup> Euronews, New Russian law criminalises searching for online content deemed extremist, 22 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>243</sup> Reuters, Russia passes law punishing searches for ‘extremist’ content, 22 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>244</sup> Reuters, Russia passes law punishing searches for ‘extremist’ content, 22 July 2025, [url](#); AP, Putin signs a bill punishing online searches for information deemed ‘extremist’, 31 July 2025, [url](#)



2025.<sup>245</sup> In early November 2025, media sources reported that the first case under this law was initiated against a 20-year old man in Sverdlovsk region,<sup>246</sup> after the internet provider informed the FSB that he had viewed content about Ukraine's Azov Brigade and the Russian Volunteer Corps, both considered 'terrorist' organisations by the Russian authorities.<sup>247</sup>

In October 2025, the Russian Prosecutor General's Office applied to the Supreme Court to declare the US-based legal branch of Alexei Navalny's-established the Anti-Corruption Foundation (ACF, Russian: *Fond borby s korruptsiyey*, FBK) – the legal successor of Russia-based FBK<sup>248</sup> – a terrorist organisation. The hearing is scheduled for 27 November 2025 and will be held behind closed doors,<sup>249</sup> presided over by the same judge who previously designated the non-existent 'international LGBT movement' and 'international satanism movement' as extremist organisations.<sup>250</sup> The ACF has been listed as an extremist organisation' since 2021.<sup>251</sup> As noted by AI, the designation of the ACF as a terrorist organisation 'would expose anyone associated with the ACF to criminal prosecution with the harshest penalties, including up to life in prison'.<sup>252</sup>

As reported by Meduza in October 2025, the list of individuals designated as terrorists and extremists is 'expanding almost faster' than the list of 'foreign agents'.<sup>253</sup> As noted by OVD-Info, the authorities have introduced a simplified mechanism for adding people to the extremist list and designating organisations as extremist, which creates additional difficulties for Russian nationals abroad, such as 'potential denial of banking services'.<sup>254</sup>

As further noted by Meduza, legal experts describe inclusion on these lists as a form of 'civil death' due to the severe financial and social restrictions such a designation brings. While the designation often hinders future employment, the most significant impact is financial:<sup>255</sup> the persons included on the list of extremists and terrorists have their bank accounts blocked for incoming transfers, while their monthly withdrawals are limited to 10 000 rubles [102 euros] to

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<sup>245</sup> Moscow Times (The), Russia Opens First Case Under Law Punishing Online Searches for 'Extremist' Content, 6 November 2025, [url](#)

<sup>246</sup> Moscow Times (The), Russia Opens First Case Under Law Punishing Online Searches for 'Extremist' Content, 6 November 2025, [url](#); Reuters, Russia opens first known investigation into online searches for 'extremist' material, 7 November 2025, [url](#), accessed 12 November 2025

<sup>247</sup> Moscow Times (The), Russia Opens First Case Under Law Punishing Online Searches for 'Extremist' Content, 6 November 2025, [url](#); Novaya Gazeta Europe, Russia's first known prosecution for viewing 'extremist' material online gets underway in Sverdlovsk region, 7 November 2025, [url](#)

<sup>248</sup> AI, Russia: Move to label Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation a "terrorist organization" puts thousands in danger, 23 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>249</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europe, Russia demands Navalny's American anti-corruption entity be deemed 'terrorist organisation', 23 October 2025, [url](#); AI, Russia: Move to label Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation a "terrorist organization" puts thousands in danger, 23 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>250</sup> AI, Russia: Move to label Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation a "terrorist organization" puts thousands in danger, 23 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>251</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europe, Russia demands Navalny's American anti-corruption entity be deemed 'terrorist organisation', 23 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>252</sup> AI, Russia: Move to label Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation a "terrorist organization" puts thousands in danger, 23 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>253</sup> 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](#)

<sup>254</sup> OVD-Info, Online interview with EUAA, 21 October 2025

<sup>255</sup> Meduza, Russia expands money laundering statutes to enable broader political repressions against anti-Kremlin speech and fundraising, 13 December 2024, [url](#)



cover personal needs.<sup>256</sup> In practice, the accounts of their relatives may be also blocked.<sup>257</sup> As noted by a human rights lawyer, restrictions in the access to banking and other services due to the inclusion to the list of terrorists and extremists are also faced by those living abroad. In addition, the Russian authorities use this list to ask for their extradition.<sup>258</sup>

## 2.4.2. Use of anti-terrorism and anti-extremism legislation

### a) Use of anti-terrorism and anti-extremism legislation in relation to freedom of speech

Sources noted an increase in the use of anti-extremism and anti-terrorism legislation<sup>259</sup> in the prosecution of religious groups, government critics,<sup>260</sup> political opponents, anti-war activists, and human rights defenders.<sup>261</sup> As reported by the SOVA Research Centre, in 2024, convictions for public speech and participation in extremist and terrorist organisations continued to increase. Around half of the criminal cases related to public speech were linked to the war in Ukraine.<sup>262</sup>

A human rights lawyer noted that terrorism-related offences have become the main focus of criminal repression in Russia. Most of these offences involve statements perceived by authorities as ‘justifying terrorism’, such as expressions of support for the Ukrainian army, comments about its military actions in Russia, and criticism of Russian authorities.<sup>263</sup> Public justification of terrorism as well as public calls for terrorist activity and propaganda of terrorism (Article 205.2 of the Criminal Code), including when committed online, can be punished with up to seven years in prison.<sup>264</sup>

### b) Use of anti-extremism and anti-terrorism legislation in relation to freedom of association

According to the SOVA Research Center, in 2024 – similarly to previous years – most convictions for participation in an extremist and terrorist organisation (Articles 205.5 and 282.2 of the Criminal Code respectively<sup>265</sup>) were issued in relation to people associated with various ‘religious and religious-political groups,’ such as Jihadist organisations and Jehovah’s Witnesses. While the number of prosecutions against Jehovah’s Witnesses for participation in

<sup>256</sup> Meduza, Russia expands money laundering statutes to enable broader political repressions against anti-Kremlin speech and fundraising, 13 December 2024, [url](#); 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](#)

<sup>257</sup> Meduza, Russia expands money laundering statutes to enable broader political repressions against anti-Kremlin speech and fundraising, 13 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>258</sup> Human rights lawyer, Online interview with EUAA, 23 October 2025

<sup>259</sup> RSF, Russia, n.d., [url](#); AI, Russia 2024, 28 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>260</sup> AI, Russia 2024, 28 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>261</sup> UN, Russia must immediately drop charges against 85-year-old human rights defender Mark Kuperman: UN experts, 13 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>262</sup> 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](#)

<sup>263</sup> Human rights lawyer, Interview with the EUAA, 2 October 2025

<sup>264</sup> Russia, Уголовный кодекс Российской Федерации от 13.06.1996 N 63-ФЗ (ред. от 31.07.2025) (с изм. и доп., вступ. в силу с 01.09.2025) [The Criminal Code of the Russian Federation of 13.06.1996 N 63-FZ (with amendments and additions, effective from 1.09.2025)], 2025, [url](#), Art. 205.2

<sup>265</sup> Russia, Уголовный кодекс Российской Федерации от 13.06.1996 N 63-ФЗ (ред. от 31.07.2025) (с изм. и доп., вступ. в силу с 01.09.2025) [The Criminal Code of the Russian Federation of 13.06.1996 N 63-FZ (with amendments and additions, effective from 1.09.2025)], 2025, [url](#), Art. 205.5, 282.2



an extremist organisation in 2024 decreased when compared to 2023, the number of prosecutions for participation in banned pro-Ukrainian organisations increased.<sup>266</sup>

Similar to the rise in criminal charges for participation in extremist organisations, the number of criminal cases related to financing extremist organisations (Article 282.3 of the Criminal Code) has also increased. According to Mediazona, 105 such cases were initiated between January and July 2025, compared with around 70 cases in 2024 and fewer than 50 in 2023. Criminal prosecution for financing extremist organisations is largely used for supporters of the ACF, with 33 criminal cases documented between January and July 2025, whereas previously these types of criminal charges were mainly used against religious groups like the Jehovah's Witnesses.<sup>267</sup> For more information, see chapter [3.1.2. Supporters of Alexei Navalny and Anti-Corruption Foundation](#) and [3.6.1 Jehovah's Witnesses](#).

Overall, there has been an increase in the number of criminal cases for donations to the ACF in 2024<sup>268</sup> and 2025.<sup>269</sup> As noted by Ivan Pavlov, authorities appear to be acting selectively rather than conducting mass arrests, with a new case emerging roughly every 10 days. While some of those targeted may have links to activism, the overall pattern of selection seems largely random.<sup>270</sup> According to a human rights lawyer, there is 'a potential to prosecute a large number of people, as authorities benefit from departmental statistics, reporting and case quota requirements (Russian: *palochnaya sistema*).<sup>271</sup>

## 2.5. Treason

Following the full-scale invasion in Ukraine in February 2022, legislation punishing crimes of treason has significantly expanded.<sup>272</sup> In July 2022, the Criminal Code was amended to criminalise 'confidential cooperation with a foreign state, international or foreign organisation' (Article 275.1 of the Criminal Code). In April 2023, the maximum punishment for state treason (Article 275 of the Criminal Code) was raised from 20 years in prison to life imprisonment. In addition, the scope of treason was expanded to include siding with an enemy, defined as participation as part of foreign forces or an international or foreign organisation in an armed conflict or hostilities.<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>266</sup> 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](#)

<sup>267</sup> Mediazona, 76 criminal cases and counting. Widespread crackdown over donations to Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation targets regular supporters. A Mediazona investigates, 5 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>268</sup> 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](#); Human rights lawyer, Online interview with the EUAA, 23 October 2025

<sup>269</sup> Human rights lawyer, Online interview with the EUAA, 23 October 2025

<sup>270</sup> Ivan Pavlov, Online interview with EUAA, 10 October 2025

<sup>271</sup> Human rights lawyer, Online interview with EUAA, 23 October 2025

<sup>272</sup> 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. 87

<sup>273</sup> Pervyy Otdel, Фигурантов дел о госизмене, шпионаже и конфиденциальном сотрудничестве уже 1000 [...] [There are already 1,000 defendants in cases involving treason, espionage, and confidential cooperation [...]], 20 December 2024, [url](#); Russia, Уголовный кодекс Российской Федерации от 13.06.1996 N 63-ФЗ (ред. от 31.07.2025) (с изм. и доп., вступ. в силу с 01.09.2025) [The Criminal Code of the Russian Federation of 13.06.1996 N 63-FZ (with amendments and additions, effective from 1.09.2025)], 2025, [url](#), Art 275, 275.1



While espionage committed by a Russian citizen is one of the definitions of treason under Article 275 of the Criminal Code,<sup>274</sup> the Article 276 'Espionage' covers actions by a foreign national or a person without nationality.<sup>275</sup> According to Alexander Verkhovsky, the 'unusually high number of espionage cases' is related to the prosecution of 'Ukrainian citizens who lived in territories that fell under Russian jurisdiction.'<sup>276</sup>

The number of prosecutions for treason, confidential cooperation, and espionage has increased, reflecting a trend similar to that related to anti-terrorism and anti-extremism legislation.<sup>277</sup> Based on open sources such as court websites,<sup>278</sup> there were around 360 convictions on charges of treason, confidential cooperation, and espionage in 2024<sup>279</sup> and 224 convictions on these charges in the first half of 2025. As further noted by Ivan Pavlov, this constitutes a drastic increase from 15 convictions on treason in 2021 and two or three such convictions a year before 2014, attributing this rise to the war in Ukraine and the authorities' search for an 'internal enemy'.<sup>280</sup>

According to a lawyer from Department One, cited by Novaya Gazeta Europe in July 2025, the majority of people prosecuted on charges of treason, confidential cooperation and espionage, are 'completely ordinary people' who had ended up under the FSB's scrutiny. The reasons for this scrutiny varied, with attempting to obtain permission to travel to Ukraine having become a 'trigger for the FSB'.<sup>281</sup>

According to Department One, 'siding with an enemy' constituted the most common charge in treason cases, accounting for 59 % of cases between February 2022 and December 2024. This charge typically involved activities like cooperating with Ukraine, attempting to join the Ukrainian army, or engaging in sabotage, such as trying to set fire to military recruitment offices or railway infrastructure.<sup>282</sup> During the same period, at least 18 people were charged

<sup>274</sup> Russia, Уголовный кодекс Российской Федерации от 13.06.1996 N 63-ФЗ (ред. от 31.07.2025) (с изм. и доп., вступ. в силу с 01.09.2025) [The Criminal Code of the Russian Federation of 13.06.1996 N 63-FZ (with amendments and additions, effective from 1.09.2025)], 2025, [url](#), Art 275

<sup>275</sup> Pervyy Otdel, Фигурантов дел о госизмене, шпионаже и конфиденциальном сотрудничестве уже 1000 [...] [There are already 1,000 defendants in cases involving treason, espionage, and confidential cooperation [...]], 20 December 2024, [url](#); Russia, Уголовный кодекс Российской Федерации от 13.06.1996 N 63-ФЗ (ред. от 31.07.2025) (с изм. и доп., вступ. в силу с 01.09.2025) [The Criminal Code of the Russian Federation of 13.06.1996 N 63-FZ (with amendments and additions, effective from 1.09.2025)], 2025, [url](#), Art 276

<sup>276</sup> Verkhovsky, A., Russia's Politicized Law Enforcement and its Evolution, Academic Policy Paper Series No. 12, The Russia Program, The George Washington University, [url](#)

<sup>277</sup> Human rights lawyer, Online interview with EUAA, 23 October 2025

<sup>278</sup> Ivan Pavlov, Online interview with EUAA, 10 October 2025

<sup>279</sup> Pervyy Otdel, Фигурантов дел о госизмене, шпионаже и конфиденциальном сотрудничестве уже 1000 [...] [There are already 1,000 defendants in cases involving treason, espionage, and confidential cooperation [...]], 20 December 2024, [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. 86; Ivan Pavlov, Online interview with EUAA, 10 October 2025

<sup>280</sup> Ivan Pavlov, Online interview with EUAA, 10 October 2025

<sup>281</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europe, Hanging on the telephone – A Russian reservist has begun an 18-year prison sentence after trying to visit his mother in Ukraine, 15 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>282</sup> Verkhovsky, A., Russia's Politicized Law Enforcement and its Evolution, Academic Policy Paper Series No. 12, The Russia Program, The George Washington University, [url](#)



with ‘providing assistance’ to the enemy, primarily through money transfers, and 15 of them were already convicted.<sup>283</sup>

As noted by Mediazona in August 2025, the expanded definition of treason, which includes ‘siding with an enemy’ as one of the forms of treason, enables the authorities to prosecute people ‘not only for alleged contact with Ukrainian intelligence but for simply sending money’ to Ukrainian and international organisations.<sup>284</sup> In November 2024, as reported by the human rights group Memorial, a Moscow court sentenced a man to 13 years in colony for donating 50 euros to the Ukrainian military.<sup>285</sup> In August 2025, a man who returned to Russia from abroad was sentenced to 15 years in a maximum security penal colony for donating 500 US dollars to the Ukrainian foundation ‘Come Back Alive’ at the end of February 2022.<sup>286</sup>

According to Mediazona, security services can easily identify donors, especially those who made bank transfers before Visa and Mastercard closed their services in Russia<sup>287</sup> in early March 2022.<sup>288</sup> Moreover, banks are required to report suspicious activity to the Federal Service for Financial Monitoring (*Rosfinmonitoring*<sup>289</sup>), Russia’s financial intelligence unit, which shares the data with the security services. Mediazona also noted that the security services are mainly interested in foundations directly supporting the Ukrainian military but ‘donations to purely humanitarian groups’ are also ‘not safe from the FSB’s interpretation.’<sup>290</sup>

Ivan Pavlov noted that while some criminal proceedings on treason cases have been discontinued, acquittals do not occur; the last known acquittal in a treason case was in 1999.<sup>291</sup> According to Department One, since the beginning of the full-scale war in Ukraine, treason and espionage trials last on average less than two months, down from over six months before 2022. Out of 536 convictions handed down between February 2022 and December 2024, 230 were issued by military courts, which generally do not disclose personal information of defendants, including their names.<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>283</sup> Pervyy Otdel, Фигурантов дел о госизмене, шпионаже и конфиденциальном сотрудничестве уже 1000 [...] [There are already 1,000 defendants in cases involving treason, espionage, and confidential cooperation [...]], 20 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>284</sup> Mediazona, “He believed it was his homeland”. An IT specialist’s trip home to Russia ends in a 15-year “treason” sentence for \$500 donation to Ukraine, 27 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>285</sup> Memorial, В Москве суд назначил Александру Крайчику 13 лет колонии по делу о госизмене [In Moscow, a court sentenced Alexander Kraychik to 13 years in a penal colony on charges of treason], 6 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>286</sup> Mediazona, “He believed it was his homeland”. An IT specialist’s trip home to Russia ends in a 15-year “treason” sentence for \$500 donation to Ukraine, 27 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>287</sup> Mediazona, “He believed it was his homeland”. An IT specialist’s trip home to Russia ends in a 15-year “treason” sentence for \$500 donation to Ukraine, 27 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>288</sup> Reuters, Visa, Mastercard suspend operations in Russia over Ukraine invasion, 6 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>289</sup> OpenSanctions, Federal Service for Financial Monitoring of the Russian Federation, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>290</sup> Mediazona, “He believed it was his homeland”. An IT specialist’s trip home to Russia ends in a 15-year “treason” sentence for \$500 donation to Ukraine, 27 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>291</sup> Ivan Pavlov, Online interview with EUAA, 10 October 2025

<sup>292</sup> Pervyy Otdel, Фигурантов дел о госизмене, шпионаже и конфиденциальном сотрудничестве уже 1000 [...] [There are already 1,000 defendants in cases involving treason, espionage, and confidential cooperation [...]], 20 December 2024, [url](#)



### 3. Treatment of certain profiles and groups of the population

The overview below is not an exhaustive list of profiles that may face specific human rights issues.

#### 3.1. Political opponents, including perceived political opponents

##### 3.1.1. Political opponents and activists

In the February 2025 report, Freedom House noted that opposition politicians and activists were frequently subjected to fabricated criminal charges and ‘other forms of harassment’ aimed at preventing their involvement in the political process.<sup>293</sup> In mid-October 2025, Novaya Gazeta Europe reported that opposition politicians face increasing reprisals, with political scientist Margarita Zavadskaya linking this pressure to Russia’s parliamentary elections, due by September 2026.<sup>294</sup>

Illustrative cases of criminal prosecution of political opponents and high-profile political activists include the following cases. In May 2025, a Moscow court sentenced Grigory Melkonyants,<sup>295</sup> co-founder and co-chair of the independent Russian election monitoring group Golos, to five years in a penal colony<sup>296</sup> on charges of organisation of activities of an ‘undesirable organisation,’ stemming from his alleged cooperation with the European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations (ENEMO), which was declared ‘undesirable’ in 2021.<sup>297</sup> Russian authorities designated Golos as a ‘foreign agent’ in 2023. Grigory Melkonyants has been in custody since his arrest in August 2023.<sup>298</sup>

On 10 June 2025, Lev Shlosberg, deputy chair of the opposition Yabloko party, was put under house arrest on criminal charges of discrediting the Russian army,<sup>299</sup> facing a prison sentence of up to five years.<sup>300</sup> Prior to his arrest, law enforcement officers searched his home and the

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<sup>293</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World, 28 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>294</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europe, Tightening the screws. Why the Russian authorities are increasingly cracking down on opposition both at home and abroad, 17 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>295</sup> RFE/RL, Russian Court Sentences Prominent Election Watchdog To 5 Years In Prison, 14 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>296</sup> OSCE, Conviction of independent election monitor in Russia undermines human rights and democratic standards, OSCE human rights office says, 16 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>297</sup> AI, Russia: Sentencing of election observer Grigory Melkonyants a brazen attack on peaceful activism, 14 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>298</sup> RFE/RL, Russian Court Sentences Prominent Election Watchdog To 5 Years In Prison, 14 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>299</sup> Yabloko, Lev Shlosberg has been placed under house arrest as part of a criminal case concerning “repeated discrediting of the army”, 11 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>300</sup> Reuters, Russian politician faces criminal charge for condemning Ukraine, 10 June 2025, [url](#)





Yabloko office in Pskov.<sup>301</sup> Lev Shlosberg was designated a ‘foreign agent’ in June 2023 and is also facing criminal charges for evading obligations of a ‘foreign agent’,<sup>302</sup> which carries a possible sentence of up to two years in prison.<sup>303</sup>

On 8 July 2025, the FSB opened a criminal case in absentia<sup>304</sup> on treason charges against Pavel Andreev,<sup>305</sup> one of the founders of the Revolt-Center, the independent cultural centre in Syktyvkar, the capital of the Komi Republic.<sup>306</sup> Andreev had also previously worked with the Komi Memorial Rights Commission<sup>307</sup> and was an executive director of online news outlet 7 x 7.<sup>308</sup> The next day, security forces carried out searches at the Revolt Centre<sup>309</sup> and detained its executive director Daria Chernysheva<sup>310</sup> for one day for failing to comply with the obligations of a ‘foreign agent’.<sup>311</sup> Authorities also conducted home searches and interrogations of a human rights activist in Irkutsk, two prisoners’ rights activists in Yoshkar-Ola, the capital of Mari El Republic, and a Yabloko party member in Veliky Novgorod. However, as reported by Meduza, it remained unclear whether all of these searches and interrogations were conducted in connection with the Revolt Centre.<sup>312</sup>

On 2 October 2025, the deputy chairman of Yabloko, Maxim Kruglov, was detained and charged with spreading ‘false’ information about the Russian army, facing from 5 to 10 years in prison.<sup>313</sup> The charges reportedly stemmed from his Telegram posts, made back in 2022: one about the killing of civilians in Bucha in March 2022 and another one on UN data on casualties in Mariupol.<sup>314</sup> On 10 October 2025, a Moscow court ordered the confiscation of his assets.

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<sup>301</sup> Reuters, Russian politician faces criminal charge for condemning Ukraine, 10 June 2025, [url](#); Yabloko, Lev Shlosberg has been placed under house arrest as part of a criminal case concerning “repeated discrediting of the army”, 11 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>302</sup> Rights in Russia, Write to Russia: Lev Shlosberg – placed under house arrest on charges of discrediting the Russian army and failing to abide by Russia’s ‘foreign agent’ law, 22 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>303</sup> Moscow Times (The), Shlosberg Placed Under House Arrest Pending Trial, 11 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>304</sup> Meduza, ‘Politically motivated and contrary to common sense’. Journalists and activists across Russia face raids and interrogations after FSB charges ex-media manager Pavel Andreev with treason, 9 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>305</sup> Barents Observer (The), FSB opens treason case against Pavel Andreev, 8 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>306</sup> Obschestvo Memorial, Telegram, 8 July 2025, [url](#); Meduza, ‘Politically motivated and contrary to common sense’. Journalists and activists across Russia face raids and interrogations after FSB charges ex-media manager Pavel Andreev with treason, 9 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>307</sup> Barents Observer (The), FSB opens treason case against Pavel Andreev, 8 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>308</sup> Barents Observer (The), FSB opens treason case against Pavel Andreev, 8 July 2025, [url](#); Meduza, ‘Politically motivated and contrary to common sense’. Journalists and activists across Russia face raids and interrogations after FSB charges ex-media manager Pavel Andreev with treason, 9 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>309</sup> Obschestvo Memorial, Telegram, 8 July 2025, [url](#); Meduza, ‘Politically motivated and contrary to common sense’. Journalists and activists across Russia face raids and interrogations after FSB charges ex-media manager Pavel Andreev with treason, 9 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>310</sup> CPJ, Russia’s repression record, 28 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>311</sup> Meduza, ‘Politically motivated and contrary to common sense’. Journalists and activists across Russia face raids and interrogations after FSB charges ex-media manager Pavel Andreev with treason, 9 July 2025, [url](#); Barents Observer (The), Director of cultural Revolt Centre Daira Chernysheva detained in Syktyvkar, 9 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>312</sup> Meduza, ‘Politically motivated and contrary to common sense’. Journalists and activists across Russia face raids and interrogations after FSB charges ex-media manager Pavel Andreev with treason, 9 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>313</sup> Moscow Times (The), Russia Arrests Yabloko Deputy Head Over ‘Army Fakes’, 2 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>314</sup> Reuters, Russian politician who called for Ukraine ceasefire is charged with telling lies about the army, 2 October 2025, [url](#); Novaya Gazeta Europe, «Сажают исключительно потому, что надо кого-то сажать» [“They put people in prison solely because they need to imprison someone”], 2 October 2025, [url](#)





According to his lawyer, who appealed the decision, this ruling ‘was not a common practice’, given that he does not have any ‘exorbitant’ income.<sup>315</sup>

### 3.1.2. Supporters of Alexei Navalny and Anti-Corruption Foundation

Following a 2021 court ruling that classified Alexei Navalny’s-established ACF, the Foundation for the Defence of Citizens’ Rights (Russian: *Fond zaschity prav grazhdan*, FZPG), and the Navalny regional headquarters as extremist organisations, Russian authorities initiated legal action against people involved in these organisations,<sup>316</sup> including for activities carried out before the 2021 ruling. As a result, regional activists, lawyers, and journalists who were involved in or collaborated with Navalny’s organisations became subjects of criminal prosecution for organising or participating in an extremist organisation<sup>317</sup> or an extremist community.<sup>318</sup> The reprisals continued after Navalny’s death in February 2024.<sup>319</sup>

According to Reuters, OVD-Info recorded 695 detentions for expressing support for Alexei Navalny between February 2024 and February 2025, with 442 detentions taking place ‘at makeshift memorials’ in the days following his death. Additionally, nearly 100 people were arrested at Navalny’s funeral in Moscow. From mid-March 2024 to February 2025, OVD-Info recorded 35 Navalny-related detentions.<sup>320</sup>

As noted by the Memorial, at least 45 people were prosecuted for participation in an extremist organisation, or an extremist community related to Navalny’s organisations, and 13 people were imprisoned on these charges as of 30 July 2025.<sup>321</sup> In June 2025, a military court in Moscow convicted in absentia Leonid Volkov, who led the ACF between 2021 and 2023 overseeing Navalny’s regional offices and election campaigns, to 18 years in prison. Volkov was charged with 40 offenses, ‘including justifying terrorism, organizing and financing an extremist group, rehabilitating Nazism, and creating a non-governmental organisation that violated citizens’ rights.’<sup>322</sup> In April 2025, the FSB reportedly searched Leonid Volkov’s father’s home in Yekaterinburg and opened a criminal case against him for alleged donation to the ACF.<sup>323</sup>

In addition, authorities have also initiated criminal prosecutions on charges of financing an extremist organisation (Article 282.3 of the Criminal Code) for donations to the ACF.<sup>324</sup> In August 2025, Mediazona reported that since spring 2024 FSB has been routinely prosecuting

<sup>315</sup> Moscow Times (The), Moscow Court Orders Seizure of Yabloko Deputy Head’s Assets Pending ‘Army Fakes’ Trial, 10 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>316</sup> Memorial, Prosecutions in cases related to the Anti-Corruption Foundation, 4 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>317</sup> SOVA Research Center, Counter-Extremism in 2024: Regulation of Public Speech and Organized Activity, 29 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>318</sup> Memorial, Prosecutions in cases related to the Anti-Corruption Foundation, 4 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>319</sup> AI, Russia 2024, 28 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>320</sup> Reuters, Russia pursues Navalny supporters, one year after opposition leader’s death, 14 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>321</sup> Memorial, Prosecutions in cases related to the Anti-Corruption Foundation, 4 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>322</sup> AP, Russian court sentences Navalny ally to 18 years in absentia as dissident crackdown continues, 12 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>323</sup> RFE/RL, Navalny Ally Volkov Says Father’s House Raided in Russia by FSB, 3 April 2025, [url](#); Reuters, Russian opens criminal case against father of former Navalny aide, 3 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>324</sup> OVD-Info, Repression in Russia in 2024: OVD-Info Overview, 12 January 2025, [url](#); Memorial, Prosecutions in cases related to the Anti-Corruption Foundation, 4 August 2025, [url](#); SOVA Research Center, Counter-Extremism in 2024: Regulation of Public Speech and Organized Activity, 29 August 2025, [url](#)



people for donating to Ukraine, irrespective of the amount donated.<sup>325</sup> People prosecuted for donating to the ACF include people from all professions, as legal proceedings have been triggered solely by a donation made through a Russian bank card. However, as noted by Mediazona, to support charges of financing an extremist organisation, investigators also collect additional evidence, such as donations made to the ACF before April 2021, political views of the accused, including through private correspondence, and their social media activity.<sup>326</sup>

Overall, the SOVA Research Center documented 32 criminal cases initiated for donations to the ACF in 2024.<sup>327</sup> On 5 August 2025, Mediazona reported that at least 75 criminal cases were initiated across 38 regions in Russia over donations to the ACF made between August 2021 and March 2022, when Visa and MasterCard ceased operations in Russia. According to Mediazona, there was a sharp increase in prosecutions since January 2025, with 33 cases reaching courts in the first half of the year.<sup>328</sup> As of October 2025, there were around 100 known criminal cases initiated against people who had donated to the ACF.<sup>329</sup>

According to the SOVA Research Center, at least 13 people were convicted in 2024 for making donations to the ACF.<sup>330</sup> As of the beginning of August 2025, Mediazona reported that courts found 49 persons guilty for the donations, with 10 of them sentenced to imprisonment, and 39 given other forms of punishment. A further 27 cases were still pending in courts. Regarding the judicial outcome, Mediazona noted that regional courts generally impose heavy fines, usually between 100 000 and 600 000 rubles [1 025 – 6 150 euros]. In contrast, courts in Moscow impose prison sentences, usually ranging from three to four years.<sup>331</sup> In December 2024,<sup>332</sup> a Moscow cardiac surgeon was sentenced to four years in prison solely for donations to the ACF.<sup>333</sup> The appellate court confirmed the verdict.<sup>334</sup> In February 2024, a former municipal deputy was sentenced to 3.5 years in a penal colony, after prosecutors appealed his initial punishment of 350 000 rubles [3 587 euros].<sup>335</sup>

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<sup>325</sup> Memorial, В Москве суд назначил Александру Крайчику 13 лет колонии по делу о госизмене [In Moscow, a court sentenced Alexander Kraychik to 13 years in a penal colony on charges of treason], 6 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>326</sup> Mediazona, 76 criminal cases and counting. Widespread crackdown over donations to Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation targets regular supporters. A Mediazona investigates, 5 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>327</sup> SOVA Research Center, Counter-Extremism in 2024: Regulation of Public Speech and Organized Activity, 29 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>328</sup> Mediazona, 76 criminal cases and counting. Widespread crackdown over donations to Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation targets regular supporters. A Mediazona investigates, 5 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>329</sup> Ivan Pavlov, Online interview with EUAA, 10 October 2025; Human rights lawyer, Online interview with EUAA, 23 October 2025

<sup>330</sup> SOVA Research Center, Counter-Extremism in 2024: Regulation of Public Speech and Organized Activity, 29 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>331</sup> Mediazona, 76 criminal cases and counting. Widespread crackdown over donations to Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation targets regular supporters. A Mediazona investigates, 5 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>332</sup> SOVA Research Center, Оставлен без изменения приговор кардиохирургу из Москвы за пожертвования ФБК [Sentence upheld for Moscow cardiac surgeon convicted of donating to the ACF], 6 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>333</sup> SOVA Research Center, Counter-Extremism in 2024: Regulation of Public Speech and Organized Activity, 29 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>334</sup> SOVA Research Center, Оставлен без изменения приговор кардиохирургу из Москвы за пожертвования ФБК [Sentence upheld for Moscow cardiac surgeon convicted of donating to the ACF], 6 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>335</sup> Memorial, Grishin Anton Andreevich, n.d., [url](#)



In February 2025, a court in St. Petersburg ruled that displaying a photograph of Alexei Navalny – as well as mentioning his name<sup>336</sup> – amounts to endorsing extremism.<sup>337</sup> As reported by RFE/RL, although the law does not formally categorise photographs of persons accused of extremism as extremist symbols, several people have been detained or fined for displaying Navalny’s image in 2024 – 2025.<sup>338</sup> According to Reuters, in February 2025, a woman who filmed a one-person protest in support of Navalny was arrested, fined 20 000 rubles [205 euros], and detained for 15 days for displaying extremist symbols.<sup>339</sup> The same month, as reported by RFE/RL, a man was arrested for two days for putting up posters with Navalny’s portrait.<sup>340</sup>

## 3.2. Protesters

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

In 2025, street protests remained prohibited in practice,<sup>349</sup> with authorities in some regions detaining protesters for violating Covid-19 measures.<sup>350</sup> In March 2025, local authorities of

<sup>336</sup> RFE/RL, Суд в Петербурге счёл фото и имя Навального экстремистскими [A court in St. Petersburg deemed Navalny’s photo and name to be extremist], 3 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>337</sup> Reuters, Russia pursues Navalny supporters, one year after opposition leader’s death, 14 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>338</sup> RFE/RL, Суд в Петербурге счёл фото и имя Навального экстремистскими [A court in St. Petersburg deemed Navalny’s photo and name to be extremist], 3 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>339</sup> Reuters, Russia pursues Navalny supporters, one year after opposition leader’s death, 14 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>340</sup> RFE/RL, Суд в Петербурге счёл фото и имя Навального экстремистскими [A court in St. Petersburg deemed Navalny’s photo and name to be extremist], 3 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>341</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europa, Picking your battles – Novaya Gazeta analysed almost 40,000 protests to see how Russia’s war in Ukraine has changed civil society, 27 June 2025, [url](#); Russia, Constitution of the Russian Federation, 1 July 2020, [url](#)

<sup>342</sup> HRW, Russia – Events of 2024, 17 January 2025, [url](#); OVD-Info, Online interview with EUAA, 21 October 2025

<sup>343</sup> HRW, Russia – Events of 2024, 17 January 2025, [url](#); AI, Russia 2024, 28 April 2025, [url](#); OVD-Info, Online interview with EUAA, 21 October 2025

<sup>344</sup> HRW, Russia – Events of 2024, 17 January 2025, [url](#); AI, Russia 2024, 28 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>345</sup> 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. 17

<sup>346</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europe, Bashkortostan protests in support of convicted activist spread to capital Ufa, 19 January 2024, [url](#); OSW, More protests in Bashkortostan, 23 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>347</sup> AI, Russia: Authorities brutally suppress mourners of Aleksei Navalny, 19 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>348</sup> Meduza, ‘We want justice’. Wives and mother of mobilised Russian soldiers protest outside Moscow’s Defense Ministry, 3 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>349</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europa, Picking your battles – Novaya Gazeta analysed almost 40,000 protests to see how Russia’s war in Ukraine has changed civil society, 27 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>350</sup> OVD-Info, Online interview with EUAA, 21 October 2025





Krasnoyarsk city in Siberia denied the organisation of a protest, stating that ‘public events are not allowed during the special military operation’.<sup>351</sup>

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’.<sup>352</sup> 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.<sup>353</sup>

Between 1 November 2024 and 17 October 2025, Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED) project<sup>354</sup> 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).<sup>355</sup>

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.<sup>356</sup> 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.<sup>357</sup> 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’.<sup>358</sup>

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

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<sup>351</sup> Moscow Times (The), Siberian City Bans Protest Against Protest Ban, 17 March 2025, 17 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>352</sup> 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. 17

<sup>353</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europa, Picking your battles – Novaya Gazeta analysed almost 40,000 protests to see how Russia’s war in Ukraine has changed civil society, 27 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>354</sup> ACLED is an independent monitor project, which collects, maps, and analyses data on conflict and protest, see ACLED, About ACLED, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>355</sup> EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data.

<sup>356</sup> 7x7, О чем и как регионы России протестовали в 2024 году: подсчеты «7x7» [What and how Russia’s regions protested in 2024: calculations by 7x7], 23 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>357</sup> OVD-Info, Online interview with EUAA, 21 October 2025

<sup>358</sup> Moscow Times (The), In Photos: Russians Stage Muted Protests on War’s Third Anniversary, 25 February 2025, [url](#)





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.’<sup>359</sup>

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.<sup>360</sup> 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.<sup>361</sup>

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.’<sup>362</sup> 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”’<sup>363</sup>

### 3.3. Environmental activists

Since the beginning of the full-scale war in Ukraine in February 2022, environmental activists remaining in Russia have become increasingly cut off from international networks and support structures.<sup>364</sup> As of 25 April 2025, 38 entities, 4 individuals, and 2 media outlets engaged in environmental activities were designated as ‘foreign agents’, with 34 of them being forced to close.<sup>365</sup> As noted by the UN Special Rapporteur, Mariana Katzarova, at least two entities and two individuals were added to the list of ‘foreign agents’ between 2024 and 2025.<sup>366</sup>

<sup>359</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europa, Picking your battles – Novaya Gazeta analysed almost 40,000 protests to see how Russia’s war in Ukraine has changed civil society, 27 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>360</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europa, Picking your battles – Novaya Gazeta analysed almost 40,000 protests to see how Russia’s war in Ukraine has changed civil society, 27 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>361</sup> OVD-Info, Online interview with EUAA, 21 October 2025

<sup>362</sup> 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. 18

<sup>363</sup> 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. 19

<sup>364</sup> Plantan, E., Environmental Activism in Russia since the 2022 Full-Scale Invasion of Ukraine, Russian Analytical Digest, No. 324, 28 February 2025, [url](#), p. 8

<sup>365</sup> EKG, Список НКО и физлиц, внесённых в реестр иностранных агентов в связи с природоохранной деятельностью [List of NGOs and individuals included in the register of foreign agents in connection with environmental activities], 25 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>366</sup> 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. 57



As reported by the Russian Socio-Ecological Union (RSEU),<sup>367</sup> in 2024, authorities initiated 5 criminal cases and at least 30 administrative cases against environmental activists. The source also noted that 72 environmental activists, 15 initiative groups, and 5 environmental organisations ‘faced pressure’ during 2024. These cases were recorded in 27 regions, with Moscow seeing the highest number (20), followed by Bashkortostan (16), Moscow region (10), Krasnodar region (8), Sverdlovsk region (8), and Arkhangelsk region (5 cases). Moreover, RSEU recorded 13 attacks on environmental activists, resulting in various types of injuries, and 5 cases of property damage.<sup>368</sup> The attacks on environmental activists often involved ‘private security or unidentified assailants.’<sup>369</sup>

In 2024, at least five new criminal cases were initiated against environmental activists;<sup>370</sup> in three of them, activists from Bashkortostan were charged with organising and participating in mass unrest and using non-lethal violence against an official.<sup>371</sup>

### 3.4. Journalists

Since February 2022, authorities have intensified the suppression of independent journalism through a wide range of legislative tools.<sup>372</sup> 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.’<sup>373</sup> State-imposed pressure led to the closure of many independent media outlets, the loss of funding<sup>374</sup> and the exile of hundreds of journalists.<sup>375</sup> In its 2025 Index, RSF ranked Russia 171<sup>st</sup> out of 180 countries, down from 162<sup>nd</sup> 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.’<sup>376</sup>

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.’<sup>377</sup> Between 24 February 2022 and 24 July 2025, OVD-Info documented 1 386 instances of ‘pressure on journalists and

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<sup>367</sup> The Socio-Ecological Union, established in 1992, is a St. Petersburg-based NGO, which as of May 2021 had 242 member organisations, see, Oshchepkov, M., Best Climate Practice Russia: The Russian Socio-Ecological Unit, Climate Scorecard, 13 May 2021, [url](#). The information is published by Moscow-based Environmental Crisis Group which publishes analyses and data by activists of the Socio-Ecological Unit. See, EKG, O nas [About us], n.d., [url](#); Environmental Crisis Group, LinkedIn, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>368</sup> EKG, Обзор за 2024 год [Review for 2024], 24 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>369</sup> 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. 54

<sup>370</sup> EKG, Обзор за 2024 год [Review for 2024], 24 January 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. 56

<sup>371</sup> EKG, Обзор за 2024 год [Review for 2024], 24 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>372</sup> RSF, Russia, n.d., [url](#); OVD-Info, Prosecution for anti-war views, 24 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>373</sup> 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. 32; CPJ, Russia's repression record, 21 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>374</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World, 28 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>375</sup> CPJ, Russia's repression record, 21 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>376</sup> RSF, Russia, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>377</sup> Meduza, ‘There’s no such thing as safety.’ In Russia journalists must either adapt to censorship or risk their freedom. So why do they keep reporting?, 29 May 2025, [url](#)



media workers,' comprising blocking, closure, or deprivation of registration, legal prosecution, police searches, detention and arrests, threats, and physical violence.<sup>378</sup>

As of 31 October 2025, RSF Barometer recorded 49 journalists and media workers in detention in Russia.<sup>379</sup> Among them, as of 29 September 2025, were 26 Ukrainian journalists.<sup>380</sup> 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.<sup>381</sup> In September 2024, Ukrainian journalist Viktoria Roschina died in detention in Russia,<sup>382</sup> after going missing in August 2023 while reporting from the occupied Zaporizhzhia region,<sup>383</sup> with reports indicating signs of torture.<sup>384</sup>

### 3.4.1. Use of legal instruments against journalists

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), as of 21 October 2025, 327 journalists and media outlets were designated as 'foreign agents'.<sup>385</sup> As noted by the UN Special Rapporteur, Mariana Katzarova, 59 journalists were added to the register in 2024 and 40 journalists in the first four months of 2025.<sup>386</sup> The UN Special Rapporteur also noted that around 40 % of administrative charges for non-compliance with 'foreign agent' legislation (Article 19.34 of the Code of Administrative Offences) were initiated against journalists and bloggers.<sup>387</sup> Furthermore, in 2024, at least 16 journalists faced criminal prosecution for violations of 'foreign agent' obligations (Article 330.1 of the Criminal Code).<sup>388</sup>

As of 21 October 2025, 23 media organisations were listed as 'undesirable'<sup>389</sup> – the label that brings criminal charges for someone who works with them or quotes their materials.<sup>390</sup> In 2024, as reported by Mediazona, Russian district courts issued 81 fines against journalists and readers for participation in the activities of 'undesirable organisations' (Article 20.33 of the Code of Administrative Offences). Of these, most cases concerned involvement with Meduza (45 administrative protocols), RFE/RL (12 administrative protocols), and TV Rain (9

<sup>378</sup> OVD-Info, Prosecution for anti-war views, 24 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>379</sup> RSF, Barometer, [detained, Russia, 2025 – 2025, Ongoing], [url](#), accessed 31 October 2025

<sup>380</sup> RSF, Ukraine: the media professionals arbitrary detained by Russia, 26 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>381</sup> 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. 32

<sup>382</sup> Guardian (The), 'Numerous signs of torture': a Ukrainian journalists' detention and death in Russian prison, 29 April 2025, [url](#); CPJ, Victoria Roshchina, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>383</sup> UN OHCHR, Report on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine, 1 September – 30 November 2024, [url](#), para. 62

<sup>384</sup> Guardian (The), 'Numerous signs of torture': a Ukrainian journalists' detention and death in Russian prison, 29 April 2025, [url](#); CPJ, Victoria Roshchina, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>385</sup> CPJ, Russia's repression record, 21 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>386</sup> 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 [A/HRC/60/59], 15 September 2025, [url](#), para. 24

<sup>387</sup> 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. 25

<sup>388</sup> 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 Katsarova [A/HRC/60/59], 15 September 2025, [url](#), para. 25

<sup>389</sup> CPJ, Russia's repression record, 31 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>390</sup> RSF, Russia, n.d., [url](#)





administrative protocols). Nearly half of them (34) were initiated by the Yakutian branch of the Centre for Combating Extremism, known as Centre E, which reportedly monitored social media for links to banned outlets.<sup>391</sup>

Since February 2022, journalists have faced criminal charges under the ‘war censorship’ legislation. In September 2025, the UN Special Rapporteur noted that at least 18 criminal cases had been initiated on these charges, with at least 23 journalists being sentenced.<sup>392</sup>

Between July 2024 and July 2025, at least nine criminal cases were initiated against journalists under terrorism-related charges (Article 205.2 of the Criminal Code), with seven journalists convicted. In February 2025, the editor-in-chief of an independent media outlet was sentenced in absentia to 10 years in prison on charges of ‘fake news’ and ‘justification of terrorism’. Under the same combination of charges, a former news presenter was sentenced in absentia to eight years in prison for publishing an interview with a fighter from the Free Russia Legion, which was designated as a ‘terrorist organization’ in Russia in July 2025.<sup>393</sup> In March 2025, the FSB reportedly arrested a Yakutian anti-war journalist<sup>394</sup> in Yakutsk, the capital of the Sakha Republic,<sup>395</sup> who had left Russia in 2022 and returned in 2024,<sup>396</sup> on charges of ‘public calls to commit acts of terrorism, public justification of terrorism or terrorism propaganda.’<sup>397</sup>

In addition, between July 2024 and July 2025, at least 8 new criminal cases were initiated against journalists on extremism charges, with 12 journalists convicted in the same period.<sup>398</sup> In April 2025, four journalists were sentenced to five and a half years in prison (each) in a closed-door trial on extremism charges, related to their alleged collaboration with the ACF.<sup>399</sup> In July 2025, a journalist from Ufa, the capital of Bashkortostan, who had covered regional protests and volunteered with the local ACF branch before it was banned in 2021, was sentenced to 12 years in prison in a closed-door trial for involvement in an extremist organisation and ‘spreading false information’ about the Russian army,<sup>400</sup> including through cooperation with the ACF.<sup>401</sup>

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<sup>391</sup> Mediazona, When journalism is “undesirable”. Russia’s crackdown on independent media results in 81 fines for those “associated” with independent media, 10 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>392</sup> 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. 34

<sup>393</sup> 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. 40

<sup>394</sup> Moscow Times (The), FSB Arrests Anti-War Yakutian Journalist on Terrorism Charges – Reports, 21 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>395</sup> CPJ, Russia's repression record, 31 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>396</sup> Moscow Times (The), FSB Arrests Anti-War Yakutian Journalist on Terrorism Charges – Reports, 21 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>397</sup> Indigenous Russia, From the Republics: The Arrest of Sasha Alexandrova, 1 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>398</sup> 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. 38

<sup>399</sup> AP, Four journalists who were accused of working for Kremlin foe Navalny are convicted of extremism, 16 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>400</sup> AP, Russian journalist sentenced to 12 years over ties to opposition group, 29 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>401</sup> CPJ, Russia's repression record, 21 October 2025, [url](#)





There have also been instances when journalists faced prosecution on national security charges.<sup>402</sup> In November 2024, an RFE/RL journalist in Chita in the Russian Far East was sentenced to four years in prison under charges of ‘confidential cooperation with a foreign organisation’ (Article 275.1 of the Criminal Code), after a regional FBS branch accused her of being paid by a foreign media outlet ‘to prepare inaccurate materials discrediting the Russian army and state authorities.’<sup>403</sup> This was the first case in which a journalist was convicted under these charges,<sup>404</sup> which carry a maximum sentence of eight years in prison.<sup>405</sup> In July 2025, the FSB initiated a criminal case against two journalists for illegal border crossing while reporting from Sudzha in August 2024 when it was under Ukrainian occupation.<sup>406</sup> As reported by the UN Special Rapporteur, an RFE/RL journalist, released in June 2024 after serving over four years in prison on charges of ‘espionage’ and ‘possession of explosives’, stated in court that he had been subjected to torture ‘to extract a confession.’<sup>407</sup>

The UN Special Rapporteur noted that at least 65 journalists have faced criminal charges in absentia.<sup>408</sup> According to CPJ, many journalists and media professionals in exile faced criminal prosecution for non-compliance with the ‘foreign agent’ legislation.<sup>409</sup> Other charges include charges for spreading ‘false’ information,<sup>410</sup> discreditation of the Russian army and government,<sup>411</sup> organisation of activities of an ‘undesirable organisation’,<sup>412</sup> justification of terrorism,<sup>413</sup> and involvement in an extremist organisation.<sup>414</sup>

### 3.4.2. Journalists in exile

As reported by the RSF in mid-October 2025, 66 media professionals had been ‘arrested or convicted in absentia by the Russian authorities because of their work’ since February 2022.

<sup>402</sup> 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. 42

<sup>403</sup> CPJ, Russian journalist Nika Novak sentenced to 4 years in prison, 26 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>404</sup> 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. 42

<sup>405</sup> CPJ, Russian journalist Nika Novak sentenced to 4 years in prison, 26 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>406</sup> Meduza, Russia opens criminal case against two journalist for reporting from Kursk region under Ukrainian occupation, 10 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>407</sup> 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. 42

<sup>408</sup> 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. 33

<sup>409</sup> CPJ, Russia's repression record, 21 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>410</sup> IStories, The Court Sentenced in Absentia the Publisher of IStories Roman Anin and Journalist Ekaterina Fomina to 8.5 Years in Prison in the Case of Military “Fakes”, 31 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>411</sup> Groza, Telegram, 25 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>412</sup> IFJ, Russia: IFJ and EFJ condemn the escalation of cross-border pressure and intimidation of Russian journalists in exile, 23 May 2025, [url](#); Novaya Gazeta Europe, Novaya Gazeta Europe’s editor-in-chief sentenced in absentia to 6 years in prison for running ‘undesirable organisation’, 22 April 2025, [url](#); Meduza, Russia opens felony case against Meduza journalist Dmitry Kuznets, 14 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>413</sup> Moscow Times (The), Ex-State TV Anchor Jailed 8 Years in Absentia for ‘War Fakes’ and ‘Justifying Terrorism’, 18 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>414</sup> OC Media, Russian authorities open criminal case against Circassian journalist Larisa Tuptsokova, 25 September 2025, [url](#)



The RSF further noted that an arrest or conviction in absentia means that the person cannot return to Russia, even for a brief visit, as it would mean their immediate arrest.<sup>415</sup>

The CPJ noted that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) ‘regularly adds journalists with outstanding foreign agent fines’ to the wanted list, making them subject to pre-trial detention if they travel to Russia or to countries that may extradite them to Russia. The MFA also seizes their assets and bank accounts in Russia.<sup>416</sup> According to the UN Special Rapporteur, Mariana Katzarova, journalists in exile appear ‘on various wanted lists, including International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) Red Notices’, which effectively places them at risk of arrest or refoulement if they travel to countries with extradition agreements with Russia.<sup>417</sup>

According to RSF, authorities ‘maintain pressure’ on journalists in exile by ‘visiting’ their family members in Russia.<sup>418</sup> CPJ reported that families of exiled journalists ‘have been harassed back home.’<sup>419</sup> As reported by Meduza in July 2025, the police summoned the parents of an exiled journalist, who faced charges of illegal border crossing, ‘for questioning’.<sup>420</sup>

### 3.5. Human rights defenders

Russian authorities have continued exerting pressure on human rights defenders,<sup>421</sup> widening in 2024 the use of ‘foreign agent’, anti-extremism,<sup>422</sup> and anti-terrorism legislation against them.<sup>423</sup> According to OVD-Info, in 2024, 22 human rights defenders faced politically motivated criminal prosecution.<sup>424</sup> As of January 2025, 84 human rights groups and 107 individuals working on human rights were placed on the list of ‘foreign agents’. For lawyers, inclusion on the ‘foreign agents’ list usually results in disbarment. Additionally, 110 human rights organisations have been designated as ‘undesirable.’<sup>425</sup>

In November 2024, a former director of the Sakharov Center, closed down in 2023, was sentenced in absentia to eight years in prison for spreading ‘false’ information for five Facebook posts on war crimes in Ukraine.<sup>426</sup> In June 2025, an 85-year-old human rights

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<sup>415</sup> RSF, Exiled, convicted, surveilled: how Russia has prosecuted nearly 70 journalists beyond its borders, 15 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>416</sup> CPJ, Russia's repression record, 21 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>417</sup> 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. 33

<sup>418</sup> RSF, Russia, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>419</sup> CPJ, Russia's repression record, 21 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>420</sup> Meduza, Russia opens criminal case against two journalist for reporting from Kursk region under Ukrainian occupation, 10 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>421</sup> PACE, Situation of human rights defenders and whistleblowers in Europe, 24 January 2025, [url](#), para. 2; 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. 50

<sup>422</sup> PACE, Situation of human rights defenders and whistleblowers in Europe, 24 January 2025, [url](#), para. 2

<sup>423</sup> UN, Russia must immediately drop charges against 85-year-old human rights defender Mark Kuperman: UN experts, 13 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>424</sup> OVD-Info, Repression in Russia in 2024: OVD-Info Overview, 12 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>425</sup> OVD-Info, Repression in Russia in 2024: OVD-Info Overview, 12 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>426</sup> RFE/RL, Russia Jails Former Sakharov Center Director In Absentia For Anti-War Posts, 18 November 2025, [url](#); OVD-Info, Экс-директора Сахаровского центра заочно приговорили к 8 годам колонии из-за антивоенных постов [Former director of Sakharov Centre sentenced in absentia to 8 years in prison for anti-war posts], 18 November 2025, [url](#)



defender,<sup>427</sup> who leads the Public Human Rights Center in the Sakhalin region,<sup>428</sup> was found guilty<sup>429</sup> on charges of ‘public calls for terrorism activities’ (Article 205.2 of the Criminal Code)<sup>430</sup> and fined 500 000 rubles [5 125 euros].<sup>431</sup> A criminal prosecution was initiated after he allegedly shared a draft article outlining scenarios for the development of Russia’s democratic institutions and the West’s supportive role with his team in January 2023.<sup>432</sup>

According to OVD-Info in January 2025, human rights defenders and lawyers have reported facing ‘physical violence or threats of violence,’ surveillance, and hacking of ‘their digital devices by secret service officers.’ In 2024, law enforcement increasingly employed tactics, such as ‘searches, interrogations and the seizure of equipment.’ Moreover, many human rights defenders felt an increase in hostility from law enforcement officers and ‘society as a whole,’ which they attributed to state propaganda efforts.<sup>433</sup>

### 3.5.1. Lawyers

Due to the current political environment, lawyers involved in politically sensitive or opposition-related cases<sup>434</sup> increasingly face the risk of criminal prosecution,<sup>435</sup> including on extremism charges, and harassment, which reflects the application of ‘selective, punitive justice’ by the authorities.<sup>436</sup> As noted by Ivan Pavlov, the profession of a lawyer has become dangerous; lawyers are increasingly prosecuted, and custodial pre-trial measures for lawyers are chosen more frequently than before.<sup>437</sup>

In November 2024, a lawyer and a former president of the Udmurtia bar association was sentenced to seven years in prison on charges of spreading ‘false’ information and ‘inciting hatred’ for 2022 Facebook posts condemning Russian military actions in Bucha, Mariupol, and Irpin.<sup>438</sup> As reported by OVD-Info, colleagues of the lawyer believed that his prosecution was

<sup>427</sup> 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. 51

<sup>428</sup> UN, Russia must immediately drop charges against 85-year-old human rights defender Mark Kuperman: UN experts, 13 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>429</sup> 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. 51

<sup>430</sup> UN, Russia must immediately drop charges against 85-year-old human rights defender Mark Kuperman: UN experts, 13 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>431</sup> 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. 51

<sup>432</sup> UN, Russia must immediately drop charges against 85-year-old human rights defender Mark Kuperman: UN experts, 13 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>433</sup> OVD-Info, Repression in Russia in 2024: OVD-Info Overview, 12 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>434</sup> ICJ, Russian Federation: Authorities must immediately release lawyer Maria Bontsler, 10 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>435</sup> ICJ, Russian Federation: Authorities must immediately release lawyer Maria Bontsler, 10 June 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. 75

<sup>436</sup> 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](#), paras. 75, 76

<sup>437</sup> Ivan Pavlov, Online interview with EUAA, 10 October 2025

<sup>438</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europe, Russian court sentences lawyer to 7 years in prison for criticising war, 28 November 2025, [url](#)



linked to his defence work for journalist Ivan Safronov, sentenced to 22 years in prison on treason charges.<sup>439</sup>

In January 2025, three of Alexei Navalny's lawyers were sentenced in a closed trial<sup>440</sup> to prison terms ranging from three and a half to five and a half years.<sup>441</sup> A month after their arrest in October 2023, they were placed on the list of 'terrorists and extremists'.<sup>442</sup> The prosecution accused them of helping Alexei Navalny lead an extremist group by communicating his messages to the public, including by social media posts, and helping him to file 'frequent lawsuits over his treatment in prison' to use legal hearings to keep speaking out against the state and the war in Ukraine.<sup>443</sup> The case was widely viewed as an attempt to increase pressure on the opposition and discourage defence lawyers from taking on politically sensitive cases. Two other members of Navalny's defence team are in exile and were added to a wanted list, with one reportedly charged in absentia with extremism.<sup>444</sup>

In May 2025, a human rights lawyer from Kaliningrad, known for defending 'activists, opposition figures, and individuals prosecuted under the laws restricting freedom of expression and assembly', was charged for 'confidential cooperation with a foreign state' (Article 275.1 of the Criminal Code) and placed in pre-trial detention.<sup>445</sup> At the prosecutor's request, the detention hearing was held behind closed doors 'on grounds of State secrecy'.<sup>446</sup>

In January 2025, OVD-Info reported that lawyers also faced violations of their professional rights and obstruction of public defenders' legal practice. Half of the lawyers surveyed by OVD-Info through a closed survey reported having faced various violations. These included, but were not limited to, denial of access to clients in police departments and other state facilities, especially during detentions and investigative procedures, searches carried out without a court order, inspections of lawyers entering court buildings, and the use of so-called 'dual defence', where a court-appointed lawyer, often aligned with the prosecution, was assigned 'in addition to the contracted lawyer'.<sup>447</sup>

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<sup>439</sup> OVD-Info, Repression in Russia in 2024: OVD-Info Overview, 12 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>440</sup> AP, 3 lawyers for the late Kremlin foe Alexei Navalny are convicted and sentenced to prison, 17 January 2025, [url](#); Reuters, Three Navalny lawyers sentenced to years in Russian penal colony for 'extremist activity', 17 January 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. 76

<sup>441</sup> AP, 3 lawyers for the late Kremlin foe Alexei Navalny are convicted and sentenced to prison, 17 January 2025, [url](#); Reuters, Three Navalny lawyers sentenced to years in Russian penal colony for 'extremist activity', 17 January 2025, [url](#);

<sup>442</sup> DW, Russia: 3 Navalny lawyers sentenced to prison, 17 January 2025, [url](#); Reuters, Three Navalny lawyers sentenced to years in Russian penal colony for 'extremist activity', 17 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>443</sup> Reuters, Three Navalny lawyers sentenced to years in Russian penal colony for 'extremist activity', 17 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>444</sup> AP, 3 lawyers for the late Kremlin foe Alexei Navalny are convicted and sentenced to prison, 17 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>445</sup> Mediazona, "Cooperation with an unfriendly state". Kaliningrad human rights lawyer Maria Bonzler, 64, charged with working "against security of Russia", 29 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>446</sup> ICJ, Russian Federation: Authorities must immediately release lawyer Maria Bontsler, 10 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>447</sup> OVD-Info, Repression in Russia in 2024: OVD-Info Overview, 12 January 2025, [url](#)



## 3.6. Religious minorities

As noted by OVD-Info, there are two groups whose religious freedom causes concern in Russia: Jehovah Witnesses and Crimean Tatars, prosecuted for their actual or perceived ties with Hizb-ut Tahrir. Both Jehovah's Witnesses and Hizb-ut Tahrir are classified as extremist organisations in Russia.<sup>448</sup>

### 3.6.1. Jehovah's Witnesses

Since the classification of Jehovah's Witnesses as an extremist organisation, and therefore the banning of its activities, in April 2017,<sup>449</sup> the authorities have engaged in 'a protracted campaign' against the community,<sup>450</sup> which involves arbitrary arrests,<sup>451</sup> confiscation of property, surveillance, and torture.<sup>452</sup> At the time of the ban in 2017, there were around 170 000<sup>453</sup> – 175 000 of Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia.<sup>454</sup>

As noted by the UN Special Rapporteur, Mariana Katzarova, the prosecution of the community affected nearly 1 000 people, with many facing mistreatment in detention, including torture and 'denial of adequate medical care.'<sup>455</sup> In October 2025, the ECHR upheld its June 2022 opinion, finding that prosecution and conviction of Jehovah's witnesses for peacefully practicing their religion were 'based on the impermissibly broad formulation and application of the extremism legislation,' while the authorities failed to prove that they were 'involved in any socially dangerous activities of an extremist nature.'<sup>456</sup>

As noted by the Oslo-based human rights organisation Forum 18,<sup>457</sup> even before a court trial takes place, investigations usually add individuals to the list of 'terrorists and extremists' maintained by the Rosfinmonitoring, which carries significant financial implications, such as the freezing of bank accounts, with exceptions allowed only for small transactions.<sup>458</sup> Furthermore, at least five Jehovah's Witnesses who had acquired Russian citizenship by naturalisation had their citizenship revoked due to their criminal convictions, with three of them being 'subsequently expelled from Russia.'<sup>459</sup>

#### a) Law enforcement practices

<sup>448</sup> OVD-Info, Online interview with EUAA, 21 October 2025

<sup>449</sup> Forum 18, Russia: more long jail sentences, removals of citizenship, 21 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>450</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World, 28 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>451</sup> AI, Russia 2024, 28 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>452</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World, 28 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>453</sup> Moscow Times (The), Persecuted En Masse, Russia's Jehovah's Witnesses "Expect to Outlast" Putin's Regime, 14 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>454</sup> Jehovah's Witnesses, About us, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>455</sup> 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. 61

<sup>456</sup> EHCR, Case of Markin and Others v. Russia, 16 October 2025, [url](#), para. 11

<sup>457</sup> Forum 18 is a human rights organisation and news service, which focuses on monitoring and analysis of violations of freedom of thought, conscience, and belief in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Central Asia, and South Caucasus. See, Forum 18, About, [url](#)

<sup>458</sup> Forum 18, Russia: more long jail sentences, removals of citizenship, 21 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>459</sup> Forum 18, Russia: more long jail sentences, removals of citizenship, 21 October 2025, [url](#)





As reported by Forum 18, authorities continued the practice of conducting raids on the homes of Jehovah's Witnesses. These raids are usually conducted by the Investigative Committee or the FSB, both of whom are 'usually responsible' for investigating Jehovah's Witnesses after their inclusion into the list of extremist organisations, and often involve the National Guard.<sup>460</sup> During home searches, law enforcement officers seize electronic devices, mobile phones,<sup>461</sup> as well as personal notes and Bibles.<sup>462</sup> During home searches in Saratov oblast, wives and children of believers were also reportedly questioned.<sup>463</sup> From 1 September 2025 to 21 October 2025, the FSB and Investigative Committee conducted at least 37 raids on households in five Russian regions.<sup>464</sup>

According to SOVA Research Center, in 2024, searches of Jehovah's Witnesses' homes were 'often accompanied by violations, including use of violence against believers.'<sup>465</sup> As reported by Forum 18 in October 2025, the FSB and other agencies used physical abuse, inhumane treatment, and threats during raids and interrogations. Moreover, according to the same source, in some cases, law enforcement officers reportedly used torture during interrogations and in some prison facilities.<sup>466</sup> In September 2025, in Saratov, National Guard officers<sup>467</sup> repeatedly used electroshock device against a 58-year-old man while conducting searches at his house before arresting him,<sup>468</sup> with none of them being investigated or held accountable.<sup>469</sup>

## b) Prosecutions and convictions

According to data from Jehovah's Witnesses, as of October 2025, 883 persons have been prosecuted by the Russian authorities, with almost all of them (882 persons) for organising an extremist organisation, participating in such organisation, or recruiting others to it.<sup>470</sup> This number includes 33 persons prosecuted in illegally annexed Crimea.<sup>471</sup> Among 633 court

<sup>460</sup> Forum 18, Russia: more long jail sentences, removals of citizenship, 21 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>461</sup> Jehovah's Witnesses, Legal Developments in Russia, На границе с Казахстаном прошли обыски в домах Свидетелей Иеговы. Возбуждено дело по подозрению в экстремизме [Searches were conducted in the homes of Jehovah's Witnesses on the border with Kazakhstan. A case has been opened on suspicion of extremism], 4 March 2025, [url](#); Jehovah's Witnesses, Legal Developments in Russia, Массовые обыски в Хакасии и Красноярском крае. Трое верующих отправлены в СИЗО [Mass searches in Khakassia and Krasnoyarsk Krai. Three believers sent to pretrial detention centres], 29 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>462</sup> Jehovah's Witnesses, Legal Developments in Russia, На границе с Казахстаном прошли обыски в домах Свидетелей Иеговы. Возбуждено дело по подозрению в экстремизме [Searches were conducted in the homes of Jehovah's Witnesses on the border with Kazakhstan. A case has been opened on suspicion of extremism], 4 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>463</sup> Jehovah's Witnesses, Legal Developments in Russia, Пятеро верующих арестованы после рейда против саратовских Свидетелей Иеговы [Five believers arrested after raid against Jehovah's Witnesses in Saratov], 11 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>464</sup> Forum 18, Russia: more long jail sentences, removals of citizenship, 21 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>465</sup> SOVA Research Center, Challenges to Freedom of Conscience in Russia in 2024, [url](#)

<sup>466</sup> Forum 18, Russia: Another Jehovah's Witness tortured during arrest, 20 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>467</sup> Forum 18, Russia: Another Jehovah's Witness tortured during arrest, 20 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>468</sup> Jehovah's Witnesses, Legal Developments in Russia, Удары электрошокером во время обыска в Саратове. Семья пострадавшего требует расследовать преступление [Shocked with a stun gun during a search in Saratov. The victim's family demands an investigation into the crime], 25 September 2025, [url](#); Forum 18, Russia: Another Jehovah's Witness tortured during arrest, 20 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>469</sup> Forum 18, Russia: Another Jehovah's Witness tortured during arrest, 20 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>470</sup> Jehovah's Witnesses, Legal developments in Russia, Prisoners of Conscience [By people, Article of Criminal Code] n.d., [url](#)

<sup>471</sup> Jehovah's Witnesses, Legal developments in Russia, Prisoners of Conscience [By people, Region] n.d., [url](#)





verdicts, 202 were prison sentences, 320 suspended sentences, and 95 fines.<sup>472</sup> Furthermore, in 26 cases, the charges were withdrawn, and two cases ended with acquittals.<sup>473</sup>

According to the same source, 49 cases against Jehovah's Witnesses were initiated in 2024<sup>474</sup> and 28 cases were recorded from 1 January 2025 to 3 October 2025.<sup>475</sup> Of these cases (77 in total), 15 persons were convicted, 31 face a trial, and 27 have been formally charged. There were no instances of charges being dropped in this period.<sup>476</sup> Moreover, as of October 2025, 169 Jehovah's Witnesses were deprived of liberty due to detention in various facilities, including penal colonies and pre-trial detention centres. Furthermore, at least 494 members of the community have faced detention, including short-term detentions.<sup>477</sup>

As noted by OVD-Info, a typical case against Jehovah's witnesses is against persons who organise small home gatherings for community members.<sup>478</sup> In January 2025, a Russian-appointed court in Crimea sentenced two men to six years in prison on charges for conducting and participating in worship gatherings.<sup>479</sup> In April 2025, a person in Chelyabinsk was similarly sentenced to six years in prison. As reported by Reuters, a local interior ministry reported that the investigation against this person involved the FSB, counter-extremism investigators, and a special unit of the National Guard (*Rosgvardiya*) who seized the person's computer hard drives, electronic devices, and handwritten notebooks containing religious content.<sup>480</sup> In September 2025, in Saransk, the capital of the Republic of Mordovia, two Jehovah's Witnesses were sentenced to six and a half and seven years in prison respectively for holding religious meetings, engaging in preaching activities in the city, and distributing extremist literature.<sup>481</sup>

In October 2025, courts convicted at least four Jehovah's Witnesses, with one of them being sentenced to 7 years in prison and two others receiving a suspended sentence.<sup>482</sup> The same month, an appellate court turned a suspended sentence of six years and six months imprisonment into an actual prison term after an appeal by a state prosecutor.<sup>483</sup>

<sup>472</sup> Jehovah's Witnesses, Legal developments in Russia, Prisoners of Conscience [By cases] n.d., [url](#); Russia, Уголовный кодекс Российской Федерации от 13.06.1996 N 63-ФЗ (ред. от 31.07.2025) (с изм. и доп., вступ. в силу с 01.09.2025) [The Criminal Code of the Russian Federation of 13.06.1996 N 63-FZ (with amendments and additions, effective from 1.09.2025)], 2025, [url](#), Art 282.2

<sup>473</sup> Jehovah's Witnesses, Legal developments in Russia, Prisoners of Conscience [By people, Status] n.d., [url](#)

<sup>474</sup> Jehovah's Witnesses, Legal developments in Russia, Prisoners of Conscience [By people, Case initiation date, 1 January 2024 – 31 December 2024] n.d., [url](#)

<sup>475</sup> Jehovah's Witnesses, Legal developments in Russia, Prisoners of Conscience [By people, Case initiation date, 1 January 2025 – 3 October 2025] n.d., [url](#)

<sup>476</sup> Jehovah's Witnesses, Legal developments in Russia, Prisoners of Conscience [By people, Case initiation date, 1 January 2024 – 3 October 2025, Status] n.d., [url](#)

<sup>477</sup> Jehovah's Witnesses, Legal developments in Russia, Prisoners of Conscience [By cases] n.d., [url](#); Russia, Уголовный кодекс Российской Федерации от 13.06.1996 N 63-ФЗ (ред. от 31.07.2025) (с изм. и доп., вступ. в силу с 01.09.2025) [The Criminal Code of the Russian Federation of 13.06.1996 N 63-FZ (with amendments and additions, effective from 1.09.2025)], 2025, [url](#), Art 282.2

<sup>478</sup> OVD-Info, Online interview with EUAA, 21 October 2025

<sup>479</sup> UN OHCHR, Report on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine, 1 December 2024 – 31 May 2025, 30 June 2025, [url](#), para. 75

<sup>480</sup> Reuters, Russian Jehovah's Witness jailed for managing extremist 'cells', 3 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>481</sup> Forum 18, Russia: more long jail sentences, removals of citizenship, 21 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>482</sup> Forum 18, Russia: more long jail sentences, removals of citizenship, 21 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>483</sup> Kommersant, В Тамбове ужесточили наказание участнику экстремистской религиозной организации [In Tambov, punishment for member of extremist religious organization was tightened], 23 October 2025, [url](#)



A human rights lawyer noted that Jehovah's Witnesses refuse legal assistance, believing that enduring trials is a test from God, therefore it is not possible to provide them with legal aid, as they decline any help.<sup>484</sup>

### 3.6.2. Persons with ties to Hizb ut-Tahrir

Hizb ut-Tahrir was one of 15 Islamic organisations whom the Supreme Court of Russia recognised as terrorist organisations, banning their activities in Russia in 2003.<sup>485</sup> In its ruling, the Supreme Court cited the organisation's 'militant Islamist propaganda combined with intolerance towards other religions' as justification for its designation as a terrorist organisation,<sup>486</sup> yet it provided no information of Hizb ut-Tahrir involvement in actual terrorist activities<sup>487</sup> such as 'terrorist attacks, assaults, or crimes of violence.'<sup>488</sup>

Human rights organisation Memorial noted that 'in recent years hundreds of Muslims' were convicted on charges for involvement in Hizb ut-Tahrir, receiving 'increasingly harsh sentences' handed down. According to Memorial, in illegally annexed Crimea, the authorities use such prosecution 'as a tool to suppress public solidarity and civic activism of local residents, especially Crimean Tatars', who constitute the majority of those accused of ties with Hizb ut-Tahrir.<sup>489</sup> OVD-Info noted that while several countries consider Hizb ut-Tahrir as an extremist or terrorist organisation, the actual reasons for criminal prosecution of alleged Hizb ut-Tahrir members in Russia 'are not very clear' and can also involve prosecution for local activism. The expert further noted that in the current situation in Russia it is difficult to establish which cases involve suppression of one's religious freedoms and which cases do not.<sup>490</sup>

As reported by Memorial, as of early 2025, at least 276 persons were serving prison sentences for involvement in Hizb ut-Tahrir, while an additional 32 persons were held in pre-trial detention and another two under house arrest. Of 16 people detained on charges of involvement in Hizb ut-Tahrir in 2024, 10 were reportedly detained in Crimea,<sup>491</sup> and 4, all of whom were women, in Kazan, the capital of Tatarstan.<sup>492</sup> Memorial recognised 289 persons accused of ties to Hizb ut-Tahrir as political prisoners.<sup>493</sup>

As noted by Crimean Tatar Resource Centre, the criminal charges against perceived members of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Russia are built on testimonies of secret witnesses as opinions by experts collaborating with the FSB, with the evidence which comprise banned Islamic literature found

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<sup>484</sup> Human rights lawyer, Online interview with EUAA, 23 October 2025

<sup>485</sup> CTCR, 117 people prosecuted in 'Hizb ut-Tahrir case' in the occupied Crimea – CTCR, 21 August 2024, [url](#)

<sup>486</sup> Memorial, Political Prisoners and Political Repression in Russia in 2024, 21 May 2025, [url](#), p. 111

<sup>487</sup> CTCR, 117 people prosecuted in 'Hizb ut-Tahrir case' in the occupied Crimea – CTCR, 21 August 2024, [url](#)

<sup>488</sup> Memorial, Political Prisoners and Political Repression in Russia in 2024, 21 May 2025, [url](#), p. 111

<sup>489</sup> Memorial, List of persecuted Hizb ut-Tahrir members, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>490</sup> OVD-Info, Online interview with EUAA, 21 October 2025

<sup>491</sup> Memorial, Political Prisoners and Political Repression in Russia in 2024, 21 May 2025, [url](#), p. 112

<sup>492</sup> Vechernaya Kazan, Суд арестовал организатора женской террористической ячейки в Казани [Court arrested organiser of women's terrorist cell in Kazan], 18 September 2024, [url](#); Memorial, Political Prisoners and Political Repression in Russia in 2024, 21 May 2025, [url](#), p. 112

<sup>493</sup> Memorial, List of persecuted Hizb ut-Tahrir members, n.d., [url](#)



during the searches, operational data of the FSB, and audio recordings in which persons discuss political and religious subjects.<sup>494</sup>

## 3.7. LGBTIQ persons

Since February 2022, Russian authorities have intensified the crackdown on LGBTIQ people<sup>495</sup> under the pretext of promoting ‘traditional values.’<sup>496</sup> According to OVD-Info, 2024 was ‘a year of systemic repression against the LGBTIQ+ community in Russia,’ with ‘an escalation of criminal, administrative and legislative measures aimed at suppressing the rights and freedoms of LGBTIQ+ people’.<sup>497</sup> Overall, LGBTIQ culture and activism ‘have been forced underground.’<sup>498</sup> In its 2025 ranking, ILGA-Europe, which ranks European countries on their respective legal and policy practices for LGBTIQ people, placed Russia on the last position out of 49 countries.<sup>499</sup> As noted by a lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues and working for several Russia-based NGOs, the current situation of LGBTIQ people in Russia is shaped by the existing legislation and continues deteriorating every month.<sup>500</sup>

### 3.7.1. Legal framework and implementation of legislation

#### a) ‘LGBT propaganda’ ban

In December 2022,<sup>501</sup> the authorities expanded the scope of the so-called ‘gay propaganda’ law<sup>502</sup> by prohibiting propaganda of non-traditional sexual relationships and gender transition (Article 6.21 of the Code of Administrative Offences) and punishing dissemination of information depicting non-traditional sexual relationships and promoting gender transition among minors (Article 6.21.2 of the same Code).<sup>503</sup> The punishments for individuals with Russian citizenship under this legislation is up to 400 000 rubles [4 100 euros].<sup>504</sup>

<sup>494</sup> CTCRC, В оккупованому Криму 122 особи переслідуються у «справі Хізб ут-Тахрір» – КРЦ [In occupied Crimea, 122 people are being prosecuted in the “Hizb ut-Tahrir case” – KRC], 26 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>495</sup> New York Times (The), A Prison Death Highlights an L.G.B.T.Q. Crackdown in Russia, 1 April 2025, [url](#); Shashkov, A., How Far Will Russia’s Wartime Anti-LGBTQ+ Campaign Go?, Carnegie Politika, 25 June 2025, [url](#); Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Online interview with EUAA, 26 September 2025

<sup>496</sup> Moscow Times (The), In Russia, Being Openly Gay Is ‘Extremist.’ But Some People Bend the Rules, 12 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>497</sup> OVD-Info, Repression in Russia in 2024: OVD-Info Overview, 12 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>498</sup> Moscow Times (The), In Russia, Being Openly Gay Is ‘Extremist.’ But Some People Bend the Rules, 12 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>499</sup> ILGA-Europe, Rainbow Map 2025, 14 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>500</sup> Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Online interview with EUAA, 26 September 2025

<sup>501</sup> CNN, Putin signs expanded anti-LGBTQ laws in Russia, in latest crackdown on rights, 5 December 2022, [url](#); Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Online interview with EUAA, 26 September 2025

<sup>502</sup> HRW, Russia: Expanded ‘Gay Propaganda’ Ban Progresses Toward Law, 25 November 2022, [url](#)

<sup>503</sup> Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Online interview with EUAA, 26 September 2025; Russia, Кодекс Российской Федерации об административных правонарушениях, от 30.12.2001 N 195-ФЗ (с изм. и доп., вступ. в силу с 22.10.2025) [“Code of Administrative Offences of the Russian Federation, of 30.12.2001 No 195 -FZ (with amendments and additions, effective from 22.10.2025), 2025, [url](#), Art. 6.21 and 6.21.2.

<sup>504</sup> Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Online Interview with EUAA, 26 September 2025; Russia, Кодекс Российской Федерации об административных правонарушениях, от 30.12.2001 N 195-ФЗ (с изм. и доп., вступ. в силу с 22.10.2025) [“Code of Administrative Offences of the Russian Federation, of 30.12.2001 No 195 -FZ (with amendments and additions, effective from 22.10.2025), 2025, [url](#), Art. 6.21





The sources noted that the use of this legislation has significantly increased<sup>505</sup> with, as reported by independent media outlet Meduza, 146 fines related to ‘LGBT propaganda’ issued by the courts in 2024, compared to 101 such fines in 2023, 16 in 2022, and 6 in 2021.<sup>506</sup> Overall, in 2024, 214 cases of administrative charges under ‘LGBT propaganda’ charges (Articles 6.21 and 6.21.2)<sup>507</sup> were recorded and 151 individuals were found guilty. People were prosecuted for managing LGBTIQ communities online, creating LGBTIQ-related social media or podcast content, regardless of the number of people who have seen this content. Other punished activities included expressing one’s sexuality or gender identity, advertising same-sex relationships, posting personal pictures online, and searching online for same-sex partners, including through private social media accounts. The prosecution was applied inconsistently, with similar actions carried out by different persons or entities resulting in different charges and penalties.<sup>508</sup>

As noted by Human Rights Watch, the authorities used laws prohibiting ‘LGBT propaganda’ ‘to suppress and punish LGBT visibility,’ including by imposing fines on television channels and streaming services for airing LGBT-related content.<sup>509</sup> A major shift occurred in book publishing industry,<sup>510</sup> with publishers forced to recall books containing LGBTIQ-related content in 2024<sup>511</sup> and 2025.<sup>512</sup> In May 2025, ‘at least 10 book publishing professionals’ were detained in Moscow for involvement in an extremist organisation for publishing LGBTIQ-related literature.<sup>513</sup> In August 2025, a Moscow court reportedly fined an online comic library 14 million rubles [143 500 euros] for hosting seven manga comics violating ‘LGBT propaganda’ law, while the library’s project manager was additionally fined a total of one million rubles [10 250 euros] for similar offences in June 2025.<sup>514</sup>

## **b) Prohibition of gender transition**

In July 2023, a law prohibited gender affirming health services, such as surgeries and hormonal therapy<sup>515</sup> and changing gender marker in identity documents.<sup>516</sup> The law also revoked previously registered marriages of transgender people, prohibited adoption and

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<sup>505</sup> AI, Russia 2024, 28 April 2025, [url](#); Meduza, ‘What even is propaganda?’ How Russia’s murky anti-LGBTIQ law fuel a repressive campaign that makes the state millions, 19 June 2025, [url](#); HRW, Russia: Rising Toll of LGBT ‘Extremism’ Designation, 30 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>506</sup> Meduza, ‘What even is propaganda?’ How Russia’s murky anti-LGBTIQ law fuel a repressive campaign that makes the state millions, 19 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>507</sup> Shashkov, A., How Far Will Russia’s Wartime Anti-LGBTQ+ Campaign Go?, Carnegie Politika, 25 June 2025, [url](#); Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Online Interview with EUAA, 26 September 2025

<sup>508</sup> Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Online interview with EUAA, 26 September 2025

<sup>509</sup> HRW, Russia – Events of 2024, 17 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>510</sup> Shashkov, A., How Far Will Russia’s Wartime Anti-LGBTQ+ Campaign Go?, 25 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>511</sup> HRW, Russia – Events of 2024, 17 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>512</sup> Department One, Telegram, 15 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>513</sup> AI, Russia: Book publishers arrested in anti LGBTI campaign, 15 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>514</sup> Mediazona, “Cultural threat to the national security”. Russian online library fined over \$170,000 for “LGBT propaganda” in manga comics, 25 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>515</sup> Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Online interview with EUAA, 26 September 2025

<sup>516</sup> HRW, Russia: Trans Health Care, Families Bill Violates Rights, 15 July 2023, [url](#); New York Times (The), A Prison Death Highlights an L.G.B.T.Q. Crackdown in Russia, 1 April 2025, [url](#); Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Online interview with EUAA, 26 September 2025





guardianship of children by transgender persons,<sup>517</sup> and allowed ‘coercive medical interventions on intersex children.’<sup>518</sup>

As reported by Meduza in April 2025, a lawyer working on transgender people rights in Russia and Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine noted that around 35 persons have succeeded in changing their identity documents after the law came into force, including through court rulings. According to the source, this procedure requires an approval from a state medical commission under the Ministry of Health and to receive such approval one must provide medical records proving that the surgery was performed before the law came into force.<sup>519</sup>

### c) Use of anti-extremism legislation

On 30 November 2023, in a court hearing held behind closed doors,<sup>520</sup> the Russian Supreme Court designated the ‘international LGBT movement’ – and all its structures<sup>521</sup> – as an extremist organisation.<sup>522</sup> The ruling took effect on 10 January 2024.<sup>523</sup> As of October 2025, the ‘international LGBT movement’ is the last organisation added to the register of extremist organisations by the Ministry of Justice.<sup>524</sup> The inclusion of the ‘international LGBT movement’ into the list of extremist organisations gave the authorities a new legislative tool to reinforce the ‘LGBT propaganda’ law,<sup>525</sup> intensifying the application of arbitrary charges against LGBTIQ people and their supporters, including lawyers.<sup>526</sup> As of mid-2025, due to the legislative repressions, at least five LGBT rights groups and 11 informal initiatives reportedly closed their operations.<sup>527</sup>

Different from the 2022 ‘LGBT propaganda’ law ‘which falls under administrative law’, organisation of or participation in an extremist organisation is a criminal offense,<sup>528</sup> for which the maximum punishment is a 12-year prison sentence.<sup>529</sup> Under Article 282.2 of the Criminal Code, individuals may face charges for organising, participating in, or financing extremist

<sup>517</sup> AI, The State of World Human Rights, April 2024, [url](#), p. 319

<sup>518</sup> HRW, Russia – Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>519</sup> Meduza, «Суды много положительных решений выносят [...] [“The courts are handing down many positive rulings [...]], 18 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>520</sup> Shashkov, A., How Far Will Russia’s Wartime Anti-LGBTQ+ Campaign Go?, Carnegie Politika, 25 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>521</sup> Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Online interview with EUAA, 26 September 2025

<sup>522</sup> HRW, Russia – Events of 2024, 17 January 2025, [url](#); New York Times (The), A Prison Death Highlights an L.G.B.T.Q. Crackdown in Russia, 1 April 2025, [url](#); HRW, Russia: Rising Toll of LGBT ‘Extremism’ Designation, 30 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>523</sup> OVD-Info, Repression in Russia in 2024: OVD-Info Overview, 12 January 2025, [url](#); HRW, Russia: Rising Toll of LGBT ‘Extremism’ Designation, 30 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>524</sup> Marianna Muravyeva, Online interview with EUAA, 3 October 2025

<sup>525</sup> Moscow Times (The), In Russia, Being Openly Gay Is ‘Extremist.’ But Some People Bend the Rules, 12 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>526</sup> New York Times (The), A Prison Death Highlights an L.G.B.T.Q. Crackdown in Russia, 1 April 2025, [url](#); Moscow Times (The), In Russia, Being Openly Gay Is ‘Extremist.’ But Some People Bend the Rules, 12 June 2025, [url](#); HRW, Russia: Rising Toll of LGBT ‘Extremism’ Designation, 30 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>527</sup> 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. 112

<sup>528</sup> Meduza, ‘What even is propaganda?’ How Russia’s murky anti-LGBTIQ law fuel a repressive campaign that makes the state millions, 19 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>529</sup> Meduza, ‘What even is propaganda?’ How Russia’s murky anti-LGBTIQ law fuel a repressive campaign that makes the state millions, 19 June 2025, [url](#); Shashkov, A., How Far Will Russia’s Wartime Anti-LGBTQ+ Campaign Go?, Carnegie Politika, 25 June 2025, [url](#)



activities.<sup>530</sup> In addition, after the inclusion of ‘LGBT movement’ into the list of extremist organisations, displaying symbols that might be associated with LGBTIQ, such as a rainbow, has become an action of ‘displaying extremist symbols’.<sup>531</sup> A first-time offence is punishable under the Code of Administrative Offences (Article 20.3) with up to 15 days in prison and/or a fine.<sup>532</sup> If the same offense is repeated within one year after paying an administrative fine or concluding a prison term,<sup>533</sup> a criminal prosecution, punishable by up to four years in prison, would follow for a repeated display of an extremist sign (Article 282.4 of the Criminal Code).<sup>534</sup> As noted by Human Rights Watch, the offence is considered ‘repeated even if a different symbol unrelated to LGBT rights is displayed in subsequent cases.’<sup>535</sup>

According to the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Mariana Katzarova, between mid-2024 and mid-2025, Russian courts reviewed 221 cases on ‘LGBT propaganda,’ including for displaying LGBTIQ symbols, such as the rainbow flag.<sup>536</sup> In June 2025, Human Rights Watch reported on having identified 81 people in 98 court cases who had been found guilty of an administrative offence for displaying LGBTIQ-related symbols, such as a rainbow flag, most commonly on social media, since January 2024.<sup>537</sup> As a lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues noted to the EUAA, one of the key concerns in these cases is the significant legal uncertainty, as the same action, such as posting LGBTIQ-related content on social media, can lead to either administrative or criminal prosecution.<sup>538</sup> According to Human Rights Watch, in 2024, courts handed down 131 convictions under Article 282.4 ‘for repeated displays of banned symbols.’ In 2025, one person was convicted of criminal charges and sentenced to six months of compulsory labour for posting a rainbow flag on a social media page.<sup>539</sup>

As of September 2025, there were 16 criminal cases filed under Article 282.2,<sup>540</sup> the first of which – against the owner of a gay club in Orenburg<sup>541</sup> – was initiated in March 2024.<sup>542</sup> Commenting on this case, Marianna Muravyeva noted that the court verdict described the person as ‘an owner of the club of non-traditional sexual orientation who had conspired with a

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<sup>530</sup> Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Online interview with EUAA, 26 September 2025

<sup>531</sup> Shashkov, A., How Far Will Russia’s Wartime Anti-LGBTQ+ Campaign Go?, Carnegie Politika, 25 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>532</sup> Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Online interview with EUAA, 26 September 2025; Russia, Кодекс Российской Федерации об административных правонарушениях, от 30.12.2001 N 195-ФЗ (с изм. и доп., вступ. в силу с 22.10.2025) [“Code of Administrative Offences of the Russian Federation, of 30.12.2001 No 195 -FZ (with amendments and additions, effective from 22.10.2025), 2025, [url](#), Art. 20.3; Shashkov, A., How Far Will Russia’s Wartime Anti-LGBTQ+ Campaign Go?, Carnegie Politika, 25 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>533</sup> Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Online interview with EUAA, 26 September 2025

<sup>534</sup> HRW, Russia – Events of 2024, 17 January 2025, [url](#); Russia, Уголовный кодекс Российской Федерации от 13.06.1996 N 63-ФЗ (ред. от 31.07.2025) (с изм. и доп., вступ. в силу с 01.09.2025) [The Criminal Code of the Russian Federation of 13.06.1996 N 63-FZ (with amendments and additions, effective from 1.09.2025)], 2025, [url](#), Art. 282.4

<sup>535</sup> HRW, Russia: Rising Toll of LGBT ‘Extremism’ Designation, 30 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>536</sup> 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. 112

<sup>537</sup> HRW, Russia: Rising Toll of LGBT ‘Extremism’ Designation, 30 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>538</sup> Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Online interview with EUAA, 26 September 2025

<sup>539</sup> HRW, Russia: Rising Toll of LGBT ‘Extremism’ Designation, 30 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>540</sup> Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Online interview with EUAA, 26 September 2025

<sup>541</sup> BBC News, Two arrested in Russia’s first LGBTIQ+ extremism case, 20 March 2024, [url](#); Marianna Muravyeva, Online interview with EUAA, 3 October 2025

<sup>542</sup> BBC News, Two arrested in Russia’s first LGBTIQ+ extremism case, 20 March 2024, [url](#); Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Online interview with EUAA, 26 September 2025



group of persons and organised and supported the activities of the LGBT organisation, promoting non-traditional sexual relations among the visitors of the bar,' which is a direct result of the November 2023 decision. She further noted that the sentence is now on appeal and there is a possibility of it being turned into a suspended sentence.<sup>543</sup>

Most of the criminal cases under Article 282.2 involve organisers of LGBTIQ events, owners and employees of gay clubs, and staff of publishing houses.<sup>544</sup> This includes the prosecution of three individuals from two publishing houses, who were charged for publishing and distributing books with LGBTIQ content.<sup>545</sup> In Vladikavkaz, the capital of North Ossetia-Alania, two men were prosecuted because of running a gay dating webpage.<sup>546</sup> However, there are also three LGBTIQ activists, prosecuted solely for their involvement in LGBTIQ-related civil society organisations. In addition, four criminal cases were launched against 'ordinary gay men,' including one case in which a man was prosecuted for proposing same-sex relationship to another man. In two cases, criminal prosecution was initiated against gay men who revealed and promoted LGBTIQ identity on social media.<sup>547</sup>

In December 2024, an owner of an LGBTIQ travel agency<sup>548</sup> facing charges for involvement in an extremist organisation died by suicide in pre-trial detention,<sup>549</sup> 'raising concerns of torture'.<sup>550</sup>

Although there were several cases of arrests of people related to publishing business,<sup>551</sup> there is no law to punish possession of LGBTIQ-related literature or materials without the intent of their distribution.<sup>552</sup> Therefore, individual possession of this type of content is not punished<sup>553</sup> or cases of such punishment are not known.<sup>554</sup>

#### **d) Police raids of LGBTIQ venues in relation to 'anti-extremism' legislation**

The November 2023 decision of the Supreme Court legitimised police raids on LGBTIQ venues,<sup>555</sup> which have become a regular practice.<sup>556</sup> Sources report police raids on gay

<sup>543</sup> Marianna Muravyeva, Online interview with EUAA, 3 October 2025

<sup>544</sup> Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Online interview with EUAA, 26 September 2025

<sup>545</sup> HRW, Russia: Rising Toll of LGBT 'Extremism' Designation, 30 June 2025, [url](#); FIDH, Russia cracks down on LGBTIQ+ community, targeting books and publishers, 21 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. 116

<sup>546</sup> Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Online interview with EUAA, 26 September 2025

<sup>547</sup> Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Online interview with EUAA, 26 September 2025

<sup>548</sup> Moscow Times (The), In Russia, Being Openly Gay Is 'Extremist.' But Some People Bend the Rules, 12 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>549</sup> HRW, Russia: Rising Toll of LGBT 'Extremism' Designation, 30 June 2025, [url](#); DW, Russia: Man accused of organizing LGBTQ+ tours dies in jail, 29 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>550</sup> 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. 114

<sup>551</sup> Insider (The), Major Russian publishers detained in "extremism" raids over books allegedly spreading "LGBT propaganda", 15 May 2025, [url](#); Marianna Muravyeva, Online interview with EUAA, 3 October 2025

<sup>552</sup> Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Online interview with EUAA, 26 September 2025

<sup>553</sup> Marianna Muravyeva, Online interview with EUAA, 3 October 2025

<sup>554</sup> Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Online interview with EUAA, 26 September 2025

<sup>555</sup> Shashkov, A., How Far Will Russia's Wartime Anti-LGBTQ+ Campaign Go?, Carnegie Politika, 25 June 2025, [url](#);

Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Online interview with EUAA, 26 September 2025

<sup>556</sup> Marianna Muravyeva, Online interview with EUAA, 3 October 2025



bars,<sup>557</sup> clubs,<sup>558</sup> and private parties,<sup>559</sup> with investigations focusing on individuals suspected of being gay.<sup>560</sup> According to journalist Andrey Shashkov, while raids on gay clubs had occurred in the past, the police ‘stopped pretending they were looking for drugs’ claiming now that the raids are carried out to prevent ‘LGBT extremism.’<sup>561</sup> As reported by Meduza, between November 2023 and January 2025, police raided ‘dozens of private parties’ in 18 regions across Russia, with officials and state media portraying them as actions against a network of ‘paramilitary groups’ engaged in ‘open gender war’ against the country or ‘devil worship.’<sup>562</sup>

Independent media outlet Current Time reported on 34 police raids on places related to the LGBTIQ community in 2024, followed by 10 raids carried out between January 2025 and May 2025.<sup>563</sup> The UN Special Rapporteur, Mariana Katzarova, recorded 40 raids conducted in 2024, adding that ‘ultranationalist vigilantes’ were frequently involved in these raids.<sup>564</sup> In January 2025, Meduza reported that police officers tried to identify during the raids people employed by the government and that the authorities pressured organisers of LGBTIQ events to share guest lists with the police and to allow ‘plainclothes officers’ to attend LGBTIQ parties.<sup>565</sup>

Police raids involved physical violence, humiliation, threats,<sup>566</sup> detentions,<sup>567</sup> fines,<sup>568</sup> and distribution of military draft summonses.<sup>569</sup> Nearly half of the 19 raids on LGBTIQ events documented by NGO Coming Out<sup>570</sup> in 2024 occurred in December, ‘which is a party period.’ Besides violations described above, in some instances, the police reportedly took photos of

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<sup>557</sup> RFE/RL, Moscow Bars, Nightclubs Raided Amid Crackdown On LGBT Community, 30 November 2024, [url](#); Moscow Times (The), In Russia, Being Openly Gay Is ‘Extremist.’ But Some People Bend the Rules, 12 June 2025, [url](#); Shashkov, A., How Far Will Russia’s Wartime Anti-LGBTQ+ Campaign Go?, Carnegie Politika, 25 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>558</sup> Euronews, Police carry out anti-LGBTIQ raids on some of Moscow’s bars and clubs, 30 November 2024, [url](#); HRW, Russia – Events of 2024, 17 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>559</sup> Meduza, ‘How do you even f–?’ In Russia’s anti-queer crackdown, police have spent years raiding nightclubs, private parties, and medical institutions. Now, the authorities have the data for another Great Terror, 29 January 2025, [url](#); Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Online interview with EUAA, 26 September 2025

<sup>560</sup> New York Times (The), A Prison Death Highlights an L.G.B.T.Q. Crackdown in Russia, 1 April 2025, [url](#); Moscow Times (The), In Russia, Being Openly Gay Is ‘Extremist.’ But Some People Bend the Rules, 12 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>561</sup> Shashkov, A., How Far Will Russia’s Wartime Anti-LGBTQ+ Campaign Go?, Carnegie Politika, 25 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>562</sup> Meduza, ‘How do you even f–?’ In Russia’s anti-queer crackdown, police have spent years raiding nightclubs, private parties, and medical institutions. Now, the authorities have the data for another Great Terror, 29 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>563</sup> Current Time, Силовики в России провели 51 рейд с момента признания ЛГБТК+ людей “экстремистским движением” [Security forces in Russia have conducted 51 raids since recognizing LGBTQ+ people as an “extremist movement.”], 26 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>564</sup> 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. 112

<sup>565</sup> Meduza, ‘How do you even f–?’ In Russia’s anti-queer crackdown, police have spent years raiding nightclubs, private parties, and medical institutions. Now, the authorities have the data for another Great Terror, 29 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>566</sup> OVD-Info, Repression in Russia in 2024: OVD-Info Overview, 12 January 2025, [url](#); Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Online interview with EUAA, 26 September 2025

<sup>567</sup> OVD-Info, Repression in Russia in 2024: OVD-Info Overview, 12 January 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. 112

<sup>568</sup> OVD-Info, Repression in Russia in 2024: OVD-Info Overview, 12 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>569</sup> 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. 112; Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Online interview with EUAA, 26 September 2025

<sup>570</sup> Coming Out is Russia-based NGO, providing LGBTIQ people with legal advice, psychological support, and career counselling. See, Coming Out, We help LGBTIQ+ people, n.d., [url](#)



the participants, which were then shared online or with their employers or educational institutions. Between January 2025 and September 2025, NGO Coming Out recorded 10 police raids. The source noted that the nature of raids has changed, with the police openly engaging in violence, without attempting to hide evidence or conceal abuse. In one case, during a raid on a Moscow gay club Mono, a person was beaten and thrown out of the club unconscious and bleeding.<sup>571</sup> Moreover, raids have been also conducted on places not directly related to LGBTIQ venues (such as private events or board game nights<sup>572</sup>) with the aim to find LGBTIQ people and press charges.<sup>573</sup>

As a result of the expansion of anti-extremism legislation on LGBTIQ people, LGBTIQ organisations were banned,<sup>574</sup> and venues closed.<sup>575</sup> LGBTIQ people protect their personal information and conduct their events under strict security measures, keeping event details and locations confidential. Despite these precautions, the authorities can obtain information about these activities,<sup>576</sup> including from anti-LGBT activists<sup>577</sup> or denunciations from residents of the same building with an LGBTIQ venue, or collaborators within the community.<sup>578</sup>

#### **e) Other legislation used against LGBTIQ people**

In addition to prosecutions under the ‘LGBT propaganda’ and ‘anti-extremism’ laws, LGBTIQ people can face other criminal charges. These have included prosecution of ‘offending religious feelings’ (Article 148.1 of the Criminal Code), as in the case of a gay club owner who was sentenced to correctional labour for displaying an Orthodox cross in his club and a same-sex couple fined 15 000 [154 euros] for posting a video of themselves kissing in the vicinity of a church. There was also a case where two young men were sentenced to five and six years in a penal colony for committing ‘sexual acts in the presence of minors’ (Article 135.2 of the Criminal Code) after allegedly engaging in sexual activity in their apartment which was visible from a window, based on a complaint of a mother of a boy who reportedly saw it. Additionally, prosecution for pornography charges (Article 242 of the Criminal Code) have been used to criminalise private exchange of private intimate content between gay men.<sup>579</sup> Homosexuality as such is not criminalised in Russia.<sup>580</sup>

#### **f) Punishment for actions committed outside Russia**

In accordance with Article 12 of the Criminal Code ‘Criminal liability for crimes committed outside Russia’<sup>581</sup> individuals can face charges for participating in LGBTIQ rallies or activities of

<sup>571</sup> Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Online interview with EUAA, 26 September 2025

<sup>572</sup> Novaya Gazeta, Europe, Party crashes, The Russian authorities are increasingly cracking down on queer venues in the name of ‘traditional values’, 20 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>573</sup> Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Online interview with EUAA, 26 September 2025

<sup>574</sup> RFE/RL, 3 Years In: How Moscow’s War In Ukraine Has Reshaped Life in Russia, 23 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>575</sup> OVD-Info, Repression in Russia in 2024: OVD-Info Overview, 12 January 2025, [url](#); RFE/RL, 3 Years In: How Moscow’s War In Ukraine Has Reshaped Life in Russia, 23 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>576</sup> Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Online interview with EUAA, 26 September 2025; Marianna Muravyeva, Online interview with EUAA, 3 October 2025

<sup>577</sup> Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Online interview with EUAA, 26 September 2025

<sup>578</sup> Marianna Muravyeva, Online interview with EUAA, 3 October 2025

<sup>579</sup> Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Online interview with EUAA, 26 September 2025

<sup>580</sup> Marianna Muravyeva, Online interview with EUAA, 3 October 2025

<sup>581</sup> Russia, Уголовный кодекс Российской Федерации от 13.06.1996 N 63-ФЗ (ред. от 31.07.2025) (с изм. и доп., вступ. в силу с 01.09.2025) [The Criminal Code of the Russian Federation of 13.06.1996 N 63-FZ (with amendments and additions, effective from 1.09.2025)], 2025, [url](#), Art. 12



LGBTIQ organisations abroad. The source noted that if the authorities become aware of such activities, they may launch an investigation and involve Interpol, which has cooperated with Russian extradition requests in the past, although not in cases ‘that are so openly politically motivated.’ Furthermore, individuals located in countries that have extradition agreement and practice with Russia would also be arrested and extradited.<sup>582</sup> Information on cases of extradition of an LGBTIQ person to Russia was not found within the time constraints of the report.

According to a lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, persons returning to Russia after an investigation into their activities abroad has started would be arrested upon arrival. However, even without a formal investigation, border control officers may inspect phones or laptops of arriving passengers. If evidence of interest in LGBTIQ-related topics is found, a more detailed examination will follow, including recovery of deleted files. This examination takes only a couple of hours and if the person’s links to LGBTIQ activities outside Russia is confirmed, they would be arrested and prosecuted as if the offence was committed in Russia.<sup>583</sup>

### 3.7.2. Societal attitudes and non-state violence

According to an April 2025 report by LGBTIQ rights organisation Coming Out and Sphere Foundation, anti-LGBTIQ censorship and self-censorship severely affected queer people’s life in Russia, with most respondents<sup>584</sup> reporting political and social pressure that forced them to ‘hide their identity or limit its expression.’<sup>585</sup> The report noted that LGBTIQ people in Russia were in a ‘vulnerable financial situation,’ often facing discrimination in job recruitment, workplaces, and educational institutions. Transgender people were reportedly the most financially vulnerable group, being more likely to live below the poverty line, have unstable income, and rely on financial support.<sup>586</sup> Additionally, LGBTIQ people faced barriers in accessing healthcare and denial of healthcare, which particularly affected transgender people<sup>587</sup> and residents of the North Caucasus.<sup>588</sup>

According to a November 2024 report by Levada-Center, a Russian non-governmental research organisation that conducts regular monitoring of Russian public opinion,<sup>589</sup> negative attitudes towards LGBTIQ people in Russia has been increasing since 2013, with 44 % of respondents saying that they felt ‘disgust’ or ‘fear’ towards gay people (compared to 27 % in 2023, 28 % in 2016, and 38 % in 2021), while 15 % said they felt ‘irritation’ towards them. Only about 30 % believed that gays and lesbians should have equal rights to other Russian

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<sup>582</sup> Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Online interview with EUAA, 26 September 2025

<sup>583</sup> Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Online interview with EUAA, 26 September 2025

<sup>584</sup> Data collection took place from 2 December 2024 to 31 January 2025 via an online questionnaire and involved 6 403 respondents living on the territory of Russia. Coming out and Sphere Foundation, Report on the life of LGBT+ people in Russia in 2024, [url](#), pp. 8, 10

<sup>585</sup> Coming out and Sphere Foundation, Report on the life of LGBT+ people in Russia in 2024, [url](#), p. 67

<sup>586</sup> Coming out and Sphere Foundation, Report on the life of LGBT+ people in Russia in 2024, [url](#), p. 31

<sup>587</sup> Coming out and Sphere Foundation, Report on the life of LGBT+ people in Russia in 2024, [url](#), pp. 32-33; Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Online Interview with EUAA, 26 September 2025

<sup>588</sup> Coming out and Sphere Foundation, Report on the life of LGBT+ people in Russia in 2024, [url](#), pp. 32-33

<sup>589</sup> Levada-Center, About Us, n.d., [url](#)



citizens.<sup>590</sup> In June 2025, head of Centre-T, which supports transgender and non-binary people in Russia, noted to independent media outlet The Moscow Times, that 'state repression has significantly worsened public attitudes toward LGBTQ+ individuals in families, schools, universities and workplaces.'<sup>591</sup>

Coming Out and Sphere Foundation reported a rise in abuse and hate crime, with nearly 48 % of respondents reporting it. Elaborating on the types of threats they had received, respondents mentioned threats of outing, physical violence, sexual abuse, and even death threats, which came from strangers on the streets and in public places (often on public transport) and from acquaintances (relatives, colleagues, classmates). Online threats were equally common on social media, forums, anonymous chat rooms, and dating apps. Respondents also mentioned account hacks and blackmail.<sup>592</sup> Transgender people were reportedly facing challenges with landlords/neighbours and abuse/hate crimes more often.<sup>593</sup>

In May 2025, a far-right organisation raided a private party, after which guests were taken to a police station and threatened with criminal prosecution.<sup>594</sup>

#### a) Conversion therapy

Experts interviewed by EUAA noticed that LGBTIQ people may be subjected to the so-called conversion therapy and psychiatric treatment.<sup>595</sup> As noted by a lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, so-called rehabilitation centres operate outside of government control and thousands of people, including LGBTIQ minors, 'can be at risk of conversion therapy.' In North Caucasus and in other Muslim regions of Russia, there are specialised Muslim hospitals where 'religious exorcism' is used as a form of treatment. In other regions, there are Russian Orthodox rehabilitation centres, which also perform the enforced conversion therapy.<sup>596</sup>

In March 2024, Current Time reported that at least 12 institutions and private clinics across Moscow, Moscow oblast, Rostov oblast, the North Caucasus, and other regions, were providing conversion therapy, with many patients being sent to these facilities against their will. According to the source, treatments included isolation from the outside world, forced administration of psychotropic drugs, hypnosis, and prayer. A Russian Orthodox rehabilitation centre in Moscow region reportedly isolated LGBTIQ people for at least six months.<sup>597</sup>

<sup>590</sup> Levada-Center, Отношение к гомосексуальности, правам ЛГБТ-людей и "пропаганде гомосексуализма": октябрь 2024 [Attitudes toward homosexuality, LGBT rights, and "propaganda of homosexuality": October 2024], 18 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>591</sup> Moscow Times (The), 'You're a Second-Class Citizen': Arrests, Club Raids and Extremism Charges Define LGBTQ+ Life in Russia in 2025, 23 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>592</sup> Coming out and Sphere Foundation, Report on the life of LGBT+ people in Russia in 2024, [url](#), p. 42

<sup>593</sup> Coming out and Sphere Foundation, Report on the life of LGBT+ people in Russia in 2024, [url](#), pp. 36, 42

<sup>594</sup> Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Online interview with EUAA, 26 September 2025

<sup>595</sup> Marianna Muravyeva, Online interview with EUAA, 3 October 2025, Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Online interview with EUAA, 26 September 2025

<sup>596</sup> Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Online interview with EUAA, 26 September 2025

<sup>597</sup> Current Time, Журналистское расследование впервые запечатлело сеансы конверсионной терапии ЛГБТК-персон в России. Главное из фильма проекта "Система" [A journalistic investigation has captured sessions of conversion therapy for LGBTQ individuals in Russia for the first time. Highlights from the film "The System"], 4 March 2024, [url](#); Moscow Times (The), Russian LGBTQ+ 'Conversion Therapy' Isolates Patients for Months – Report, 4 March 2024, [url](#)



## b) Impact on family life

As noted by a lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues to EUAA, since 2024, LGBTIQ parents, particularly those in transgender relationships, have faced increasing threats of having their children removed from the family. The expert noted that child protection services often maintain a view that these children are ‘subjected to propaganda’ which serves as a ground to remove the children from the family, with transgender parents, whose gender markers have been changed, being particularly vulnerable. Supportive parents of an LGBTIQ child can be ‘threatened with the loss of parental rights.’<sup>598</sup>

### 3.7.3. Regional differences

The main regional distinction regarding the situation of LGBTIQ people is between Russia as whole and the North Caucasus republics, particularly Chechnya, Ingushetia, and Dagestan.<sup>599</sup> A lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues noted that non-state violence, such as discrimination, outing, and physical assault, is widespread across the country. While some cities like St. Petersburg may be comparatively safer environments for LGBTIQ people, the overall difference between the regions when Chechnya, Ingushetia, and Dagestan are excluded is not very substantial.<sup>600</sup> However, regarding St. Petersburg, Marianna Muravyeva noted that while it is ‘often considered safe, it’s a city of six million people and is always closely affected by Moscow’s politics, especially in what concerns the court caseloads.’ According to the same source, if Chechnya is left aside, it is not possible to say that one location in Russia is safer than others for LGBTIQ people.<sup>601</sup>

As noted by Marianna Muravyeva, in the North Caucasus, policing of behaviour by the community is much more intense, with close networking resulting in reporting LGBTIQ people to the authorities.<sup>602</sup>

According to lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, in Chechnya, Ingushetia, and Dagestan, the authorities rarely use ‘LGBT propaganda’ laws as they do not want to acknowledge the presence of LGBTIQ people in the republics. However, in these three republics, LGBTIQ people face serious threats to life due to their gender identity or sexual orientation, including torture, enforced disappearance, domestic violence, including ‘honour killings’, and pressure to sign contracts for service in the army. Gay men have been detained by authorities in basements for months, being subjected to beatings and electrocution (including in 2024 and 2025), which is a practice more common in Chechnya, but also occurring in Dagestan and Ingushetia.<sup>603</sup> As noted by the UN Special Rapporteur, Mariana Katzarova, in December 2024, a 19-year-old Chechen man was detained ‘for alleged association with a gay friend,’ tortured, including by electrocution, and died in custody. No investigation was conducted into his

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<sup>598</sup> Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Online interview with EUAA, 26 September 2025

<sup>599</sup> Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Online interview with EUAA, 26 September 2025; Marianna Muravyeva, Online interview with EUAA, 3 October 2025

<sup>600</sup> Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Online interview with EUAA, 26 September 2025

<sup>601</sup> Marianna Muravyeva, Online interview with EUAA, 3 October 2025

<sup>602</sup> Marianna Muravyeva, Online interview with EUAA, 3 October 2025

<sup>603</sup> Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Online interview with EUAA, 26 September 2025, and Email correspondence with EUAA, 20 November 2025



death, which ‘follows a documented pattern of abuse against LGBT individuals in Chechnya.’<sup>604</sup>

According to a lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, if a person’s gender identity or sexual orientation is revealed, the likelihood of conversion practices or domestic violence – particularly for men and transgender men – is ‘extremely high’. There ‘is no state protection’ against physical and domestic violence, particularly in Chechnya, Ingushetia, and Dagestan.<sup>605</sup> According to Marianna Muravyeva, violence against LGBTIQ people in Chechnya never reaches police or courts, unlike in the other republics of the North Caucasus; particularly, there are some court cases in the Vladikavkaz court.<sup>606</sup> As noted by a lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, LGBTIQ persons who leave their families and their regions, can be abducted elsewhere inside Russia (or abroad) and ‘possibly taken to Chechnya for education,’ with more than 20 documented cases of LGBTIQ people, who lived outside Russia, being brought to Chechnya against their will and forced to stay.<sup>607</sup>

In Chechnya specifically, the authorities have conducted ‘raids on gays’ at least since 2016,<sup>608</sup> with over 100 men detained in March 2017.<sup>609</sup> At the end of August 2024, human rights activists reported an ‘intensified wave of arrests’ of gay men in Chechnya and Dagestan, with North Caucasus SOS noting that security forces were arranging fake dates using social media accounts of previously detained men.<sup>610</sup> As reported by North Caucasus SOS, in April 2025, a gay man in Vladikavkaz, the capital of North Ossetia-Alania in Russia’s North Caucasus region, was allegedly lured into a fake date by people posing as drug enforcement officers who attempted to blackmail him into informing on other gay men. According to North Caucasus SOS, North Ossetia is considered more liberal than neighbouring Chechnya or Ingushetia, with no previous reports of fake dates or practices of rounding up gay men, with Vladikavkaz being a place where gay men from other North Caucasian republics – Chechnya, Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria, and Ingushetia – often come to seek for partners.<sup>611</sup>

### 3.8. Women

As Russia’s ‘decade-long’ demographic crisis<sup>612</sup> has deepened due to the ongoing war in Ukraine, the government ‘is throttling back access to abortion and stepping up incentives for women to have more babies.’<sup>613</sup> In November 2024, a federal law prohibiting ‘propaganda of refusal to bear children’ was signed into law, introducing censorship, fines, and arrests for

<sup>604</sup> 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. 115

<sup>605</sup> Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Online interview with EUAA, 26 September 2025

<sup>606</sup> Marianna Muravyeva, Online interview with EUAA, 3 October 2025

<sup>607</sup> Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Online interview with EUAA, 26 September 2025

<sup>608</sup> Caucasian Knot, Gay raids spread to North Ossetia, 27 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>609</sup> Novaya Gazeta, Убийство чести [Honour killing], 1 April 2017, [url](#)

<sup>610</sup> DW, Власти Чечни отправляют задержанных геев воевать в Украину [Chechen authorities send detained gay men to fight in Ukraine], 5 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>611</sup> NC SOS, “Let’s Just Settle This Quietly.” The Story of Zaur, Who Was Forced to Inform on Gay Men in North Ossetia – But Refused, 11 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>612</sup> RFE/RL, Russia’s ‘Year of The Family’ Has Means A War on Abortion and Divorce, 13 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>613</sup> RFE/RL, 3 Years In: How Moscow’s War In Ukraine Has Reshaped Life in Russia, 23 February 2025, [url](#)



promoting child-free lifestyles.<sup>614</sup> As noted by the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Mariana Katzarova, the law ‘restricts discourse on contraception, abortion, infertility and voluntary childlessness.’<sup>615</sup> The legislation echoes the so-called ‘LGBT’ propaganda and is part of a broader state campaign to defend ‘traditional values.’ It imposes fines of up to 400 000 [4 100 euros] for individuals and 5 million rubles [51 250 euros] for organisations that promote voluntary childlessness.<sup>616</sup>

Aligning with the Kremlin’s stance, over a dozen regions have reportedly passed laws prohibiting ‘coercion to abortion’ in 2024,<sup>617</sup> introducing fines of up to 100 000 rubles [1 025 euros] ‘for doctors and employers who are judged to have forced advice on pregnant women.’<sup>618</sup> In June 2024, the Komi Republic’s parliament ‘prohibited “coercion to abortion”, effectively introducing heavy fines for facilitating the procedure.’ Other 14 regions introduced similar laws. As reported by AI in 2024, numerous private clinics stopped offering abortion services, even though it has not been officially banned.<sup>619</sup>

Russia has not signed the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention).<sup>620</sup>

### 3.8.1. Domestic violence

The UN Special Rapporteur, Mariana Katzarova, noted an increase in violence against women in Russia.<sup>621</sup> There is no specific domestic violence legislation.<sup>622</sup> Women can access justice and there are some improvements in the area of protection, due to the decisions by the Russian Constitutional Court and the Supreme Court, which have provided lawyers and women rights organisations with legal instruments that can make litigation more successful.<sup>623</sup> For instance, in January 2024, the Constitutional Court ruled that courts may prohibit persons convicted of domestic violence to approach places regularly attended by their victims, such as their place of residence, work, studies, etc.<sup>624</sup> In March 2024, the Constitutional Court ruled

<sup>614</sup> AI, Russia 2024, 28 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>615</sup> 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. 111

<sup>616</sup> RFE/RL, Bill Banning ‘Childfree Propaganda’ Get Initial Approval From Russian Lawmakers, 17 October 2024, [url](#); RFE/RL, Russia’s ‘Year of The Family’ Has Means A War on Abortion and Divorce, 13 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>617</sup> RFE/RL, 3 Years In: How Moscow’s War In Ukraine Has Reshaped Life in Russia, 23 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>618</sup> RFE/RL, Russia’s ‘Year of The Family’ Has Means A War on Abortion and Divorce, 13 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>619</sup> AI, Russia 2024, 28 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>620</sup> Muravyeva, M., Domestic Violence Legislation in Russia: Campaigning for Change, Wilson Centre, [url](#), 2021. p. 7; Equality Now, Breaking Barriers: Addressing Child, Early, and Forced Marriage in Eurasia, 10 October 2024, [url](#), p. 15

<sup>621</sup> 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. 109

<sup>622</sup> 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. 109; Marianna Muravyeva, Online interview with EUAA, 3 October 2025

<sup>623</sup> Marianna Muravyeva, Online interview with EUAA, 3 October 2025

<sup>624</sup> Nasiliyu Net, Постановление Конституционного Суда РФ о возможности запрещать осужденному агрессору посещать места, в которых может регулярно находиться пострадавшая [Decision of the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation on the possibility of prohibiting a convicted aggressor from visiting places where the victim may regularly be present], n.d., [url](#)



that district and magistrate courts must accept domestic violence complaints even if the police decline to open a criminal case.<sup>625</sup>

As noted by NGO Nasiliu.net, Russia lacks accessible and comprehensive statistics on domestic violence and removal of criminal penalties for battery in 2017 has distorted the situation, creating the false impression of a sharp drop in family violence, as only criminal cases reach official statistics.<sup>626</sup>

According to Russian Consortium of Women's Non-Governmental Organisations, more than 3 400 women were killed in Russia in 2022-2023. Of these, almost 2 300 women were killed because of domestic violence, including over 2 100 women killed by their partners.<sup>627</sup> Based on data from regional courts in Russia and illegally annexed Crimea, independent outlet Verstka reported that between 1 January 2024 and 30 June 2024 courts adjudicated 5 000 cases of domestic violence by an intimate partner, including 245 cases in which men were convicted of killing their wives or girlfriends.<sup>628</sup> According to data of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in 2024, 530 women in Russia were killed by an intimate partner and 433 by a family member.<sup>629</sup>

As noted by the Special Rapporteur, Mariana Katzarova, reported cases of domestic violence by current or former armed forces members have 'nearly doubled',<sup>630</sup> including cases where persons returning from the war in Ukraine killed their wives, ex-partners, or family members, including children.<sup>631</sup> There are no legal restrictions preventing repeat offenders from re-enlisting to the Russian armed forces to avoid prosecution.<sup>632</sup> Furthermore, pardoned offenders face no consequences of their conviction or administrative supervision, which leaves survivors of domestic violence unprotected from further harassment or retaliation.<sup>633</sup>

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<sup>625</sup> Forbes, Конституционный суд обязал районные суды рассматривать дела о домашнем насилии [The Constitutional Court has ordered district courts to hear cases of domestic violence], 29 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>626</sup> Nasiliu.net, Почти четверть преступлений с нанесением тяжких телесных повреждений в России совершается в семьях. Доклад Центра «Насилию.нет» Almost a quarter of crimes involving grievous bodily harm in Russia are committed within families. Report by the Centre 'No to Violence', n.d., [url](#)

<sup>627</sup> Consortium of Women's Non-Governmental Organisations, Масштабы домашнего насилия в России за 2022-2023 годы [The extent of domestic violence in Russia in 2022–2023], n.d., [url](#)

<sup>628</sup> Verstka, Календарь домашнего насилия — спецпроект «Вёрстки» о насилии, за которое в России судят каждый день [Domestic Violence Calendar — a special project by Verstka about violence prosecuted every day in Russia], 21 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>629</sup> UNODC, Intentional homicide [Country: Russian Federation, Dimension: By relationship to perpetrator, Sex: female, Year: 2024 – 2024], n.d., [url](#)

<sup>630</sup> 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. 109

<sup>631</sup> 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. 110

<sup>632</sup> 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. 110

<sup>633</sup> Consortium of Women's Non-Governmental Organisations, Масштабы домашнего насилия в России за 2022-2023 годы [The extent of domestic violence in Russia in 2022–2023], n.d., [url](#)



### 3.8.2. Situation of women in the North Caucasus

In the North Caucasus, women face ‘pervasive gender-based violence’,<sup>634</sup> including ‘honour killings’<sup>635</sup> and early<sup>636</sup> and forced marriages.<sup>637</sup> According to the UN Special Rapporteur, Mariana Katzarova, these practices are particularly reported in Chechnya and Dagestan.<sup>638</sup> As reported by NGO Equality Now in October 2024, the majority of early marriages in the North Caucasus remain unregistered, with families involved in cases of kidnapping, rape, or forced marriage prioritising ‘familial and clan honour’ and relying on traditional mediation by imams, who ‘continue to officiate marriage involving minors.’<sup>639</sup> In 2021, child marriages affected 4 453 girls and 614 boys under the age of 18, with the highest number of cases reported in Dagestan and the Stavropol region.<sup>640</sup>

As noted by Caucasian Knot, in the North Caucasus, women whose behaviour is viewed as bringing ‘a disgrace to their family’ may become victims of ‘honour killings,’ committed by their relatives, most often fathers or brothers.<sup>641</sup> ‘Disgrace’ usually refers to sexual conduct forbidden in the culture of the region, such as adultery, pre-marital sex, rape, or homosexual relations. However, complaining about a physically abusive husband or ‘improper behaviour’ in daily life activities, including choice of clothing, can likewise lead to ‘honour killing.’<sup>642</sup> In an interview with the EUAA, OVD-Info noted that ‘honour killings’ mostly concern women who try to flee domestic violence.<sup>643</sup>

In December 2023, Caucasian Knot reported that out of 31 convictions for the killings of women in Chechnya in 2022 – 2023, 22 were ‘honour killings’, as the text of the court ruling referred to such terms ‘immoral behaviour’, ‘shame,’ ‘honour’, ‘reputation’, and ‘according to our traditions.’<sup>644</sup> In February 2025, a Chechen man who in 2024 killed his 22-year-old daughter-in-law justifying the killing during the investigation by her ‘immoral behaviour’

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<sup>634</sup> 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. 131

<sup>635</sup> OC Media, Rallies in support of Seda Suleymanova held in Moscow and Saint Petersburg, 10 March 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. 131; Marianna Muravyeva, Online Interview with EUAA, 3 October 2025; OVD-Info, Online interview with EUAA, 22 October 2025

<sup>636</sup> Caucasian Knot, Researchers discuss early and forced marriages in Northern Caucasus, 1 June 2024, [url](#); Equality Now, Breaking Barriers: Addressing Child, Early, and Forced Marriage in Eurasia, 10 October 2024, [url](#), p. 5

<sup>637</sup> 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. 131; Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Online Interview with EUAA, 26 September 2025

<sup>638</sup> 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. 131

<sup>639</sup> Equality Now, Breaking Barriers: Addressing Child, Early, and Forced Marriage in Eurasia, 10 October 2024, [url](#), p. 42

<sup>640</sup> Equality Now, Breaking Barriers: Addressing Child, Early, and Forced Marriage in Eurasia, 10 October 2024, [url](#), p. 23

<sup>641</sup> Caucasian Knot, Human rights activists from Russia have asked Yerevan to complete its investigation into Baimuradova's case, 27 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>642</sup> Caucasian Knot, «Убийства чести» на Северном Кавказе [‘Honour killings’ in the North Caucasus], 24 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>643</sup> OVD-Info, Online interview with EUAA, 22 October 2025

<sup>644</sup> Caucasian Knot, Домашнее насилие на Северном Кавказе: отчет по результатам мониторинга ситуации в регионе и анализа судебной практики [Domestic violence in the North Caucasus: report on the results of monitoring the situation in the region and analysis of judicial practice], 29 December 2025, [url](#)



reportedly signed a military contract to fight in Ukraine.<sup>645</sup> Media sources reported prevalence of domestic violence against women<sup>646</sup> and occurrence of 'honour killings' in Ingushetia.<sup>647</sup> Regarding Dagestan, experts consulted by Caucasian Knot in October 2025 noted that 'honour killings' there are rare but not exceptional cases. Moreover, the experts stated that the scale and dynamics of 'honour killings' in the North Caucasus is impossible to assess due to a lack of official statistics, as the authorities either do not record such crimes or conceal them.<sup>648</sup> Marianna Muravyeva similarly noted that the Russian authorities do not speak about 'honour killings.'<sup>649</sup>

While domestic violence in Chechnya, Ingushetia, and Dagestan 'affects women of all ages,' it is mainly women under 30 who try to flee their families.<sup>650</sup> As noted by Caucasian Knot, fleeing is often 'the only chance to save their lives' for women facing domestic violence. Many women leave the North Caucasus for other parts of Russia, while others leave the country.<sup>651</sup> As noted by a lawyer, interviewed by RFE/RL service Kavkaz.Realii in June 2023, women should cut all ties with their families to protect themselves from 'honour killings.'<sup>652</sup>

As noted by Marianna Muravyeva, many women flee to nearby regions, particularly to the city of Rostov-on-Don, the closest city to the North Caucasus. The expert further noted that 'many cases' of 'honour killings' originate from Rostov-on-Don courts, since men travel there to find and punish their wives and daughters who have defied family order. Many women hide from their families, with their situation becoming particularly dangerous if they take their children with them. In Ingushetia, Chechnya, and Dagestan, women often leave their children behind to survive. Those who flee with children, particularly if they are boys and in cases of fleeing from Chechnya, 'have no chance of survival',<sup>653</sup> as in the North Caucasus, the children are considered to belong to the father's family.<sup>654</sup>

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<sup>645</sup> Caucasian Knot, Rights defenders assess chances of justice for young woman assassinated in Chechnya, 15 February 2025, [url](#); OC Media, Russian army conscripts man who murdered daughter-in-law in Chechnya, 14 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>646</sup> Caucasian Knot, Human rights defenders treat report on victims of domestic violence in Northern Caucasus as relevant, 18 November 2023, [url](#); RFE/RL, Woman Who Fled Ingushetia Over Domestic Violence Detained in Armenia, 16 November 2023, [url](#); Moscow Times (The), Chechen Woman Who Fled Abusive Family Briefly Detained in Georgia, Activists Say, 14 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>647</sup> Kavkaz.Realii, "“Он говорил, что будет резать меня на куски”. История бежавшей от "убийства чести" матери из Ингушетии" ['He said he would cut me into pieces.' The story of a mother from Ingushetia who fled from 'honour killing'], 31 June 2023, [url](#)

<sup>648</sup> Caucasian Knot, «Убийства чести» на Северном Кавказе ['Honour killings' in the North Caucasus], 24 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>649</sup> Marianna Muravyeva, Online interview with EUAA, 3 October 2025

<sup>650</sup> Caucasian Knot, Rights defenders issue report on domestic violence victims in Northern Caucasus, 14 November 2023, [url](#); Caucasian Knot, Human rights activists from Russia have asked Yerevan to complete its investigation into Vaimuradova's case, 27 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>651</sup> Caucasian Knot, Human rights activists from Russia have asked Yerevan to complete its investigation into Vaimuradova's case, 27 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>652</sup> Kavkaz.Realii, "“Он говорил, что будет резать меня на куски”. История бежавшей от "убийства чести" матери из Ингушетии" ['He said he would cut me into pieces.' The story of a mother from Ingushetia who fled from 'honour killing'], 31 June 2023, [url](#)

<sup>653</sup> Marianna Muravyeva, Online interview with EUAA, 3 October 2025

<sup>654</sup> RFE/RL, In Russian Region, Muslim Women Lose Child Custody After Remarrying, 28 January 2025, [url](#)





As noted by Caucasian Knot, the authorities and security forces in the North Caucasus often 'take the side of family aggressors,'<sup>655</sup> particularly in Dagestan, Ingushetia, and Chechnya, whereas in Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachay-Cherkessia, as reported in November 2023, law enforcement was reportedly 'less involved in persecuting victims of domestic violence.'<sup>656</sup>

In Chechnya, under the rule of Ramzan Kadyrov, as noted by Mediazona, domestic violence has been 'effectively institutionalised,' with the authorities encouraging 'the idea that women's lives must be strictly controlled by male relatives' and using the notion of family honour to justify violence toward women, including 'honour killings.'<sup>657</sup> According to the head of the 'Fathers and Daughters' project Aida Mirmaksumova, cited by Caucasus Knot, mistrust remains a main factor preventing women in Chechnya from seeking help.<sup>658</sup>

A lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues noted to the EUAA that the practice of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) exists in Dagestan.<sup>659</sup> No further information within the reference period of the report could be found regarding the scale of this practice.

In October 2025, Novaya Gazeta noted that 'cases of Chechen women who have fled domestic violence or arranged marriages being coerced or forcibly returned home are not uncommon.'<sup>660</sup> OVD-Info noted that they have documented several cases where women were abducted and forcefully returned to Chechnya and Dagestan.<sup>661</sup> According to a lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, forced returns of young women perceived as exhibiting transgressive behaviour to Chechnya are usually organised by family members and typically involve deception and physical violence. In some cases, relatives, with the assistance of law-enforcement authorities, confiscate their identity documents; if a woman manages to leave home and attempts to obtain new documents, law enforcement notify her family and hand the documents over to 'a male relative or senior women' in the family.<sup>662</sup>

In August 2023, a Chechen woman was abducted in St. Petersburg, where she had fled to avoid a forced marriage in 2022, and forcibly returned to her family in Chechnya,<sup>663</sup> with the assistance of law enforcement officials.<sup>664</sup> In June 2025, the MoI placed her on the list of missing persons, with human rights defenders presuming she was killed in a 'honour killing' 'for her disobedience.'<sup>665</sup> In July 2025, a 24-year-old Chechen woman who fled 'abusive and

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<sup>655</sup> Caucasian Knot, Human rights activists from Russia have asked Yerevan to complete its investigation into Baimuradova's case, 27 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>656</sup> Caucasian Knot, Human rights defenders treat report on victims of domestic violence in Northern Caucasus as relevant, 18 November 2023, [url](#)

<sup>657</sup> Mediazona, When borders fail to protect. Missing Chechen woman Aishat Baimuradova found dead in Yerevan, 20 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>658</sup> Caucasian Knot, Rights defenders assess chances of justice for young woman assassinated in Chechnya, 15 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>659</sup> Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Online interview with EUAA, 26 September 2025

<sup>660</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europe, Chechen woman who fled abusive family in Russia found dead in Armenian capital Yerevan, 20 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>661</sup> OVD-Info, Online interview with EUAA, 22 October 2025

<sup>662</sup> Lawyer specialising in LGBTIQ issues, Email correspondence with EUAA, 20 November 2025

<sup>663</sup> OC Media, Rallies in support of Seda Suleymanova held in Moscow and Saint Petersburg, 10 March 2025 [url](#); Novaya Gazeta Europe, Chechen woman feared dead in honour killing declared missing nearly 2 years after disappearance, 16 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>664</sup> OC Media, Rallies in support of Seda Suleymanova held in Moscow and Saint Petersburg, 10 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>665</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europe, Chechen woman feared dead in honour killing declared missing nearly 2 years after disappearance, 16 June 2025, [url](#)





controlling' family was reportedly 'briefly abducted' in Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, where she was staying under 'the protective order,' 'by her sister and five other people', identified as Chechens.<sup>666</sup> With the help of women rights organisations, the woman was reportedly able to escape again.<sup>667</sup>

In October 2025, a 23-year-old<sup>668</sup> Chechen woman who fled to Armenia to escape domestic violence was found dead in Yerevan<sup>669</sup> in a suspected 'honour killing.'<sup>670</sup> Women rights activists reported that she went missing after going out to meet a woman she had befriended on Instagram, whose followers included people close to Ramzan Kadyrov.<sup>671</sup> Like many other Chechens who have fled Chechnya, she reportedly had been receiving treats.<sup>672</sup>

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<sup>666</sup> Moscow Times (The), Chechen Woman Who Fled Abusive Family Briefly Detained in Georgia, Activists Say, 14 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>667</sup> 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. 131

<sup>668</sup> Mediazona, When borders fail to protect. Missing Chechen woman Aishat Baimuradova found dead in Yerevan, 20 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>669</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europe, Chechen woman who fled abusive family in Russia found dead in Armenian capital Yerevan, 20 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>670</sup> Caucasian Knot, Human rights activists from Russia have asked Yerevan to complete its investigation into Baimuradova's case, 27 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>671</sup> Mediazona, When borders fail to protect. Missing Chechen woman Aishat Baimuradova found dead in Yerevan, 20 October 2025, [url](#); Novaya Gazeta Europe, Chechen woman who fled abusive family in Russia found dead in Armenian capital Yerevan, 20 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>672</sup> Caucasian Knot, Human rights activists from Russia have asked Yerevan to complete its investigation into Baimuradova's case, 27 October 2025, [url](#)



## 4. Military Service

### 4.1. Overview of military service in Russia

The Russian armed forces have a hybrid structure, consisting of professional soldiers employed under term contracts and conscripts drafted for one-year compulsory military service.<sup>673</sup> The main legislation for military service in Russia is the federal law On Military Duty and Military Service, which has been in effect since 1998.<sup>674</sup> The law defines the legal framework for conscription, military service under contract, reserve, and mobilisation.<sup>675</sup>

As of early 2025, the Military Balance<sup>676</sup> estimated that Russia's armed forces numbered approximately 1 134 000 active-duty troops,<sup>677</sup> up from 900 000 in 2021.<sup>678</sup> The ground forces form the largest part of the Russian army and comprise an estimated 550 000 personnel, which is nearly double of the pre-war number of 280 000. At the same time, between 2021 and 2025, a significant decrease of the Russian army's elite units was reported, with the naval infantry showing a decline from 35 000 troops to 10 000 and airborne forces from 45 000 to 35 000.<sup>679</sup>

According to the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS),<sup>680</sup> as of late December 2024, Russia deployed up to 617 000 military personnel to or near Ukraine. This figure included 'recoverable wounded and those undergoing training.'<sup>681</sup> An expert on Russian political and military affairs, Yuri Fedotov, noted, in September 2025, that almost all the active-duty soldiers (ground combat troops) were engaged in fighting in Ukraine. According to Fedotov, their size has remained 'relatively stable' since mid-2023 at around 600 000.<sup>682</sup> The same month, Novaya Gazeta Europe reported that 850 000 men signed contracts with the Russian army in 2023 and 2024 combined, followed by 200 000 in the first half of 2025.<sup>683</sup>

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<sup>673</sup> CSIS, The Best or Worst of Both Worlds?, 23 September 2020, [url](#)

<sup>674</sup> Denmark, DIS, and Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Russia: Conscription, March 2025, [url](#), p. 9

<sup>675</sup> Russia, Федеральный закон "О воинской обязанности и военной службе" от 28.03.1998 N 53-ФЗ (ред. От 29.09.2025) [Federal Law "On Military Duty and Military Service" dated March 28, 1998, No. 53-FZ (amended 29.09.2025)], 29 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>676</sup> The Military Balance is an 'annual authoritative assessment of the military capabilities and defence economics worldwide' by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), see Taylor & Francis Online, The Military Balance, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>677</sup> Koizumi, Y., Key Changes in the Russian Military Since the Start of the War, Sasakawa Peace Foundation, 30 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>678</sup> EPRS, Russia's armed forces, Defence capabilities and policy, March 2021, [url](#), p. 3; Regional trends in 2021, The Military Balance, Vol. 122, 2022 p. 164; Koizumi, Y., Key Changes in the Russian Military Since the Start of the War, Sasakawa Peace Foundation, 30 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>679</sup> Koizumi, Y., Key Changes in the Russian Military Since the Start of the War, Sasakawa Peace Foundation, 30 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>680</sup> The IISS is a think tank with headquarters in London, which collects data and provides information and analysis about geopolitics, security, geo-economics, and military conflict. See, IISS, About Us, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>681</sup> IISS, Military Balance Blog, Combat losses and manpower challenger underscore the importance of 'mass' in Ukraine, 10 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>682</sup> Gorenburg D. et al, The Future Russian Way or War. Part 1: State Mobilisation, SCEEUS, Report No 11 2025, 26 September 2025, [url](#), p. 6

<sup>683</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europe, Как их всех загребли. Три года мобилизации [How they were all rounded up. Three years of mobilization], 22 September 2025, [url](#)



On 6 October 2025, the General Staff of Ukrainian Armed Forces reported that Russia has lost over 1 115 200 troops since 24 February 2022.<sup>684</sup> According to the data compiled by Mediazona and BBC Russian Service based on ‘open source data from Russian cemeteries, military memorials, and obituaries’,<sup>685</sup> as of 24 October 2025, the list of Russian military personnel killed in Ukraine contained over 140 100 verified names.<sup>686</sup>

Sources noted a significant regional and ethnic disproportionality in the war casualties,<sup>687</sup> with the highest death toll affecting soldiers originating from poor regions of Siberia, the Urals, the Far East, and ‘the southern regions with a high percentage of Cossacks’ such as Kuban, as well as Buryatia, Tatarstan, Dagestan, Bashkortostan, with Moscow oblast as a notable exception.<sup>688</sup> As noted by researcher Guzel Yusupova, state-imposed recruitment quotas – both for voluntary recruitment and during the autumn 2022 mobilisation – have significantly contributed to the ethnic imbalance in war casualties. Smaller and more remote settlements, where larger number of ethnic minorities live, have been assigned disproportionately high quotas. According to the source, further factors include poverty and ‘normalisation’ of the perception of military recruitment as a path to financial improvement and ‘glorification’ of ‘war heroes’ in society.<sup>689</sup>

In February 2024, Transparency International Russia noted that corruption in the Russian army include ‘petty corruption’ (such as everyday thefts by lower-rank soldiers and corruption at military enlistment offices and border control), administrative corruption and irregularities in state procurement, and ‘grand corruption’ involving oligarchs and high-ranking officials.<sup>690</sup> In 2024, several high-ranking military officials were dismissed from their positions or detained over alleged corruption charges.<sup>691</sup> In the reshuffle of military leadership, former defence minister Sergei Shoigu, who had held the post since 2012, was removed from this role in May 2024, following military setbacks in Ukraine and ‘his inability to root out’ corruption in the army.<sup>692</sup> In April 2025, a top general was sentenced to seven years in prison over taking bribes from a company producing communications equipment.<sup>693</sup> The same month, a former major general, who reportedly criticised Russian ‘military leadership in Ukraine’ was sentenced to five years in prison on fraud charges.<sup>694</sup>

<sup>684</sup> Kyiv Independent (The), General Staff: Russia has lost 1,115,250 troops in Ukraine since Feb. 24, 2022, 5 October 2025, [url](#); Ukraine, General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, Facebook, 5 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>685</sup> BBC News, How Russia took record losses in Ukraine in 2024, 5 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>686</sup> Mediazona, Russian losses in the war with Ukraine. Mediazona count, updated, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>687</sup> Yusupova, G., The mechanisms of forced military enlistment amid the intersections of ethnicity, rurality and special mobility in Russia, *Mobilities*, 13 June 2025, [url](#), pp. 7-9; Gorenburg D. et al, The Future Russian Way or War. Part 1: State Mobilisation, SCEEUS, Report No 11 2025, 26 September 2025, [url](#), p. 13

<sup>688</sup> Gorenburg D. et al, The Future Russian Way or War. Part 1: State Mobilisation, SCEEUS, Report No 11 2025, 26 September 2025, [url](#), p. 13

<sup>689</sup> Yusupova, G., The mechanisms of forced military enlistment amid the intersections of ethnicity, rurality and special mobility in Russia, *Mobilities*, 13 June 2025, [url](#), p. 7-9, 14

<sup>690</sup> Transparency International Russia, War and Corruption, Corruption’s Role in Russia’s Full-scale Invasion of Ukraine, 24 February 2024, [url](#), pp. 14-16, 18-21, 46

<sup>691</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World, 28 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>692</sup> Guardian (The), Putin removes Sergei Shoigu as Russia’s defence minister, 13 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>693</sup> BBC News, Ex-Russian general jailed for seven years over bribes, 17 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>694</sup> TPV World, Ex-general who criticized Russia’s military leadership jailed for fraud, 24 April 2025, [url](#)



### 4.1.1. War crimes committed by the Russian military in Ukraine

On 17 March 2023, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for President Vladimir Putin and Maria Lvova-Belova, the Commissioner for Children’s Rights in the Office of the President of Russia for the ‘unlawful deportation and transfer of children’ from Russia-occupied Ukrainian territories to Russia. On 5 March 2024, the ICC issued arrest warrants for lieutenant general Sergei Kobylash and admiral Viktor Sokolov for ‘directing attacks to civilian objects,’ causing excessive civilian harm. Furthermore, on 24 June 2024, arrest warrants were issued for former defence minister Sergei Shoigu and chief of General Staff Valery Gerasimov for committing international crimes in Ukraine.<sup>695</sup>

In October 2025, the UN Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, established by the UN Human Rights Council, noted that the actions of the Russian military in Ukraine amount to two crimes against humanity: the crime of ‘murder and of forcible transfer of population’ and the crime of ‘deportations and transfers of civilians.’ The Commission noted that the attacks by the Russian military in Dnipropetrovsk, Kherson, and Mykolaiv oblasts were conducted with the intention to ‘drive Ukrainians out of their homes’ and targeted ‘individuals, houses and buildings, humanitarian distribution points and critical energy infrastructure servicing civilians,’ as well as ‘first responders – including ambulances and fire brigades, which are afforded special protection under international humanitarian law.’ Moreover, Russian authorities ‘coordinated actions to deport or transfer groups of people from areas under occupation.’<sup>696</sup>

### 4.1.2. Reserve

#### a) Inactive mobilisation reserve

There are two types of reserve in the Russian military system.<sup>697</sup> The general reserve<sup>698</sup> – which is called ‘inactive mobilisation reserve’ or ‘mobilisation human resource’<sup>699</sup> (Russian: *zapas*<sup>700</sup>) – is ‘a large pool of people’ who can be called up ‘during the special period in the leadup to a likely war’.<sup>701</sup> It consists of those who:

- were discharged from obligatory military service and added to the military reserve;
- completed military training at higher education institutions, graduating from programs for the training of reserve sergeants, petty officers, soldiers, or sailors;

<sup>695</sup> ICC (International Criminal Court), Ukraine, ICC-01/22, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>696</sup> UN, Russian army committing murder in Ukraine: Independent rights commission, 27 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>697</sup> Russia, Федеральный закон “О воинской обязанности и военной службе” от 28.03.1998 N 53-ФЗ (ред. От 29.09.2025) [Federal Law “On Military Duty and Military Service” dated March 28, 1998, No. 53-FZ (amended 29.09.2025)], 29 September 2025, [url](#), Parts VIII and VIII.1; ISW, Warning: The Kremlin is Preparing to Mobilize Reservists on a Rolling Basis to Fight in Ukraine for the First Time, 13 October 2025, [url](#); ERR, Researcher: Russia no longer has enough personnel to maintain pace of Ukraine offensive, 15 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>698</sup> ERR, Researcher: Russia no longer has enough personnel to maintain pace of Ukraine offensive, 15 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>699</sup> Cranny-Evans, S., Understanding Russia’s Mobilisation, RUSI, 22 September 2022, [url](#)

<sup>700</sup> ISW, Warning: The Kremlin is Preparing to Mobilize Reservists on a Rolling Basis to Fight in Ukraine for the First Time, 13 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>701</sup> Reach, C. et al, Russian Military Strategy, RAND Corporation, [url](#), p. 59



- completed studies at a military educational institution or training at military training centers affiliated with federal state educational institutions under programs of training reserve officers, sergeants, soldiers, or sailors;
- did not take part in obligatory military service due to exemption or deferral;
- were not called up for obligatory military service before reaching the age of 30;
- did not take part in obligatory military service without having a legal basis for exemption and reached the age of 30;
- completed alternative civilian service;
- are women who have acquired military specialisations.<sup>702</sup>

Individuals in the inactive reserve do not have an active affiliation with the Russian armed forces.<sup>703</sup> According to the law, those in the reserve are classified into three categories based on their rank and age,<sup>704</sup> as shown in the table below.

**Table 1. Individuals in the inactive mobilisation reserve**

	Age of Russian nationals in the reserve		
	First category	Second category	Third category
<b>Soldiers, sailors, sergeants, petty officers, warrant officers, and midshipmen</b>	up to 40	up to 50	up to 55
<b>Junior officers</b>	up to 50	up to 55	up to 60
<b>Majors, captains of the 3rd rank, lieutenant colonels, captains of the 2nd rank</b>	up to 55	up to 60	up to 65
<b>Colonels, captains of the 1st rank</b>	up to 60	up to 65	
<b>Senior officers</b>	up to 65	up to 70	

Source: Federal Law on Military Duty and Military Service, informal translation<sup>705</sup>

<sup>702</sup> Russia, Федеральный закон “О воинской обязанности и военной службе” от 28.03.1998 N 53-ФЗ (ред. От 29.09.2025) [Federal Law “On Military Duty and Military Service” dated March 28, 1998, No. 53-FZ (amended 29.09.2025)], 29 September 2025, [url](#), Art. 52

<sup>703</sup> ISW, Warning: The Kremlin is Preparing to Mobilize Reservists on a Rolling Basis to Fight in Ukraine for the First Time, 13 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>704</sup> Russia, Федеральный закон “О воинской обязанности и военной службе” от 28.03.1998 N 53-ФЗ (ред. От 29.09.2025) [Federal Law “On Military Duty and Military Service” dated March 28, 1998, No. 53-FZ (amended 29.09.2025)], 29 September 2025, [url](#), Art. 53

<sup>705</sup> Russia, Федеральный закон “О воинской обязанности и военной службе” от 28.03.1998 N 53-ФЗ (ред. От 29.09.2025) [Federal Law “On Military Duty and Military Service” dated March 28, 1998, No. 53-FZ (amended 29.09.2025)], 29 September 2025, [url](#), Art. 53



The ‘partial mobilisation’ held between 21 September 2022 and 31 October 2022 concerned persons included to the inactive mobilisation reserve.<sup>706</sup> Following the announcement of the ‘partial mobilisation’ in September 2022, the then-Defence Minister, Sergei Shoigu, claimed that the size of Russia’s inactive mobilisation reserve reached approximately 25 million people.<sup>707</sup>

## b) Active mobilisation reserve

Russia also has an active reserve (‘active mobilisation reserve’) officially consisting of two million people.<sup>708</sup> As noted by researcher Igor Gretskiy,<sup>709</sup> the number of reservists in Russia is ‘a state secret’ but it can be lower than one million.<sup>710</sup> According to the law, the active reserve consists of individuals from the general inactive reserve, as well as of those in the inactive reserves of the Foreign Intelligence Service and the FSB, who sign a contract to voluntarily join the active reserve of the Russian armed forces or other troops and military formations.<sup>711</sup>

Russia’s first mobilisation reserve, known as the Special Combat Army Reserve (BARS) was established in 2015 and consisted of ‘individuals who had previously served in the army and signed a special ‘reservist contract’ with the MoD.<sup>712</sup> Active recruitment started in 2021, with a number of reservists increasing from several thousand to 100 000.<sup>713</sup> As noted by The Insider, initially, the reservist contract is signed for a duration of three years, with reservists undergoing training once a year. The source also noted that reservists are paid monthly stipends and receive salaries for the periods of training or deployment.<sup>714</sup> As reported by the Moscow Times, many reservists joined the so-called BARS battalions to participate in the war in Ukraine in February 2022 and subsequently signed military contracts with the MoD.<sup>715</sup>

On 28 October 2025, the State Duma adopted amendments<sup>716</sup> to the federal laws On Defence, On Military Duty and Military Service, and On the Status of Servicemen,<sup>717</sup> to allow individuals in the active mobilisation reserve to be called up for special trainings for defence of

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<sup>706</sup> EUAA, The Russian Federation: Military service, December 2022, [url](#), p. 26

<sup>707</sup> Insider (The), Russia approves use of reservists in “special” training operations outside the country, 13 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>708</sup> RFE/RL, Russia To Expand Use of Active Reservists in Ukraine, 15 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>709</sup> Igor Gretskiy is a research fellow at the Estonia-based International Centre for Defence and Security. See, ICDS, Igor Gretskiy, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>710</sup> ERR, Researcher: Russia no longer has enough personnel to maintain pace of Ukraine offensive, 15 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>711</sup> Russia, Федеральный закон "О воинской обязанности и военной службе" от 28.03.1998 N 53-ФЗ (последняя редакция) [Federal Law “On Military Duty and Military Service” dated March 28, 1998, No. 53-FZ (latest edition)], 7 July 2025, [url](#), Article 57.1

<sup>712</sup> Moscow Times (The), ‘Hidden Mobilization?’: What Russia’s New Reservist Law Could Mean for the War in Ukraine, 7 November 2025, [url](#)

<sup>713</sup> Meduza, Власти решили отправлять резервистов Минобороны на «специальные сборы» [The authorities have decided to send Ministry of Defence reservists on ‘special training exercises’] 30 October 2025, [url](#); Moscow Times (The), ‘Hidden Mobilization?’: What Russia’s New Reservist Law Could Mean for the War in Ukraine, 7 November 2025, [url](#)

<sup>714</sup> Insider (The), Russia approves use of reservists in “special” training operations outside the country, 13 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>715</sup> Moscow Times (The), ‘Hidden Mobilization?’: What Russia’s New Reservist Law Could Mean for the War in Ukraine, 7 November 2025, [url](#)

<sup>716</sup> RBC, Госдума приняла закон о привлечении резервистов к защите важных объектов [The State Duma passed a law on the involvement of reservists in the protection of important facilities], 28 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>717</sup> RFE/RL, Russia To Expand Use of Active Reservists in Ukraine, 15 October 2025, [url](#)



critically important infrastructure.<sup>718</sup> According to a Russian General Staff official, reservists would be responsible for ‘critical infrastructure facilities, including energy and transport infrastructure’, with the primary task to counter drone attacks.<sup>719</sup> While the MoD has stated that reservists would not be sent to perform tasks outside Russia,<sup>720</sup> the law itself does not explicitly impose such restrictions, as noted by the Institute for the Study of War (ISW).<sup>721</sup> As of 10 November 2025, at least 20 Russian regions have started recruiting reservists as part of the newly enacted law, with Tatarstan and Bashkortostan establishing units to protect oil refineries and petrochemical sites. With BARS units established in Kursk, Bryansk, and Belgorod oblasts already in 2024, Kursk and Bryansk oblasts will reportedly ‘form additional detachments to help thwart sabotage attempts and assist in emergency evacuations.’<sup>722</sup>

Furthermore, since July 2025, Russia has reportedly been forming an additional strategic reserve composed of soldiers who have signed contracts with the MoD.<sup>723</sup> Citing ‘a Russian insider source’, ISW reported that this reserve will be composed of 292 000 individuals who have signed contracts with the MoD between January 2025 and September 2025. Due to ‘reduced casualty rates’ among the Russian military personnel during the summer 2025 in Ukraine, Russia could potentially withhold some of these recruits from immediate deployment to Ukraine.<sup>724</sup>

### 4.1.3. Mobilisation

On 21 September 2022, President Putin issued a decree on ‘partial mobilisation’ to draft 300 000 men into the army.<sup>725</sup> Officials claimed that the mobilisation efforts ended on 31 October 2022.<sup>726</sup> Since then, military recruitment has focused on the enlistment of volunteers who enter military service under contracts with the Ministry of Defence (MoD).<sup>727</sup> However, as the presidential decree on ‘partial mobilisation’ sets no official end date,<sup>728</sup> persons drafted between 21 September 2022 and 31 October 2022 cannot leave the military service.<sup>729</sup>

During the ‘partial mobilisation’ held between in that period, numerous irregularities in the mobilisation process were reported.<sup>730</sup> Uncertainty over the profiles of people who would be

<sup>718</sup> ISW, Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, November 5, 2025, 5 November 2025, [url](#)

<sup>719</sup> Moscow Times (The), ‘Hidden Mobilization?’: What Russia’s New Reservist Law Could Mean for the War in Ukraine, 7 November 2025, [url](#)

<sup>720</sup> Mediazona, Госдума приняла закон о привлечении резервистов к защите критически важных объектов из-за атак украинских беспилотников [The State Duma passed a law on the mobilisation of reservists to defend critical infrastructure against attacks by Ukrainian drones], 28 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>721</sup> ISW, Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, November 5, 2025, 5 November 2025, [url](#)

<sup>722</sup> Moscow Times (The), Russian Regions Launch Drive to Recruit Reservists for Critical Infrastructure Defense, 10 November 2025, [url](#)

<sup>723</sup> ISW, Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, September 29, 2025, 29 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>724</sup> ISW, Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, September 21, 2025, 21 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>725</sup> France 24, Russia says 300,000 reservists to be mobilised, 21 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>726</sup> Reuters, After weeks of chaos, Russia says partial mobilisation is complete, 31 October 2022, [url](#)

<sup>727</sup> Al Jazeera, Despite huge manpower losses, how is Russia replenishing its military?, 26 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>728</sup> Novaya Gazeta, At least 100 Russian conscripts drafted to fight in Ukraine confirmed dead so far, 1 November 2022, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Despite huge manpower losses, how is Russia replenishing its military?, 26 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>729</sup> Al Jazeera, Despite huge manpower losses, how is Russia replenishing its military?, 26 August 2025, [url](#); Meduza, ‘They forgot about him’ Three years ago, Putin’s ‘partial mobilization’ sent 9,000 men from two Siberian regions to war. Today, a third are dead or disabled, 19 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>730</sup> EUAA, The Russian Federation: Military service, December 2022, [url](#), pp. 30-33



drafted created widespread panic across the country.<sup>731</sup> In an interview with the Danish Immigration Service (DIS) and the Swedish Migration Agency, scholar Mark Galeotti noted that around 900 000 men fled Russia following the announcement of the mobilisation.<sup>732</sup>

Since 2024, the Russian military command has repeatedly demanded organising another wave of ‘partial mobilisation’, claiming that 350 000 – 400 000 additional soldiers and junior soldiers should be recruited to defeat the Ukrainian Armed Forces.<sup>733</sup> In mid-June 2025, the deputy head of the MoD’s Main Military-Political Directorate and commander of Akhmad special forces, Aпти Alaudinov, reportedly suggested to mobilise 500 000 to 1 000 000 soldiers in a new mobilisation wave. As noted by ISW, the immediate rejection of this proposal by Russian high-ranking officials shows their commitment to continue ‘volunteer and crypto recruitment’ and to avoid another mobilisation to prevent societal backlash.<sup>734</sup> In Mid-October 2025, ISW noted that Russia was ‘unlikely to conduct a large-scale involuntary reserve mobilisation.’<sup>735</sup>

In September 2025, Timofey Vaskin, head of the legal department of the Russia-based NGO *Shkola prizyvnik* (School of Conscript), and Sergey Krivenko, head of the Russia-based human rights group Citizen.Army.Law, told Novaya Gazeta Europe that their organisations had not observed any cases of individuals being summoned or conscripted specifically under the ‘partial mobilisation’ decree since November 2022.<sup>736</sup> Artem Klyga, a lawyer specialising in military issues, indicated that summonses sent out in September and October 2022 would no longer lead to call-up, including for people returning to Russia.<sup>737</sup> As noted by a human rights lawyer in an interview with EUAA at the end of October 2025, up to that date, there was no information about criminal cases being initiated against persons who left Russia to avoid mobilisation.<sup>738</sup>

## 4.2. Conscription

### 4.2.1. General regulations

According to Article 59 of the Constitution, all Russian citizens have ‘a duty and obligation’ to defend the country.’ The same Article stipulates that every citizen is obliged to ‘carry out military service according to the federal law.’<sup>739</sup> One-year military service is compulsory for all Russian men<sup>740</sup> aged between 18 and 30 years old.<sup>741</sup> The upper conscription age was raised

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<sup>731</sup> Klain D., Mobilization Can’t Save Russia’s War, FP, 4 October 2022, [url](#)

<sup>732</sup> Demark, DIS and Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Russia – Conscription, 5 March 2025, [url](#), p. 12

<sup>733</sup> Gorenburg D. et al, The Future Russian Way or War. Part 1: State Mobilisation, SCEEUS, Report No 11 2025, 26 September 2025, [url](#), p. 7

<sup>734</sup> ISW, Russian Force Generation And Technological Adaptations Update June 18, 2025, 18 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>735</sup> ISW (Institute for the Study of War), Warning: The Kremlin is Preparing to Mobilize Reservists on a Rolling Basis to Fight in Ukraine for the First Time, 13 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>736</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europe, Три года назад началась мобилизация. [Mobilization started three years ago], 21 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>737</sup> Artem Klyga, Online interview with EUAA, 8 October 2025

<sup>738</sup> Human rights lawyer, Online interview with EUAA, 23 October 2025

<sup>739</sup> Russia, The Constitution of the Russian Federation, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>740</sup> ISW, Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, September 29, 2025, 29 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>741</sup> ISW, Russian Force Generation And Technological Adaptations Update April 30, 2025, 30 April 2025, [url](#)



from 27 years as of 1 January 2024.<sup>742</sup> Upon completion of the mandatory military service, conscripts are transferred to the inactive mobilisation reserve,<sup>743</sup> and are eligible for future call-ups.<sup>744</sup>

The military draft for obligatory military service is carried out semi-annually: between 1 April and 15 July and between 1 October and 31 December. Three groups of Russian nationals have different conscription periods: residents of the Far North or certain areas equated to the Far North (from 1 May to 15 July and from 1 November to 31 December), conscripts living in rural areas and engaged in sowing or harvesting works (only fall conscription from 15 October to 31 December is carried out), and teaching staff (conscription is organised only in spring, between 1 May and 15 July).<sup>745</sup>

On 28 October 2025, the State Duma adopted a draft law to replace the existing bi-annual conscription process with a year-round draft, allowing military enlistment offices to organise medical and psychological examinations and conscription board meetings throughout the year.<sup>746</sup> The law was signed by President Putin on 4 November 2025.<sup>747</sup> Under the new law, effective from 1 January 2026,<sup>748</sup> the duration of the conscription periods is to be determined by a presidential decree (each year),<sup>749</sup> while the dispatch of conscripts to military units will take place between 1 April and 15 July and between 1 October and 31 December.<sup>750</sup>

As per Article 25 of the Federal Law on Military Duty and Military Service, conscription is carried out upon a presidential order, which also determines the number of conscripts to be drafted.<sup>751</sup> In 2025, the government decided to conscript a total of 295 000 men (160 000 in spring<sup>752</sup> and 135 000 in autumn<sup>753</sup>), which is the highest number in nine years.<sup>754</sup>

On 21 April 2025, President Putin signed a law allowing men of conscription age who had received conscription summonses and completed conscription procedures, such as medical examinations, but were not assigned to military service, to be drafted within a year without

<sup>742</sup> Russia, President of Russia, Maximum conscription age raised from 27 to 30 years starting from January 1, 2024, 4 August 2023, [url](#)

<sup>743</sup> Russia, Федеральный закон “О воинской обязанности и военной службе” от 28.03.1998 N 53-ФЗ (ред. От 29.09.2025) [Federal Law “On Military Duty and Military Service” dated March 28, 1998, No. 53-FZ (amended 29.09.2025)], 29 September 2025, [url](#), Art. 52

<sup>744</sup> ISW, Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, September 29, 2025, 29 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>745</sup> Russia, Федеральный закон “О воинской обязанности и военной службе” от 28.03.1998 N 53-ФЗ (ред. От 29.09.2025) [Federal Law “On Military Duty and Military Service” dated March 28, 1998, No. 53-FZ (amended 29.09.2025)], 29 September 2025, [url](#), Art. 25

<sup>746</sup> Novaya Gazeta – Europe, Russian parliament adopts draft law on year-round conscription, 28 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>747</sup> Moscow Times (The), Putin Signs Law Moving Russia to Year-Round Military Draft, 4 November 2025, [url](#)

<sup>748</sup> Novaya Gazeta – Europe, Russian parliament adopts draft law on year-round conscription, 28 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>749</sup> Artem Klyga, Online interview to EUAA, 8 October 2025

<sup>750</sup> Artem Klyga, Online interview to EUAA, 8 October 2025; Moscow Times (The), Putin Signs Law Moving Russia to Year-Round Military Draft, 4 November 2025, [url](#)

<sup>751</sup> Russia, Федеральный закон “О воинской обязанности и военной службе” от 28.03.1998 N 53-ФЗ (ред. От 29.09.2025) [Federal Law “On Military Duty and Military Service” dated March 28, 1998, No. 53-FZ (amended 29.09.2025)], 29 September 2025, [url](#), Art. 25

<sup>752</sup> ISW, Russian Force Generation And Technological Adaptations Update April 30, 2025, 30 April 2025, [url](#); Prizyv k sovesti et al, Resistance during the 2025 Spring Conscription, August 2025, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>753</sup> ISW, Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, September 29, 2025, 29 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>754</sup> Moscow Times (The), Russia’s Fall Draft To Use Digital-Only Summons in Moscow and 3 Other Regions, 30 September 2025, [url](#); Artem Klyga, Online interview with EUAA, 8 October 2025



repeating the conscription procedures.<sup>755</sup> While the law became effective on 1 October 2025, according to human rights groups that support conscripts, in Moscow this practice was already applied in October 2024.<sup>756</sup> Similarly to previous years, in 2025, the authorities stated that conscripts will serve only in Russia and not in the Russia-occupied areas of Ukraine and would not ‘conduct tasks related to the war.’<sup>757</sup>

As noted by Artem Klyga, in 2024, the heads of the occupied Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia regions officially announced the start of conscription into obligatory military service, with a representative of the Russian General Staff claiming that military enlistment offices of Donetsk and Luhansk regions met their 2024 conscription targets. According to official reports, conscripts from the occupied territories were deployed to military units in Russia’s Southern military district. The source also noted that human rights organisations helping conscripts have not recorded cases when conscripts from the occupied territories would be sent to combat; however, he also pointed out that the information regarding the occupied territories is limited as people who are willing to communicate with human rights groups face pressure.<sup>758</sup> According to a human rights lawyer, the fact that conscription takes place in the occupied territories in Ukraine suggests that conscripts serve there as well. However, the source similarly noted that they do not take part in combat operations.<sup>759</sup>

#### 4.2.2. Electronic military register

In November 2024, the authorities launched a Unified military register – an information system on individuals eligible for military service – in three Russian regions: Ryazan, Mari El, and Sakhalin.<sup>760</sup> The register is designed to collect comprehensive data on all individuals eligible for military registration, including the registered and actual places of residence, marital status, education, employment, police record, ownership of real estate or vehicles, health condition,<sup>761</sup> tax information, pension records, and court history.<sup>762</sup>

As noted by Artem Klyga, by July 2025, there was widespread transfer of data to the electronic military register, with military enlistment offices (*voenkomats*) requesting information from various institutions such as hospitals and educational institutions, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs.<sup>763</sup> The military register has also affected border crossing practices, as border officials control whether the person has received a summons from a military enlistment

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<sup>755</sup> ISW, Russian Force Generation And Technological Adaptations Update, 30 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>756</sup> Prizyv k sovesti et al, Resistance during the 2025 Spring Conscription, August 2025, [url](#), p. 13

<sup>757</sup> ISW, Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, September 29, 2025, 29 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>758</sup> Artem Klyga, Online interview with EUAA, 8 October 2025

<sup>759</sup> Human rights lawyer, Online interview with EUAA, 23 October 2025

<sup>760</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europe, Как их всех загребли. Три года мобилизации [How they were all rounded up. Three years of mobilization], 22 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>761</sup> Pravo&Slovo, The Unified Military Register, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>762</sup> Moscow Time (The), Russia Tightens Border Controls on Conscripted Men With Expanded FSB Powers – Reports, 23 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>763</sup> Artem Klyga, Online interview with EUAA, 8 October 2025



office,<sup>764</sup> and prevent exit if an electronic summons is found in the system.<sup>765</sup> At the same time, entry data is automatically transmitted to a military enlistment office.<sup>766</sup>

### 4.2.3. Delivery of conscription summonses

According to the law, a summons or other notice is handed personally to the citizen against signature on receipt. If the person is not at home, the summons may be handed (upon consent) to any adult family member living with them, and in this case, the recipient is considered fully notified. If the summons is addressed to an organisation, it must be delivered to an employee who signs the receipt.<sup>767</sup>

In addition to paper summonses, delivery of electronic summonses has been introduced nationwide.<sup>768</sup> Researcher Huseyn Aliyev noted that the electronic delivery of summonses started in March 2025, with a growing number being sent out after July 2025.<sup>769</sup> As noted by a human rights lawyer, according to a military commissioner of Bryansk region, in August 2025, military enlistment officers were connected to the electronic military registry, after which the first electronic summonses were sent out through the state services portal *Gosuslugi*. The expert added that many people reported receiving electronic summonses from military enlistment offices through *Gosuslugi*.<sup>770</sup> Military enlistment offices send out summonses on a regular basis, including outside of the conscription periods, for instance to confirm certain details.<sup>771</sup>

During the autumn draft of 2025, conscription summonses were reportedly issued solely in electronic form in Moscow oblast, Ryazan oblast, Mari El Republic, and Sakhalin oblast.<sup>772</sup> According to Artem Klyga, as of 31 October 2025, delivery of electronic summonses – in addition to paper summonses – was recorded in 20 regions across Russia. Besides the ones mentioned above, these regions included Mordovia, Krasnodar krai, Perm krai, Khabarovsk krai, Zabaikalsky krai, Smolensk oblast, Buryatia, Krasnoyarsk krai, Tver oblast, Karelia, Chelyabinsk oblast, Altai krai, Nizhny Novgorod oblast, Saratov oblast, Pskov oblast, Samara oblast, and the city of St. Petersburg.<sup>773</sup> According to researcher Huseyn Aliyev, electronic notices have also been introduced in the republics of the North Caucasus.<sup>774</sup> A human rights

<sup>764</sup> Artem Klyga, Online interview with EUAA, 8 October 2025

<sup>765</sup> Moscow Times (The), Russia Tightens Border Controls on Conscripted Men With Expanded FSB Powers – Reports, 23 July 2025, [url](#); Artem Klyga, Email correspondence with EUAA, 31 October 2025

<sup>766</sup> Artem Klyga, Email correspondence with EUAA, 31 October 2025

<sup>767</sup> Russia, Федеральный закон "Об исполнительном производстве" от 02.10.2007 N 229-ФЗ (последняя редакция) [Federal Law "On Enforcement Proceedings" dated October 2, 2007, No. 229-FZ (latest edition)], 31 July 2025, [url](#), Article 27

<sup>768</sup> Moscow Times (The), Russia's Fall Draft To Use Digital-Only Summons in Moscow and 3 Other Regions, 30 September 2025, [url](#); Huseyn Aliyev, Online interview with EUAA, 7 October 2025; Human rights lawyer, Online interview with EUAA, 23 October 2025

<sup>769</sup> Huseyn Aliyev, Online interview with EUAA, 7 October 2025

<sup>770</sup> Human rights lawyer, Email correspondence with EUAA, 23 October 2025

<sup>771</sup> Huseyn Aliyev, Online interview with EUAA, 7 October 2025

<sup>772</sup> Moscow Times (The), Russia's Fall Draft To Use Digital-Only Summons in Moscow and 3 Other Regions, 30 September 2025, [url](#); Huseyn Aliyev, Online interview with EUAA, 7 October 2025

<sup>773</sup> Artem Klyga, Email correspondence with EUAA, 31 October 2025

<sup>774</sup> Huseyn Aliyev, Online interview with EUAA, 7 October 2025



lawyer has also mentioned Leningrad and Omsk oblasts, noting that overall the system should be working across the country.<sup>775</sup>

According to the law, a conscription summons is considered delivered seven days after it has been lodged in the electronic register, requiring the person to report to the military enlistment office within that time.<sup>776</sup> From the day a conscription summons is lodged, the person is prohibited from leaving Russia. If the person fails to appear at the military enlistment office within 20 days from the date indicated in the summons, other restrictions would be imposed, including bans on registering as an individual entrepreneur, registering real estate or vehicles, obtaining loans, and driving vehicles.<sup>777</sup>

As noted by a human rights lawyer, there were various reports on restrictions imposed on individuals who failed to appear at a military enlistment office after receiving an electronic summons via the *Gosuslugi* portal.<sup>778</sup> According to Artem Klyga, the primary measure is a travel ban; in one case, a conscript registered in Krasnodar krai was prevented from leaving Russia at Moscow's Sheremetyevo airport. The source noted that other restrictions, such as a ban on property registration, driving, taking a bank loan, or registering as an entrepreneur, have not yet been implemented as of October 2025.<sup>779</sup>

In September 2025, media sources reported that a person allegedly required to appear for a medical examination was prevented from leaving Russia at the same airport, as the travel ban appeared in the border control database.<sup>780</sup> However, Russia-based Movement of Conscientious Objectors, which also reported on the incident, noted some doubts about the authenticity of the case, since the provided documentation did not specify which military enlistment office issued the restriction.<sup>781</sup> As noted by Huseyn Aliyev, in 2024 and 2025, there were some cases where individuals attempted to leave Russia by plane after receiving conscription summonses: reportedly, some were denied boarding, detained, or fined for failing to appear at a military enlistment office. In other cases, the border control could not detect that they had pending summonses, so they were able to leave.<sup>782</sup>

#### 4.2.4. Exemptions and deferrals

##### a) Exemptions

According to the law, exemptions from obligatory military service apply to individuals deemed unfit for military service due to health reasons, those who have already completed the obligatory military service or alternative civilian service, holders of academic (doctoral) degree, and those whose father or brother died during military service, training, or as a result of injury

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<sup>775</sup> Human rights lawyer, Email correspondence with EUAA, 23 October 2025

<sup>776</sup> RFE/RL, В России заработал реестр с электронными повестками в армию [A register with electronic summonses to the army has been launched in Russia], 1 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>777</sup> RFE/RL, В России заработал реестр с электронными повестками в армию [A register with electronic summonses to the army has been launched in Russia], 1 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>778</sup> Human rights lawyer, Online interview with EUAA, 23 October 2025

<sup>779</sup> Artem Klyga, Online interview with EUAA, 8 October 2025

<sup>780</sup> IStories, Russia Implements First Travel Ban Due to Military Register, 12 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>781</sup> IStories, Russia Implements First Travel Ban Due to Military Register, 12 September 2025, [url](#); DSO–Dvizhenie Soznatelnyh otkazchikov [Movement of Conscientious Objectors], Telegram, 12 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>782</sup> Huseyn Aliyev, Online interview with EUAA, 7 October 2025



sustained during military service. Other groups exempted from military service are convicts serving their sentence, persons with an outstanding criminal record, or persons under investigation.<sup>783</sup>

Medical exemptions are ‘the most popular way to avoid military service,’<sup>784</sup> with approximately 30-40 % of conscripts seeking exemption on health grounds.<sup>785</sup> As noted by Russia-based human rights organisations helping potential conscripts and their families, obtaining medical exemptions remain difficult across the country due to bureaucracy and subjective medical interpretations of medical documents at military enlistment offices. Moscow in particular has been ‘a trouble spot’ for a long time, with doctors reporting ‘that they are prohibited from assigning non-draftable diagnoses.’<sup>786</sup>

Beginning from 5 September 2025 – for the first time since years<sup>787</sup> – the authorities have reclassified certain medical conditions previously leading to exemptions from military service<sup>788</sup> and introduced stricter documentation requirements. The main changes affect conditions such as primary and secondary syphilis, stage I hypertension, stage I sarcoidosis, well-controlled asthma, epilepsy under treatment, skin and endocrinal conditions, and obesity, which now do not result in the category unfit for military service. In addition, it became harder for individuals suffering from mental health issues to prove their condition.<sup>789</sup>

As noted by Huseyn Aliyev, in many cases, there is ‘a strong element of corruption’ at the level of local military enlistment offices. There were cases, both regarding conscription into obligatory military service and partial mobilisation, where individuals with conditions qualifying for exemption were denied it. Those who did not challenge the conscription decision in court were ultimately conscripted into military service. The source further added that the situation varies across military enlistment offices, and legal procedures are not always followed, including numerous cases where individuals were denied the right to apply for an exemption or were intimidated.<sup>790</sup>

## **b) Deferrals**

According to the law, deferrals from compulsory military service may be granted on the grounds of health (up to one year), full-time studies in accredited educational programs, and family care obligations, such as caring for relatives or young siblings. Other grounds for deferrals are employment in state institutions and law enforcement agencies, being an elected

<sup>783</sup> Russia, Федеральный закон “О воинской обязанности и военной службе” от 28.03.1998 N 53-ФЗ (ред. От 29.09.2025) [Federal Law “On Military Duty and Military Service” dated March 28, 1998, No. 53-FZ (amended 29.09.2025)], 29 September 2025, [url](#), Art. 23

<sup>784</sup> Prizyv k sovesti et al, Resistance during the 2025 Spring Conscription, August 2025, [url](#), p. 9

<sup>785</sup> Artem Klyga, Online Interview with EUAA, 8 October 2025 and email communication, 23 October 2025

<sup>786</sup> Prizyv k sovesti et al, Resistance during the 2025 Spring Conscription, August 2025, [url](#), p. 8

<sup>787</sup> Artem Klyga, Online Interview with EUAA, 8 October 2025 and email communication, 23 October 2025

<sup>788</sup> Pervaya Liniya, Изменения в Расписании болезней [Changes to the Schedule of Illnesses], 8 September 2025, [url](#); DSO–Dvizhenie Soznatelnyh otkazchikov [Movement of Conscientious Objectors], Telegram, 9 September 2025, [url](#); Artem Klyga, Online Interview with EUAA, 8 October 2025 and email communication, 23 October 2025

<sup>789</sup> Pervaya Liniya, Изменения в Расписании болезней [Changes to the Schedule of Illnesses], 8 September 2025, [url](#); Artem Klyga, Online Interview with EUAA, 8 October 2025 and email communication, 23 October 2025

<sup>790</sup> Huseyn Aliyev, Online interview with EUAA, 7 October 2025



official to governmental institutions of state and municipal level, and presidential decrees granting special deferments.<sup>791</sup>

#### 4.2.5. Alternative civilian service

The right to alternative civilian service is stipulated by Article 59.3 of the Russian Constitution.<sup>792</sup> It is applicable to individuals whose convictions or religious beliefs contradict military service or individuals who represent small indigenous ethnic minorities who lead a traditional way of life.<sup>793</sup> The duration of alternative civilian service is 18 months within organisations of the armed forces and other military formation in the role of civilian personnel and 21 months in civilian organisations.<sup>794</sup>

As of March 2025, the list of professions available for alternative civilian service consisted of 266 professions.<sup>795</sup> The placements can be in the spheres of social service, healthcare, education, culture, and art,<sup>796</sup> with the positions ranging from skilled professions (such as doctor, veterinarian, engineer, programmer, or economist) to general working specialities (janitor, driver, courier, handyman).<sup>797</sup> The placement is determined by the draft commission and, therefore, can take place in the location different from the individual's place of residence. Quitting alternative civilian service is not possible, as it leads to a criminal prosecution for draft evasion.<sup>798</sup>

While there was an increase towards alternative civilian service after the start of the full-scale war in Ukraine in February 2022,<sup>799</sup> compared to the total number of conscripts, the number of persons enrolled in the alternative civilian service is comparatively small.<sup>800</sup> According to the statistics by the Russian Federal Service of Labour and Employment (Rostrud), as of 1 August 2025, 2 722 young men were enrolled in alternative civil service,<sup>801</sup> compared to 2 022 as of 1 August 2024.<sup>802</sup>

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<sup>791</sup> Russia, Федеральный закон “О воинской обязанности и военной службе” от 28.03.1998 N 53-ФЗ (ред. От 29.09.2025) [Federal Law “On Military Duty and Military Service” dated March 28, 1998, No. 53-FZ (amended 29.09.2025)], 29 September 2025, [url](#), Art. 24

<sup>792</sup> Russia, The Constitution of the Russian Federation, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>793</sup> Sluzhba pomoschi prizyvnikom, Альтернативная гражданская служба: условия и требования [Alternative civil service: conditions and requirements], 25 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>794</sup> Privyva net, Альтернативная служба в 2025 году [Alternative service in 2025], 5 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>795</sup> RTVI, «Не должно быть комфортно»: в России обновили список профессий для альтернативной службы [“It shouldn't be comfortable”: Russia has updated its list of professions available for alternative military service], 3 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>796</sup> Sluzhba pomoschi prizyvnikom, Альтернативная гражданская служба: условия и требования [Alternative civil service: conditions and requirements], 25 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>797</sup> Privyva net, Альтернативная служба в 2025 году [Alternative service in 2025], 5 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>798</sup> Sluzhba pomoschi prizyvnikom, Альтернативная гражданская служба: условия и требования [Alternative civil service: conditions and requirements], 25 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>799</sup> The ‘Call to Conscience’ coalition et al, The Right to Conscientious Objection to Military Service in Russia During Full-Scale War, 31 May 2024, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>800</sup> Forum 18, Russia: “Faith forbids him to take up arms, kill, or take oaths”, 19 December 2023, [url](#)

<sup>801</sup> Russia, Rostrud, Численность граждан, проходящих альтернативную гражданскую службу (по состоянию на 01.08.2025 г.) [Number of citizens undergoing alternative civilian service (as of 01.08.2025)], n.d., [url](#)

<sup>802</sup> Russia, Rostrud, Численность граждан, проходящих альтернативную гражданскую службу (по состоянию на 01.08.2024 г.) [Number of citizens undergoing alternative civilian service (as of 01.08.2024)], n.d., [url](#)



Applicants must submit their request to the military enlistment office no later than six months before the start of the conscription period: by 1 April to enroll during the autumn draft and by 1 October to be included in next year's spring draft. The application must clearly indicate the reasons for the inability to perform the military service and include supporting documents, such as a reference letter from the place of work or study and witness statements.<sup>803</sup> Late applications can be submitted with a valid explanation for the delay.<sup>804</sup>

Military enlistment offices often refuse the requests for alternative civilian service, including for missing application deadline (which constitutes the majority of refusals<sup>805</sup>), insufficient or false information, prior evasion of military service, and lack of suitable or available vacancies.<sup>806</sup> As noted by Artem Klyga, in some cases – for example, in Chuvashia, Krasnodar krai, and Tomsk oblast – military enlistment offices reportedly claimed that the possibility to replace military service with alternative civilian service was no longer valid, which has been appealed in court. Moreover, there were also instances where military enlistment offices refused to forward applications to the draft board.<sup>807</sup>

Access to alternative civilian service in Moscow has become increasingly difficult,<sup>808</sup> with only one in 33 applications approved during the 2025 spring draft.<sup>809</sup> As noted by Artem Klyga, even if the person is granted alternative civilian service, problems often occur with finding an organisation where it can be performed, with the procedure handled by the Ministry of Labour, a civil service agency.<sup>810</sup> Huseyn Aliyev further noted an increase in corruption, with some applicants being requested to pay bribes to receive approval.<sup>811</sup>

As of May 2024, there were at least two cases where persons who have applied for alternative civilian service were charged with an administrative offence of 'discrediting' the Russian armed forces as the applicant noted that 'he does not want to serve in the military because Russia is waging a war of aggression' in Ukraine.<sup>812</sup>

#### 4.2.6. Conscription quotas and raids

As noted by Sergey Krivenko in an interview with the Danish Immigration Service (DIS) and the Swedish Migration Office, since 2022, military enlistment offices have increasingly employed

<sup>803</sup> Privyva net, Альтернативная служба в 2025 году [Alternative service in 2025], 5 June 2025, [url](#); Sluzhba pomoschi prizyvnikom Альтернативная гражданская служба: условия и требования [Alternative civil service: conditions and requirements], 25 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>804</sup> The 'Call to Conscience' coalition et al, The Right to Conscientious Objection to Military Service in Russia During Full-Scale War, 31 May 2024, [url](#), p. 5

<sup>805</sup> Artem Klyga, Online interview with EUAA, 8 October 2025

<sup>806</sup> Sluzhba pomoschi prizyvnikom, Альтернативная гражданская служба: условия и требования [Alternative civil service: conditions and requirements], 25 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>807</sup> Artem Klyga, Online interview with EUAA, 8 October 2025

<sup>808</sup> Prizyv k sovesti et al, Resistance during the 2025 Spring Conscription, August 2025, [url](#), p. 11 DSO–Dvizhenie Soznatelnyh otkazchikov [Movement of Conscientious Objectors], Telegram, 19 August 2025, [url](#); Artem Klyga, Online interview with EUAA, 8 October 2025

<sup>809</sup> DSO–Dvizhenie Soznatelnyh otkazchikov [Movement of Conscientious Objectors], Telegram, 19 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>810</sup> Artem Klyga, Online interview with EUAA, 8 October 2025

<sup>811</sup> Huseyn Aliyev, Online interview with EUAA, 7 October 2025

<sup>812</sup> Настоящее Время, "Для военнослужащих по призыву это работает". Кто выбирает и как добывается альтернативной службы в России во время войны, 17 May 2024, [url](#)



the so-called ‘one-day-draft’ practice whereby persons, who came to a military enlistment office ‘for a specific purpose’, such as collecting documents, are immediately conscripted into the military service. This practice is more common in larger cities, as residents of rural areas tend to adhere to their conscription summonses ‘to a greater extent than in larger and more densely populated places.’<sup>813</sup>

During the conscription period of spring 2025, police conducted raids to meet conscription quotas across the country,<sup>814</sup> including in Tatarstan, Dagestan, the Kursk region and St. Petersburg.<sup>815</sup> According to organisations helping conscripts, differently from autumn 2024, in spring 2025, these raids were not random, as police followed specific ‘lists’ rather than ‘picking up everyone on the street.’<sup>816</sup> Most reports on raids were from Moscow,<sup>817</sup> where police detained individuals with pending conscription summonses,<sup>818</sup> conducting raids at fitness clubs<sup>819</sup> and detaining men at metro stations.<sup>820</sup> Most persons who were detained were identified through CCTV cameras and detained in metro, or located at their homes or workplaces.<sup>821</sup>

During the spring 2025 raids, legal grounds for exemption or deferral from military service as well as for conscientious objection were often ignored,<sup>822</sup> whereas the authorities attempted to conscript individuals, or make a conscription decision, within one day.<sup>823</sup> In St. Petersburg, police reportedly detained at least 200 conscript-age men and attempted to send some of them to military service within 24 hours, including those ‘with chronic illnesses and medical deferrals.’<sup>824</sup>

During the autumn 2025 draft, individuals were reportedly similarly detained in the metro, near homes, and on the street.<sup>825</sup> As noted by a human rights lawyer, conscription-related raids in Russia typically occur towards the end of the draft period, when regional military enlistment offices struggle to meet their conscription quotas. In these cases, military enlistment offices involve law enforcement, primarily the police, to meet the recruitment plan. Raids are more common in major cities, such as Moscow and St. Petersburg, which have higher living standards and lower number of people willing to take part in the obligatory

<sup>813</sup> Denmark, DIS, and Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Russia: Conscription, March 2025, [url](#), p. 19

<sup>814</sup> ISW, Russian Force Generation And Technological Adaptations Update, 30 April 2025, [url](#); Prizyv k sovesti et al, Resistance during the 2025 Spring Conscription, August 2025, [url](#), pp. 2, 4

<sup>815</sup> Prizyv k sovesti et al, Resistance during the 2025 Spring Conscription, August 2025, [url](#), pp. 2, 4

<sup>816</sup> Prizyv k sovesti et al, Resistance during the 2025 Spring Conscription, August 2025, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>817</sup> Prizyv k sovesti et al, Resistance during the 2025 Spring Conscription, August 2025, [url](#), pp. 2, 4

<sup>818</sup> ISW, Russian Force Generation And Technological Adaptations Update, 30 April 2025, [url](#); Prizyv k sovesti et al, Resistance during the 2025 Spring Conscription, August 2025, [url](#), pp. 2, 4

<sup>819</sup> Insider (The), Силовики пришли с облавой уже во второй фитнес-клуб Москвы [Security forces raided Moscow's second fitness club], 2 April 2025, [url](#); ISW, Russian Force Generation And Technological Adaptations Update, 30 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>820</sup> Insider (The), В Москве начались облавы на призывников. Людей задерживают в метро [Raids on conscripts have begun in Moscow. People are being detained in the underground], [url](#)

<sup>821</sup> Prizyv k sovesti et al, Resistance during the 2025 Spring Conscription, August 2025, [url](#), p. 2; Novaya Gazeta Europe, Право уклониться. Как изменилась работа тех, кто помогает призывникам [The right to evade. How the work of those who help conscripts has changed], 1 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>822</sup> Prizyv k sovesti et al, Resistance during the 2025 Spring Conscription, August 2025, [url](#), p. 3

<sup>823</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europe, Право уклониться. Как изменилась работа тех, кто помогает призывникам [The right to evade. How the work of those who help conscripts has changed], 1 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>824</sup> Insider (The), В Москве начались облавы на призывников. Людей задерживают в метро [Raids on conscripts have begun in Moscow. People are being detained in the underground], [url](#)

<sup>825</sup> Idite lesom, Telegram, 31 October 2025, [url](#)



military service, whereas quotas in these locations are higher due to higher population density.<sup>826</sup> According to Huseyn Aliyev, conscription quotas remain unmet in almost every region, with Chechnya being ‘an outstanding exception’, consistently claiming to have exceeded its quotas for both conscripts and mobilised personnel.<sup>827</sup>

#### 4.2.7. Draft evasion

According to the Code of Administrative Offences (Article 21.5), young men of conscript age face liability for failing to appear at a military enlistment office upon receiving a summons<sup>828</sup> – such as for a medical examination or additional medical examination<sup>829</sup> – which is punishable with a fine of 10 000 [102 euros] to 30 000 roubles [307 euros].<sup>830</sup> Smaller fines from 1 000 to 20 000 [10 – 205 euros] are imposed for failing to notify a military enlistment office about changes related to personal information, such as marital status, education, place of studies or employment, and residential address, as well as for not notifying a military enlistment office about leaving Russia for a period of more than six months.<sup>831</sup> The law requires to notify a military enlistment office about of a change of one’s address within 14 days, including by sending a notification via the *Gosuslugi* portal.<sup>832</sup>

In June 2025, the State Duma approved an amendment, increasing fines for failing to notify a military enlistment office of a change of address from the previous 1 000 – 5 000 rubles [10 – 51 euros] to 10 000 – 20 000 rubles [102 – 205 euros], noting that more than 47 000 individuals were held responsible under this legal provision, with 28 700 being fined and 18 300 receiving warnings.<sup>833</sup> As noted by Artem Klyga, these fines ‘are intended to scare young people and force them to send more supporting documents to military enlistment offices.’ However, as of 31 October 2025, a widespread enforcement of these fines has not been observed.<sup>834</sup>

Draft evasion from obligatory military service is a criminal offence, punished under Article 328 of the Criminal Code by a fine up to 200 000 rubles [2 050 euros] or imprisonment for up to two years. Draft evasion from the alternative civilian service is punishable by penalties ranging

<sup>826</sup> Human rights lawyer, Online interview with EUAA, 24 October 2025

<sup>827</sup> Huseyn Aliyev, Online interview with EUAA, 7 October 2025

<sup>828</sup> Russia, Кодекс Российской Федерации об административных правонарушениях, от 30.12.2001 N 195-ФЗ (с изм. и доп., вступ. в силу с 22.10.2025) [“Code of Administrative Offences of the Russian Federation, of 30.12.2001 No 195 -FZ (with amendments and additions, effective from 22.10.2025), 2025, [url](#), Art. 21.5

<sup>829</sup> Sluzhba pomoschi prizyvnikom, Уклонение от армии. Что бывает с уклонистами? [Draft dodging. What happens to draft dodgers?], 25 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>830</sup> Russia, Кодекс Российской Федерации об административных правонарушениях, от 30.12.2001 N 195-ФЗ (с изм. и доп., вступ. в силу с 22.10.2025) [“Code of Administrative Offences of the Russian Federation, of 30.12.2001 No 195 -FZ (with amendments and additions, effective from 22.10.2025), 2025, [url](#), Art. 21.5

<sup>831</sup> Russia, Кодекс Российской Федерации об административных правонарушениях, от 30.12.2001 N 195-ФЗ (с изм. и доп., вступ. в силу с 22.10.2025) [“Code of Administrative Offences of the Russian Federation, of 30.12.2001 No 195 -FZ (with amendments and additions, effective from 22.10.2025), 2025, [url](#), Art. 21.5

<sup>832</sup> DSO–Dvizhenie Soznatelnykh otkazchikov [Movement of Conscientious Objectors], Telegram, 24 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>833</sup> Forbes, Госдума приняла закон о новых штрафах за несообщение в военкомат о переезде [The State Duma passed a law on new fines for failure to notify the military enlistment office of a change of address], 24 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>834</sup> Artem Klyga, Email communication with EUAA, 31 October 2025



from a fine of 80 000 rubles [820 euros] to arrest of up to six months.<sup>835</sup> As noted by Sergey Krivenko, the court must establish that there was a deliberate intent to evade military service, which can be demonstrated, for instance, through proving ‘repeated failures’ to appear at the military enlistment office without a valid reason.<sup>836</sup>

In 2024, as reported by IStories, 916 individuals were convicted of draft evasion, and two more were found guilty of evading alternative civilian service. In 95 % of convictions the punishment was a fine of up to 100 000 rubles [1 025 euros].<sup>837</sup> According to a human rights lawyer, in the first half of 2025, 580 people were convicted by courts for draft evasion, with the majority (576) punished by a fine. Only two individuals were sentenced to imprisonment (up to one year): these are the first prison convictions in several years, which indicates that penalties for draft evasion remain relatively lenient.<sup>838</sup> As reported by IStories, based on data from the Judicial Department, actual prison sentence was applied previously only once, in 2022.<sup>839</sup>

## 4.2.8. Conditions of service

### a) Assignment to military units

Conscripts can serve in ground forces, navy, aerospace forces, strategic missile forces and airborne forces, military units dealing with logistical and technical support, the Ministry of Emergency Situations, and the National Guard (*Rosgvardiya*).<sup>840</sup> The distribution of conscripts to military units is carried out by military enlistment offices. During conscription procedures, conscripts have a possibility to indicate their preference regarding the type of the armed forces, but there is no guarantee that they will get to serve there.<sup>841</sup> As noted by Huseyn Aliyev, some conscripts can pay a bribe to be able to choose the type of forces and even the location of the military unit.<sup>842</sup> Otherwise, the assignment of conscripts depends on the needs of military units,<sup>843</sup> therefore, they can be sent anywhere in Russia,<sup>844</sup> including to the border regions with Ukraine.<sup>845</sup>

The conditions of military service depend on a particular unit and its location, with some units providing ‘relatively decent conditions.’<sup>846</sup> Conscripts deployed to border regions with Ukraine

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<sup>835</sup> Russia, Уголовный кодекс Российской Федерации от 13.06.1996 N 63-ФЗ (ред. от 31.07.2025) (с изм. и доп., вступ. в силу с 01.09.2025) [The Criminal Code of the Russian Federation of 13.06.1996 N 63-FZ (with amendments and additions, effective from 1.09.2025)], 2025, [url](#), Art. 328

<sup>836</sup> Denmark, DIS, and Sweden, The Swedish Migration Agency, Russia: Conscription, March 2025, [url](#), p. 35

<sup>837</sup> IStories, How and for What Russians Are Judged in 2024, 18 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>838</sup> Human rights lawyer, Online interview with EUAA, 24 October 2025

<sup>839</sup> IStories, How and for What Russians Are Judged in 2024, 18 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>840</sup> Centr podderzhki prizyvnikov ‘Voennik.ru’, Как в военкомате распределяют призывников по видам войск [How conscripts are assigned to different branches of the military at the military enlistment office], 2 November 2025, [url](#)

<sup>841</sup> Centr podderzhki prizyvnikov ‘Voennik.ru’, Где в России легче всего служить в армии и в каких войсках [Where in Russia is it easiest to serve in the army and in which branches of the military?], 10 February 2025, [url](#)

<sup>842</sup> Huseyn Aliyev, Online interview with EUAA, 7 October 2025

<sup>843</sup> Huseyn Aliyev, Online interview with EUAA, 7 October 2025; Artem Klyga, Online interview with EUAA, 8 October 2025

<sup>844</sup> Huseyn Aliyev, Online interview with EUAA, 7 October 2025

<sup>845</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europe, Власти снова обещают не отправлять срочников на войну. На деле всё иначе [The authorities are once again promising not to send conscripts to war. In reality, things are different.], 23 September 2025, [url](#); Huseyn Aliyev, Online interview with EUAA, 7 October 2025

<sup>846</sup> Huseyn Aliyev, Online interview with EUAA, 7 October 2025



– such as Kursk,<sup>847</sup> Belgorod,<sup>848</sup> and Bryansk oblasts<sup>849</sup> – may find themselves in active combat zone, exposed to missile shelling and drone strikes by Ukraine, making their military service dangerous.<sup>850</sup> According to Artem Klyga, most conscripts will not be deployed to the border regions with Ukraine; however, after the outbreak of hostilities in the Kursk region, Russian military personnel were redeployed there to prevent Ukrainian advances. Furthermore, since 2024, conscripts have been allowed to serve in the border troops of the FSB, positioning them directly at the border, which helps explain reports of casualties and missing conscripts.<sup>851</sup>

As reported by ISW in September 2025, the Russian armed forces have relied on conscripts to perform border security duties, including in Bryansk, Belgorod, and Kursk oblasts. Conscripts assigned to border guard duties participated in combat operations during the Ukrainian offensive into Kursk oblast, which generated considerable discontent within Russian society.<sup>852</sup> In April 2025, the Ukrainian government's project 'I want to live' (*Hochu zhit*), which facilitates the voluntary surrender of Russian military personnel,<sup>853</sup> published the names of 217 conscripts who had died in the war in Ukraine since February 2022.<sup>854</sup> According to independent media source Vot Tak, the project clarified that the list included only individuals who died while serving as conscripts while those who signed a contract with the MoD were not included. Following verification of the names, Vot Tak reported that at least 72 of these conscripts were killed in Kursk and Belgorod oblasts.<sup>855</sup>

Sources also noted that conscripts can be deployed to serve in the occupied territories of Ukraine.<sup>856</sup> According to the head of the legal department at *Shkola prizyvnika* (School of Conscript), cited by Novaya Gazeta Europe, Russian authorities consider these areas part of Russia and therefore can assign conscripts to serve there. However, the source noted that this does not appear to be a widespread practice.<sup>857</sup> As noted by Artem Klyga, conscripts serving in border regions can legally be deployed to combat operations through 30-day assignments. In these cases, conscripts are not sent to frontline assaults but are usually involved in support

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<sup>847</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europe, *Власти снова обещают не отправлять срочников на войну. На деле всё иначе* [The authorities are once again promising not to send conscripts to war. In reality, things are different.], 23 September 2025, [url](#); Artem Klyga, Online interview with EUAA, 8 October 2025

<sup>848</sup> Huseyn Aliyev, Online interview with EUAA, 7 October 2025; Artem Klyga, Online interview with EUAA, 8 October 2025

<sup>849</sup> Artem Klyga, Online interview with EUAA, 8 October 2025

<sup>850</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europe, *Власти снова обещают не отправлять срочников на войну. На деле всё иначе* [The authorities are once again promising not to send conscripts to war. In reality, things are different.], 23 September 2025, [url](#); Huseyn Aliyev, Online interview with EUAA, 7 October 2025

<sup>851</sup> Artem Klyga, Online interview with EUAA, 8 October 2025

<sup>852</sup> ISW, *Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment*, September 29, 2025, 29 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>853</sup> *Hochu zhit*, About the project 'I want to live', n.d., [url](#)

<sup>854</sup> Proekt 'Hochu zhit', X (Former Twitter), 17 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>855</sup> Vot Tak, *Срочники, которые не уйдут на дембель. На войне в Украине погибли 217 российских солдат-призывников* [Conscripts who will not be discharged. 217 Russian conscripts have died in the war in Ukraine], 17 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>856</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europe, *Власти снова обещают не отправлять срочников на войну. На деле всё иначе* [The authorities are once again promising not to send conscripts to war. In reality, things are different.], 23 September 2025, [url](#); Huseyn Aliyev, Online interview with EUAA, 7 October 2025; Artem Klyga, Online interview with EUAA, 8 October 2025

<sup>857</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europe, *Власти снова обещают не отправлять срочников на войну. На деле всё иначе* [The authorities are once again promising not to send conscripts to war. In reality, things are different.], 23 September 2025, [url](#)



roles, such as shooting down drones or digging trenches. Still, reports of such deployments by conscripts are not widespread.<sup>858</sup>

### **b) Pressure to sign contracts**

The Russian authorities reportedly view mandatory military service as a source for recruiting contract soldiers.<sup>859</sup> The practice of forcing conscripts into signing contracts began in late 2022<sup>860</sup> and intensified in 2024, becoming widespread across military units in Russia.<sup>861</sup> Sources reported on conscripts being persuaded,<sup>862</sup> pressured and coerced,<sup>863</sup> including by means of torture,<sup>864</sup> or deceived into signing contracts.<sup>865</sup> As noted by UN Special Rapporteur Mariana Katzarova, 'in at least one case, a person was shot dead for refusing to sign the contract.'<sup>866</sup> According to Artem Klyga, these practices remain widespread, with no change observed after retaking of Kursk region by the Russian army. Once a contract is signed, even if it was signed on the first day of the military service, conscripts, in the status of contract soldiers, can be immediately deployed to the frontlines.<sup>867</sup>

Pressure on conscripts to sign contracts reportedly began upon their departure to the military unit,<sup>868</sup> and included threats to their lives<sup>869</sup> or disciplinary punishment.<sup>870</sup> As noted by Artem Klyga, for example, in Tatarstan, conscripts were told they could stay in headquarters if they signed a contract; otherwise, they would be sent to Belgorod region and forced to sign contracts anyway.<sup>871</sup> In Bashkortostan, military officials reportedly urged conscripts to sign contracts at the assembly point, threatening them with deployment to the frontline, to

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<sup>858</sup> Artem Klyga, Online interview with EUAA, 8 October 2025

<sup>859</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europe, Как их всех загребли. Три года мобилизации [How they were all rounded up. Three years of mobilization], 22 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>860</sup> Huseyn Aliyev, Online interview with EUAA, 7 October 2025

<sup>861</sup> Verstka, «Вас убьют, других пришлют». Как срочников принуждают подписывать контракты [If they'll kill you, they'll send others.' How conscripts are forced to sign contracts], 26 June 2025, [url](#); Artem Klyga, Online interview with EUAA, 8 October 2025

<sup>862</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europe, Как их всех загребли. Три года мобилизации [How they were all rounded up. Three years of mobilization], 22 September 2025, [url](#); Artem Klyga, Online interview with EUAA, 8 October 2025

<sup>863</sup> RFE/RL, Putin's Broken Promise: Young Russian Conscripts Dying In Ukraine Invasion, 19 March 2025, [url](#); Prizyv k sovesti et al, Resistance during the 2025 Spring Conscription, August 2025, [url](#), p. 2; Novaya Gazeta Europe, Как их всех загребли. Три года мобилизации [How they were all rounded up. Three years of mobilization], 22 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>864</sup> 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. 97

<sup>865</sup> Prizyv k sovesti et al, Resistance during the 2025 Spring Conscription, August 2025, [url](#), p. 2; 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. 97; Novaya Gazeta Europe, Как их всех загребли. Три года мобилизации [How they were all rounded up. Three years of mobilization], 22 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>866</sup> 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. 97

<sup>867</sup> Artem Klyga, Online interview with EUAA, 8 October 2025

<sup>868</sup> RFE/RL, Putin's Broken Promise: Young Russian Conscripts Dying In Ukraine Invasion, 19 March 2025, [url](#); Verstka, «Вас убьют, других пришлют». Как срочников принуждают подписывать контракты [If they'll kill you, they'll send others.' How conscripts are forced to sign contracts], 26 June 2025, [url](#); Artem Klyga, Online interview with EUAA, 8 October 2025

<sup>869</sup> Sibir.Realii, "Запугивали обнулением". Как российских срочников заставляют подписывать контракты [Intimidated with "zeroing" How Russian conscripts are forced to sign contracts], 28 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>870</sup> Artem Klyga, Online interview with EUAA, 8 October 2025

<sup>871</sup> Artem Klyga, Online interview with EUAA, 8 October 2025



participate in so-called ‘meat assaults’ – infantry-led assaults with high death tolls – if they refused.<sup>872</sup>

In addition, there are reports of conscript’s signatures being forged on the contracts with the MoD.<sup>873</sup> According to Huseyn Aliyev, this practice seems to have replaced the use of direct pressure and coercion observed in 2024, which included violence, verbal intimidation, and public shaming of conscripts at the end of their service. Forging signatures ‘has become systematised and standardised,’ as it does not require any sort of intimidation or physical violence. Therefore, commanders appear to ‘have the green light to sign contracts on behalf of conscripts’, particularly when meeting recruitment quotas.<sup>874</sup> In February 2025, a military prosecutor’s office of a garrison in Chelyabinsk oblast reportedly confirmed that conscripts of five military units were misled about contract conditions, coerced or deceived into signing contracts, and, in some cases, had their signatures forged. Yet, the contracts remained in force,<sup>875</sup> as the military prosecutor’s office did not implement the mechanism for reversing the conscripts’ status.<sup>876</sup>

### 4.3. Contractual military service

Following the conclusion of the ‘partial mobilisation’ in late 2022,<sup>877</sup> the Russian authorities shifted to recruitment of contract soldiers for the regular armed forces, military personnel by private military contractors, and volunteer fighters for diverse irregular forces.<sup>878</sup> Contract service is widely advertised both in cities and remote villages, as well as online,<sup>879</sup> appealing to patriotism and sense of duty.<sup>880</sup>

The recruitment process has largely been based on various financial incentives,<sup>881</sup> making the war effort costly for the state to sustain.<sup>882</sup> In June 2025, BBC News Russian service reported that 37 Russian federal subjects were offering one-off enlistment bonuses exceeding 2 million rubles [20 500 euros], with the highest – 2.6 million rubles [26 650 euros] paid in Moscow and

<sup>872</sup> Shkola prizyvnika, Telegram, 2 June 2025, [url](#); Artem Klyga, Online interview with EUAA, 8 October 2025

<sup>873</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europe, Как их всех загребли. Три года мобилизации [How they were all rounded up. Three years of mobilization], 22 September 2025, [url](#); Artem Klyga, Online interview with EUAA, 8 October 2025

<sup>874</sup> Huseyn Aliyev, Online interview with EUAA, 7 October 2025

<sup>875</sup> Shkola prizyvnika, Telegram, 13 February 2025, [url](#); Artem Klyga, Online interview with EUAA, 8 October 2025 and email communication with EUAA, 31 October 2025

<sup>876</sup> Artem Klyga, Online interview with EUAA, 8 October 2025 and email communication with EUAA, 31 October 2025

<sup>877</sup> Gorenburg D. et al, The Future Russian Way or War. Part 1: State Mobilisation, SCCEUS, Report No 11 2025, 26 September 2025, [url](#), pp. 4, 11

<sup>878</sup> Gorenburg D. et al, The Future Russian Way or War. Part 1: State Mobilisation, SCCEUS, Report No 11 2025, 26 September 2025, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>879</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europe, Как их всех загребли. Три года мобилизации [How they were all rounded up. Three years of mobilization], 22 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>880</sup> Gorenburg D. et al, The Future Russian Way or War. Part 1: State Mobilisation, SCCEUS, Report No 11 2025, 26 September 2025, [url](#), pp. 4, 11

<sup>881</sup> ISW, Russian Force Generation And Technological Adaptations Update April 30, 2025, 30 April 2025, [url](#); Gorenburg D. et al, The Future Russian Way or War. Part 1: State Mobilisation, SCCEUS, Report No 11 2025, 26 September 2025, [url](#), pp. 4, 11; Gogov, Выплаты военнослужащим при заключении контракта в 2025 году [Payments to military personnel upon signing a contract in 2025], 30 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>882</sup> ISW, Russian Force Generation And Technological Adaptations Update June 18, 2025, 18 June 2025, [url](#)



Tula oblasts.<sup>883</sup> Newly recruited contract soldiers have been also offered high salaries and other financial benefits, such as ‘preferential tax status’ and writing off loans up to 10 million rubles [102 500 euros].<sup>884</sup>

In June 2025, Verstka reported that the authorities were offering payments to police officers and ordinary citizens for recruiting volunteers.<sup>885</sup> Alongside financial incentives, the authorities have also used ‘deception and indirect coercion’, with reports that some individuals were ‘lured into signing contracts’ with promises that they would ‘serve as cooks or drivers.’<sup>886</sup> Moreover, military contracts are offered to job seekers, with employment centres offering vacancies in the military.<sup>887</sup> Furthermore, authorities grant Russian citizenship to foreigners – as well as to their families – through a fast-track process if they sign a one-year military contract.<sup>888</sup> Since April 2024, police has reportedly conducted frequent mass detentions of migrants and individuals with acquired Russian citizenship, to force them to conscript into obligatory military service or to sign a contract with the army, threatening them with revocation of Russian citizenship.<sup>889</sup>

According to IStories, based on Russia’s federal budget expenditures, up to 407 200 individuals signed contracts with the MoD.<sup>890</sup> Without indicating a source, researcher Dmitry Gorenburg mentioned 450 000 contracts soldiers recruited the same year.<sup>891</sup> As reported by IStories, 89 600 individuals signed contracts in the first quarter of 2025<sup>892</sup> and 37 900 in the second quarter of 2025.<sup>893</sup> In an interview with EUAA, a human rights lawyer noted that contract recruitment campaigns have been winding down, which is also reflected in the reduction of regional bonus payments for signing contracts. The MoD appears to be less intent on recruiting contract soldiers compared to 2023 and 2024, with individuals with criminal records being increasingly denied deployment to Ukraine, even when they volunteer. Previously there have been no such rejections.<sup>894</sup>

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<sup>883</sup> BBC News Russian Service, Не хватит на иномарку. Как российские власти повышают выплаты контрактникам на войну в Украине [Not enough to buy a foreign car. How Russian authorities are increasing payments to contract soldiers fighting in Ukraine], 16 June 2025, [url](#); ISW, Russian Force Generation And Technological Adaptations Update June 18, 2025, 18 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>884</sup> Gorenburg D. et al, The Future Russian Way or War. Part 1: State Mobilisation, SCCEUS, Report No 11 2025, 26 September 2025, [url](#), pp. 4-5, 11

<sup>885</sup> Verstka, «Приведи друга», или как россияне зарабатывают, отправляя друг друга на войну [‘Bring a friend,’ or how Russians earn money by sending each other to war], 11 June 2025, [url](#); ISW, Russian Force Generation And Technological Adaptations Update June 18, 2025, 18 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>886</sup> Gorenburg D. et al, The Future Russian Way or War. Part 1: State Mobilisation, SCCEUS, Report No 11 2025, 26 September 2025, [url](#), p. 11

<sup>887</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europe, Как их всех загребли. Три года мобилизации [How they were all rounded up. Three years of mobilization], 22 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>888</sup> Bahovadinova, M and Borisova, E. Weaponising naturalised citizenship: mitigating risks of war mobilisation in Putin’s Russia, Citizenship Studies, 29 (1-2), 1 April 2025, [url](#)

<sup>889</sup> Prizyv k sovesti et al, Resistance during the 2025 Spring Conscription, August 2025, [url](#), p. 16

<sup>890</sup> IStories, Up to 407 Thousand Russians Signed Contracts with the Defense Ministry in 2024, 30 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>891</sup> Gorenburg D. et al, The Future Russian Way or War. Part 1: State Mobilisation, SCCEUS, Report No 11 2025, 26 September 2025, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>892</sup> IStories, В первом квартале 2025 года контракт с Минобороны подписали почти 90 тыс. россиян [In the first quarter of 2025, nearly 90,000 Russians signed contracts with the Ministry of Defence], 9 June 2025, [url](#); ISW, Russian Force Generation And Technological Adaptations Update June 18, 2025, 18 June 2025, [url](#)

<sup>893</sup> IStories, In the Second Quarter of 2025, 37,900 Russians Signed Contracts with the Defense Ministry — 2.5 Times Fewer Than a Year Ago, 18 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>894</sup> Human rights lawyer, Online interview with EUAA, 23 October 2025



The largest number of contract military personnel serve directly under the MoD.<sup>895</sup> According to the presidential decree on ‘partial mobilisation,’ the contracts of all contract soldiers (*kontraktniki*) and those who were mobilised under the decree remain in force until the end of the ‘special military operation’.<sup>896</sup> For both groups, since autumn 2022, leaving the military service has been possible only because of serious health issues,<sup>897</sup> such as injuries rendering a person temporarily or permanently unfit for the service,<sup>898</sup> if a person has been sentenced to a real prison term.<sup>899</sup> As noted by Huseyn Aliyev, there are individuals who were mobilised or joined the army as volunteers in 2022 who still continue to serve.<sup>900</sup>

In contrast, former members of the Wagner group or other PMCs, which are now under control of the MoD, and especially those recruited from the prison system, signed one-year contracts guaranteeing that they would be released from the military service – as well as from the prison sentences – after they complete their contracts. These commitments have largely been fulfilled, both by the Wagner group and the PMCs that replaced it.<sup>901</sup>

### 4.3.1. Private military companies

Russia has numerous volunteer formations or private military companies (PMCs), many of which were created after Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. In June 2023, the MoD ordered that all of them sign contracts with the MoD.<sup>902</sup> PMCs are actively engaged in recruiting volunteers for various formations and combat units and provide ‘tens of thousands’ of combatants in the war in Ukraine.<sup>903</sup>

As noted by Huseyn Aliyev, since 2024 all PMCs are registered with the MoD. They became ‘quite firmly embedded within formal institutional framework’, are tightly controlled by MoD, and their financing comes ‘almost directly’ from the MoD. While in general the contracts offered by PMCs are similar to those of the MoD, they offer higher one-off payments and monthly contract payments than those of the MoD and provide much more flexible service conditions.<sup>904</sup>

Some volunteer formations, such as ‘Rusich’ and the ‘Russian Imperial League’ use ‘nationalist sentiments’ in their recruitment efforts.<sup>905</sup> Other groups which use pro-Russian patriotic

<sup>895</sup> Huseyn Aliyev, Online interview with EUAA, 7 October 2025

<sup>896</sup> Russia, Указ Президента РФ от 21.09.2022 N 647 "Об объявлении частичной мобилизации в Российской Федерации" [Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 647 of 21 September 2022 ‘On the declaration of partial mobilisation in the Russian Federation’], 21 September 2022, [url](#); Gorenburg D. et al, The Future Russian Way or War. Part 1: State Mobilisation, SCEEUS, Report No 11 2025, 26 September 2025, [url](#), p. 11; Huseyn Aliyev, Online Interview with EUAA, 7 October 2025

<sup>897</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europe, Право уклониться. Как изменилась работа тех, кто помогает призывникам [The right to evade. How the work of those who help conscripts has changed], 1 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>898</sup> Huseyn Aliyev, Online interview with EUAA, 7 October 2025

<sup>899</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europe, Право уклониться. Как изменилась работа тех, кто помогает призывникам [The right to evade. How the work of those who help conscripts has changed], 1 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>900</sup> Huseyn Aliyev, Online interview with EUAA, 7 October 2025

<sup>901</sup> Huseyn Aliyev, Online interview with EUAA, 7 October 2025

<sup>902</sup> Larsen, K. P., The rise and fall of the Wagner group, DIIS, 9 January 2025, [url](#)

<sup>903</sup> Gorenburg D. et al, The Future Russian Way or War. Part 1: State Mobilisation, SCEEUS, Report No 11 2025, 26 September 2025, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>904</sup> Huseyn Aliyev, Online interview with EUAA, 7 October 2025

<sup>905</sup> Gorenburg D. et al, The Future Russian Way or War. Part 1: State Mobilisation, SCEEUS, Report No 11 2025, 26 September 2025, [url](#), p. 11



rhetoric are the militias Union of Donbas Volunteers, PMC Tsar Wolves (*Tsarskie Volki*<sup>906</sup>), and units of the All-Russian Cossack Society.<sup>907</sup> The latter is an umbrella organisation for various Cossack units: it is integrated into Russia's Combat Army Reserve (BARS) system and reportedly consists of 18 battalions comprising 25 000 members.<sup>908</sup> One of the brigades of the All-Russian Cossack Society, Don Brigade, has reportedly operated under the PMC Redut, which is also reported to have paid its wages.<sup>909</sup>

As noted by Huseyn Aliyev, 'a whole range' of PMCs remain active in Ukraine, including Espanola and many other small formations. They continue to offer one-year contracts and reportedly respect the contract terms, allowing the recruited personnel to leave service after completion of the contract. More than 20 000 individuals have served under these contracts with various PMCs, and they were subsequently demobilised. Notably, 13 000 former PMCs reportedly received 'veteran status' in 2024.<sup>910</sup>

### 4.3.2. Recruitment of prison inmates

The practice of recruiting prison inmates was first initiated by the Wagner Group,<sup>911</sup> which used convicts in combat operations near Bakhmut in Ukraine,<sup>912</sup> and overtaken by the MoD in 2023.<sup>913</sup>

In October 2024,<sup>914</sup> legislative amendments were adopted to expand the pool for potential recruits, allowing 'criminal suspects, accused persons, and convicts' to 'have their sentences commuted or prosecutions dropped' in exchange for signing military contracts with the MoD.<sup>915</sup> According to the UN Special Rapporteur, Mariana Katzarova, approximately 12 % of all suspects signed contracts to join the military, 'with police officers receiving financial remuneration' for each enlistment. Overall, around 200 000 prison inmates signed contracts, reportedly leading to 'the closure of nearly 80 of the 900 penitentiary institutions as of July 2025.'<sup>916</sup> As noted by researcher Dmitry Gorenburg in September 2025, according to some estimates, 30 % of military recruits have criminal records.<sup>917</sup> Thus, as reported by Novaya Gazeta Europe, the head of Unified Court Press Service of St. Petersburg stated that 287

<sup>906</sup> OpenSanctions, Tsar Wolves, 30 May 2025, [url](#)

<sup>907</sup> Klein, M., Russia's Volunteer Formations: Instruments for Recruitment, Proof of Loyalty or Diffusion of Power? Russian Analytical Digest 323, 2025, [url](#), pp. 20-21, 23

<sup>908</sup> Arnold, R., Kremlin Formalizing Cossack Mobilization Reserve, Eurasia Daily Monitor, The Jamestown Foundation, 2 July 2025, [url](#)

<sup>909</sup> Seltzer, J., Sanctioned Sector Analysis: Russian Private Military Companies (PMCs), 14 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>910</sup> Huseyn Aliyev, Online interview with EUAA, 7 October 2025

<sup>911</sup> Gorenburg D. et al, The Future Russian Way or War. Part 1: State Mobilisation, SCEEUS, Report No 11 2025, 26 September 2025, [url](#), p. 5

<sup>912</sup> Gorenburg D. et al, The Future Russian Way or War. Part 1: State Mobilisation, SCEEUS, Report No 11 2025, 26 September 2025, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>913</sup> Gorenburg D. et al, The Future Russian Way or War. Part 1: State Mobilisation, SCEEUS, Report No 11 2025, 26 September 2025, [url](#), p. 5; Huseyn Aliyev, Online interview with EUAA, 7 October 2025

<sup>914</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europe, Как их всех загребли. Три года мобилизации [How they were all rounded up. Three years of mobilization], 22 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>915</sup> 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. 93

<sup>916</sup> 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. 93

<sup>917</sup> Gorenburg D. et al, The Future Russian Way or War. Part 1: State Mobilisation, SCEEUS, Report No 11 2025, 26 September 2025, [url](#), p. 5



criminal cases were dropped after defendants signed contracts with the MoD. Most of them were charged with drug possessions, fraud, and failure to pay alimony.<sup>918</sup> In November 2024, a former soldier who had been sentenced to 20 years in prison for the murder of 13 people returned to the war in Ukraine after signing a new military contract.<sup>919</sup>

## 4.4. Military recruitment in Chechnya

As noted by Huseyn Aliyev, the Chechen Republic stands out within Russia for its unique interpretation and application of federal laws. Other republics of the North Caucasus largely follow the same practices as elsewhere in the country, while Dagestan's authorities 'have somewhat different approach to mobilisation and conscription', conducting more frequent raids on potential conscripts, compared to other regions in Russia.<sup>920</sup> In contrast, Chechnya is also an outstanding case due to the level of political repression,<sup>921</sup> with all forms of critique being harshly suppressed,<sup>922</sup> with no changes regarding this in 2025.<sup>923</sup>

### 4.4.1. Chechen military units

After Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the head of Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov, significantly expanded Chechen military formations,<sup>924</sup> reportedly establishing ten additional units,<sup>925</sup> including new regiments and battalions as well as 'volunteer' Akhmat unit, which are subordinated to the Russian MoD.<sup>926</sup> In addition, a new regiment and a separate OMON (Special Police Mobile Unit) detachment were established within the National Guard (*Rosgrvardiya*).<sup>927</sup> The military and paramilitary Chechen units are colloquially known as 'the *kadyrovtsy*'.<sup>928</sup> According to Huseyn Aliyev, there are roughly nine different Akhmat regiments, with some of them being part of *Rosgrvardiya* and others being under MoD and the Ministry of Interior (Mol). At least seven or eight of these units have reportedly been deployed to Ukraine and are either operating directly within the country or on Ukraine-Russian

<sup>918</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europe, Как их всех загребли. Три года мобилизации [How they were all rounded up. Three years of mobilization], 22 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>919</sup> 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. 94

<sup>920</sup> Huseyn Aliyev, Online interview with EUAA, 7 October 2025

<sup>921</sup> Huseyn Aliyev, Online interview with EUAA, 7 October 2025

<sup>922</sup> HRW, Moscow Plays a Weak Hand on Lawlessness in Chechnya, 9 February 2022, [url](#); Rondeli Foundation, Republic of Chechnya: "Kadyrov's Chechnya" or a Federal Subject of Russia, 11 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>923</sup> Huseyn Aliyev, Online interview with EUAA, 7 October 2025

<sup>924</sup> Memorial, Кадыров: «призвать добровольно» на войну 84 тысячи человек [Kadyrov: 'voluntarily call up' 84,000 people for war], 20 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>925</sup> Moscow Times (The), Chechnya's Kadyrov Nearly Triples Loyal Military Units During Ukraine War – Proekt, 12 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>926</sup> Memorial, Кадыров: «призвать добровольно» на войну 84 тысячи человек [Kadyrov: 'voluntarily call up' 84,000 people for war], 20 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>927</sup> Memorial, Кадыров: «призвать добровольно» на войну 84 тысячи человек [Kadyrov: 'voluntarily call up' 84,000 people for war], 20 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>928</sup> Moscow Times (The), Chechnya's Kadyrov Nearly Triples Loyal Military Units During Ukraine War – Proekt, 12 December 2024, [url](#)



border.<sup>929</sup> In March 2025, a new regiment, Akhmat-Kavkaz, subordinated to MoD, was created.<sup>930</sup>

The Akhmat special forces are often viewed as Ramzan's Kadyrov's private army<sup>931</sup> and have been deployed to fight in Ukraine since the start of the war in February 2022.<sup>932</sup> After the disbandment of the Wagner group, some of its fighters transferred entire units to Akhmat battalions, due to reluctance to serve under the MoD,<sup>933</sup> with the Akhmat Battalion commander stating in October 2023 that it was a 'mass influx.'<sup>934</sup> In April 2024, Ramzan Kadyrov announced that another 3 000 former Wagner fighters were expected to join the Akhmad battalion.<sup>935</sup> From late 2022, the Chechen forces in Ukraine have increasingly assumed rear-area tasks, such as policing, supporting Russia-appointed local authorities, and providing border security duties.<sup>936</sup> For instance, several Chechen units have been deployed in or around Mariupol, where they are tasked with so-called implementation of 'law and order.'<sup>937</sup>

#### 4.4.2. Forced recruitment

Chechen authorities employ distinct methods of military recruitment, compared to other parts of Russia,<sup>938</sup> with cases of forced recruitment reported since summer 2022.<sup>939</sup> As noted by Memorial, while Ramzan Kadyrov claims that Chechnya deploys to Ukraine 'volunteers' and in numbers that 'fulfilled the plan,' Chechen security resort to such methods as pressure, threats, kidnapping, violence, fabrication of criminal cases, blackmailing, and extortion.<sup>940</sup> Moreover, the authorities have reportedly also used such methods as kidnappings of relatives and threatened to 'dishonour' female family members of men refusing to join the military, as reported by the opposition movement NIYSO.<sup>941</sup>

Longstanding practices also include forced recruitment of prison inmates,<sup>942</sup> and intimidation of suspects accused of various minor offences, ranging from traffic violations to alcohol

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<sup>929</sup> Huseyn Aliyev, Online interview with EUAA, 7 October 2025

<sup>930</sup> Kavkaz.Realii, В Чечне сформирован новый полк в составе Минобороны России – "Ахмат-Кавказ". С ним, заявил Кадыров, "можно дойти до Киева" [A new regiment has been formed in Chechnya as part of the Russian Ministry of Defence – 'Akhmat-Kavkaz'. With it, Kadyrov said, 'we can reach Kiev'], 18 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>931</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europe, Over 3,000 former Wagner mercenaries to join Chechen leader's special forces unit, 6 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>932</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europe, Over 3,000 former Wagner mercenaries to join Chechen leader's special forces unit, 6 April 2024, [url](#); Youngman, M., Chechnya's war on Ukraine, Ridl, 5 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>933</sup> New York Times (The), Inside the Chechen Units Helping to Fight Russia's War, 16 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>934</sup> Meduza, Former Wagner Group mercenaries are joining Chechnya's Akhmat battalion, says Chechen commander, 28 October 2023, [url](#)

<sup>935</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europe, Over 3,000 former Wagner mercenaries to join Chechen leader's special forces unit, 6 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>936</sup> Youngman, M., Chechnya's war on Ukraine, Ridl, 5 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>937</sup> Huseyn Aliyev, Online interview with EUAA, 7 October 2025

<sup>938</sup> Huseyn Aliyev, Online interview with EUAA, 7 October 2025

<sup>939</sup> Insider (The), "They pointed at some woman and said I'd been caught red-handed": How Chechen security services honeytrap men into going to war, 25 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>940</sup> Memorial, Кадыров: «призвать добровольно» на войну 84 тысячи человек [Kadyrov: 'voluntarily call up' 84,000 people for war], 20 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>941</sup> Insider (The), "They pointed at some woman and said I'd been caught red-handed": How Chechen security services honeytrap men into going to war, 25 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>942</sup> Huseyn Aliyev, Online interview with EUAA, 7 October 2025



consumption (which is formally prohibited in Chechnya)<sup>943</sup> and drug use<sup>944</sup> to petty crimes, such as public disturbances.<sup>945</sup> ‘Volunteering’ to serve in Ukraine is routinely presented as an opportunity of repentance.<sup>946</sup> The authorities have also pressured critics of Ramzan Kadyrov and LGBTIQ persons to either enlist for military service or face imprisonment.<sup>947</sup> Among people subjected to forced recruitment are also relatives and family members of opposition figures, including those who are abroad. Some of them were in their late 50s or 60s, ‘indicating that there is no age limit.’<sup>948</sup>

Recruitment efforts in Chechnya have been heavily driven by certain recruitment quotas assigned to law enforcement agencies.<sup>949</sup> In October 2024, police stations and traffic police units were tasked with recruiting 20 – 50 volunteers each.<sup>950</sup> According to activists, some agencies which have exceeded the quota used group chats to exchange recruits for 100 000 or 200 000 rubles [1 025 – 2 050 euros] among themselves.<sup>951</sup>

Security forces reportedly use arbitrary detention of men, stopping cars for alleged traffic violation<sup>952</sup> or for travelling together with a woman who is not a relative (staged by the law enforcement officers)<sup>953</sup> or detaining men of military age at the borders with other republics of the North Caucasus to check their phones, resulting in their transfer to military unit deployment sites.<sup>954</sup>

<sup>943</sup> Insider (The), “They pointed at some woman and said I’d been caught red-handed”: How Chechen security services honeytrap men into going to war, 25 September 2025, [url](#); Huseyn Aliyev, Online interview with EUAA, 7 October 2025; Caucasian Knot, Human rights activists have confirmed the practice sending Chechen residents to the SVO for minor violations, 21 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>944</sup> Insider (The), “They pointed at some woman and said I’d been caught red-handed”: How Chechen security services honeytrap men into going to war, 25 September 2025, [url](#); Caucasian Knot, Human rights activists have confirmed the practice sending Chechen residents to the SVO for minor violations, 21 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>945</sup> Huseyn Aliyev, Online interview with EUAA, 7 October 2025

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<sup>947</sup> 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. 130

<sup>948</sup> Huseyn Aliyev, Online interview with EUAA, 7 October 2025

<sup>949</sup> Huseyn Aliyev, Online interview with EUAA, 7 October 2025

<sup>950</sup> Memorial, Кадыров: «призвать добровольно» на войну 84 тысячи человек [Kadyrov: ‘voluntarily call up’ 84,000 people for war], 20 December 2024, [url](#); Insider (The), “They pointed at some woman and said I’d been caught red-handed”: How Chechen security services honeytrap men into going to war, 25 September 2025, [url](#)

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<sup>952</sup> Memorial, Кадыров: «призвать добровольно» на войну 84 тысячи человек [Kadyrov: ‘voluntarily call up’ 84,000 people for war], 20 December 2024, [url](#)

<sup>953</sup> Huseyn Aliyev, Online interview with EUAA, 7 October 2025; Insider (The), “They pointed at some woman and said I’d been caught red-handed”: How Chechen security services honeytrap men into going to war, 25 September 2025, [url](#)

<sup>954</sup> Memorial, Кадыров: «призвать добровольно» на войну 84 тысячи человек [Kadyrov: ‘voluntarily call up’ 84,000 people for war], 20 December 2024, [url](#)



## 4.5. Punishments for desertion

### 4.5.1. Desertion from the Russian armed forces

According to UN Special Rapporteur Mariana Katzarova, desertion has become a primary means for individuals to avoid participating in the war in Ukraine, with over 50 000 soldiers – or nearly 10 % of the Russian armed forces in Ukraine – estimated to have deserted since 2022. Furthermore, in 2024, over 16 000 Russian military personnel have reportedly faced prosecution ‘for desertion-related offences with over 13 500 conscripts and contract soldiers convicted.’<sup>955</sup> The number of cases against deserters and those who have left military service without permission, has also risen sharply. Currently, there are tens of thousands of such criminal cases.<sup>956</sup>

As reported by the Ukrainian OSINT project Frontelligence Insight, as of December 2024, most cases of desertion and absence without leave (AWOL) were reported in Russia’s Southern military district,<sup>957</sup> which mostly comprises the North Caucasus<sup>958</sup> as well as the occupied regions of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia<sup>959</sup> (nearly 22 580 cases out of a total of 50 500), followed by the Central military district (nearly 13 800 cases), the Moscow military district (nearly 7 780 cases), the Eastern military district (nearly 3 380 cases), and the Leningrad military district (over 3 050 cases).<sup>960</sup> Furthermore, in mid-October 2025, military intelligence service reported that over 25 000 soldiers and officers of Russia’s Central military district have left their units in the period between November 2024 and July 2025.<sup>961</sup> The Central military district covers the Volga region, the Urals, and Siberia.<sup>962</sup>

### 4.5.2. Punishments under the Criminal Code

Under Russian law, desertion is defined as the unauthorised abandonment of a military unit or place of service for the purpose of evading military duties and is punishable by 7 to 15 years in prison, with the maximum prison term being applied during mobilisation, martial law, wartime or during an armed conflict or combat operations (Article 338 of the Criminal Code).<sup>963</sup> In addition, AWOL under the same circumstances is punishable by a prison term of up to seven years (Article 337 of the Criminal Code).<sup>964</sup>

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<sup>955</sup> 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. 91

<sup>956</sup> Human rights lawyer, Online interview with EUAA, 24 October 2025

<sup>957</sup> Frontelligence Insight, Desertions and Loss Ratios: Trends and Forecasts, 5 March 2025, [url](#)

<sup>958</sup> Rondeli Foundation, Key Agencies, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>959</sup> Militartnyi, Russia Creates Two New Military Districts in Reorganization Move, 26 February 2025, [url](#)

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<sup>961</sup> TPV World, Ukrainian intelligence says over 25,000 Russian troops deserted since late 2024, 18 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>962</sup> GlobalSecurity.org, Central Military District, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>963</sup> Russia, Уголовный кодекс Российской Федерации от 13.06.1996 N 63-ФЗ (ред. от 31.07.2025) (с изм. и доп., вступ. в силу с 01.09.2025) [The Criminal Code of the Russian Federation of 13.06.1996 N 63-FZ (with amendments and additions, effective from 1.09.2025)], 2025, [url](#), Art. 338

<sup>964</sup> Russia, Уголовный кодекс Российской Федерации от 13.06.1996 N 63-ФЗ (ред. от 31.07.2025) (с изм. и доп., вступ. в силу с 01.09.2025) [The Criminal Code of the Russian Federation of 13.06.1996 N 63-FZ (with amendments and additions, effective from 1.09.2025)], 2025, [url](#), Art. 337



As noted by The Insider, Russia restricted public access to detailed statistics on crimes against military service in February 2023, following secrecy orders by the FSB and the MoD. However, based on data from over 100 garrison courts, between February 2022 and July 2025, courts convicted nearly 18 500 individuals for desertion and for being AWOL, including 8 561 in 2024 and nearly 4 679 in the first seven months of 2025. The vast majority – approximately 17 500 – persons were convicted for unauthorised absence, while convictions for desertion amounted to fewer than 1 000. In addition, 94 individuals were punished for evading military service by feigning illness. Many cases are handled by courts in the occupied territories, for which there are no publicly available data.<sup>965</sup>

Sources noted that authorities tend to prosecute military personnel for AWOL rather than for desertion,<sup>966</sup> as the punishment for AWOL can be a suspended sentence, enabling the return of the individual to military service. Furthermore, persons convicted of AWOL are not included in official casualty statistics, unlike those convicted for desertion.<sup>967</sup> In practice, as noted by the human rights group *Prizyv k sovesti* (Appeal to Conscience) which focuses on military issues, convictions of AWOL usually result in 5 year-prison term in a general-regime colony, with shorter absences leading to lighter sentences. Reportedly, some military personnel have deliberately surrendered after being absent for a period between two days and one month to mitigate punishment. There were no known cases of anyone convicted of AWOL while serving on the frontline. Moreover, since April 2024, personnel accused of AWOL have been more often forcibly returned to the frontline even with pending criminal cases, while previously they were pressured to return in exchange for a suspended sentence.<sup>968</sup> A human rights defender interviewed by Novaya Gazeta Europe, similarly, noted that in many instances deserters and those gone AWOL are forcibly returned to the front, often being sent on assault missions. At the same time, as noted by the source, the authorities are reluctant to prosecute these individuals under the law, with only around 1 000 cases initiated per month.<sup>969</sup>

For those who refuse to fight, including wounded soldiers, the authorities apply the criminal charge of ‘disobeying orders’<sup>970</sup> (Article 332 of the Criminal Code) which is punishable by up to ten years in prison.<sup>971</sup> According to *Prizyv k sovesti*, the authorities treat conscientious refusal to participate in the so-called ‘special military operation’ as a criminal offence. In the best-case

<sup>965</sup> Insider (the), Не менее 18,5 тысячи человек осудили в России за дезертирство и самовольное оставление части за время полномасштабной войны в Украине [At least 18,500 people have been convicted in Russia for desertion and unauthorised absence from their units during the full-scale war in Ukraine], 19 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>966</sup> Mediazona, When soldiers say no. Hundreds of Russian servicemen face trial in defiance of Ukraine deployment, Mediazona study reveals, 11 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>967</sup> Insider (the), Не менее 18,5 тысячи человек осудили в России за дезертирство и самовольное оставление части за время полномасштабной войны в Украине [At least 18,500 people have been convicted in Russia for desertion and unauthorised absence from their units during the full-scale war in Ukraine], 19 August 2025, [url](#)

<sup>968</sup> 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](#)

<sup>969</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europe, Право уклониться. Как изменилась работа тех, кто помогает призывникам [The right to evade. How the work of those who help conscripts has changed], 1 October 2025, [url](#)

<sup>970</sup> 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

<sup>971</sup> Russia, Уголовный кодекс Российской Федерации от 13.06.1996 N 63-ФЗ (ред. от 31.07.2025) (с изм. и доп., вступ. в силу с 01.09.2025) [The Criminal Code of the Russian Federation of 13.06.1996 N 63-FZ (with amendments and additions, effective from 1.09.2025)], 2025, [url](#), Art. 332



scenario, individuals can receive a relatively lenient sentence of two to three years in a settlement colony, which also results in formal dismissal from military service.<sup>972</sup>

### 4.5.3. Informal punishments

Refusal to continue military service as a contract soldier<sup>973</sup> as well as refusal to comply with military orders<sup>974</sup> can also be punished informally.<sup>975</sup> 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 who try to leave the war.<sup>976</sup> 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.<sup>977</sup>

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 whether 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.<sup>978</sup>

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.<sup>979</sup>

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<sup>972</sup> 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](#)

<sup>973</sup> Huseyn Aliyev, Online interview with EUAA, 7 October 2025

<sup>974</sup> 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

<sup>975</sup> 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

<sup>976</sup> 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

<sup>977</sup> 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](#)

<sup>978</sup> Huseyn Aliyev, Online interview with EUAA, 7 October 2025

<sup>979</sup> 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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## Annex 2: Terms of Reference

The research should **focus on the period between 1 November 2024 – 1 November 2025**. Limited relevant information covering **November 2025** to be added where available.

### **Political opposition, activists, minority groups, women**

- Political context and developments
- Legal context and its impact on freedom of speech and freedom of assembly
- Treatment of specific profiles
  - Political opponents
  - Journalists
  - Human rights defenders and lawyers
  - Activists, including environmental activists
  - LGBTIQ
  - Religious minorities
  - Women

### **Military Service**

- Overview of the armed forces
- Compulsory military service
- Contract military service
- Military service in the North Caucasus, particularly in Chechnya
- Consequences for desertion



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