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Repressions Report. April 2024

Русская версия

The death of a volunteer who helped Ukrainian refugees, new criminal cases against «foreign agents» and a ban on a non-existent movement. OVD-Info talks about these and other important news in a new chronicle of political persecution.

In early April, Alexander Demidenko, a volunteer who helped Ukrainian refugees return to their homeland, **died** in a pre-trial detention centre in Belgorod. In November, after the kidnapping by members of the «Ahmat» battalion (a military unit that operates under the aegis of the Chechen Republic) and an administrative arrest, Alexander was taken into custody as a suspect in a case of illegal possession of explosives. The local department of Federal Penitentiary Service claims that Demidenko committed suicide. This version raised doubts among his relatives: the day before, he asked his son to bring him a parcel for his transfer to St. Petersburg. One day before his death, a criminal case was **opened** against Demidenko on charges of treason.

PERSECUTION DUE TO ANTI-WAR POSITION

>900

people faced persecution due to their anti-war position by the end of April 2024

>19

sentences imposed on opponents of the war in April 2024

People convicted and imprisoned because of their anti-war position regularly face pressure in places of imprisonment: gruelling **transfers**, **refusal** of medical care, **use** of dangerous medications, **violence** from fellow inmates. A Barnaul journalist Maria Ponomarenko, convicted on charges of spreading «fake facts» about the Russian army, went on a **hunger strike** after yet another round of abuse in a pre-trial detention centre. After this, she was placed in solitary confinement.

Meanwhile, even participation in a street survey can become a reason for prosecution: in April, a Moscow resident Yuri Kokhovets was **found guilty** on the same charges after he participated in a street survey by Radio Svoboda and condemned the war against Ukraine. OVD-Info regularly updates **infographics** on people who have faced criminal prosecution because of their anti-war position.

5

5 years of forced labor were assigned to a Moscow resident who participated in a street survey by "Radio Free Europe"

REPRESSIVE LEGISLATION

In early April, the «Spravedlivaya Rossiya» (Just Russia) party **withdrew** a bill banning «foreign agents» from participating in elections and holding official positions for revision.

A month later, the lower house of parliament adopted a law limiting the passive suffrage of «foreign agents.» According to the document, «foreign agents» and persons included in the Rosfinmonitoring list (formally known as the Federal Financial Monitoring Service of the Russian Federation, is a government agency responsible for combating money laundering and financing terrorism within Russia) will not be able to participate in elections as candidates, as well as be observers, authorized representatives, and proxies of candidates.

The law-makers also intend to prohibit people who were prosecuted under administrative law on charges of propaganda or **demonstration of «extremist» symbols** and the **distribution of «extremist» materials** from being voting members of the election commission. OVD-Info regularly updates compilations of politically motivated cases of prosecution for the following reasons: saving pictures, reposting, even simply **mentioning** Alexei Navalny.

«FOREIGN AGENTS» AND «UNDESIRABLE ORGANISATIONS»

«Foreign agents»

55* «foreign agents» were added to the corresponding list by the Ministry of Justice since the beginning of 2024



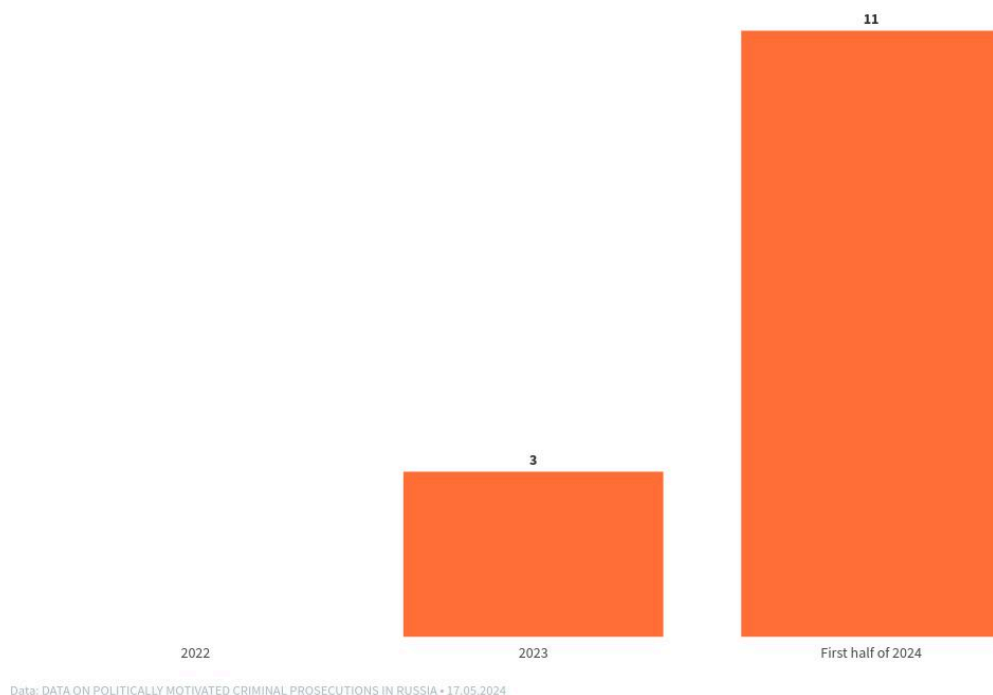
Данные: [Инотека](#) • На 1 мая 2024

*в графике не учитываются общества с ограниченной ответственностью, которые «иноагенты» обязаны создавать для подачи отчетов в Минюст

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In April, the list of «foreign agents» was expanded twice: now it also includes **Mikhail Weller** (a writer), **Asya Kazantseva** (a popularizer of science), journalists **Ilya Barabanov** and **Ivan Filippov**, **Alexandra Tatulova** (a businesswoman), **Nikolai Kuzmin** (a politician) and **Ivan Astashin** (a human rights activist) as well as the **Russian Socialist Movement** (RSD). RSD activists later **announced** the dissolution of the organisation due to it being added to the register.

More cases on charges of «the failure to comply with the duties of a „foreign agent“» are being opened in Russia



Data: [DATA ON POLITICALLY MOTIVATED CRIMINAL PROSECUTIONS IN RUSSIA](#) • 17.05.2024

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At least 14 criminal cases under the article on «failure to comply with the duties of a 'foreign agent'» have become known since the beginning of 2024. In April, the media reported about the initiation of such a case against journalist Andrei Zakharov, and in early May, rapper Oxymiron (Miron Fedorov) was declared wanted under this article. Earlier such cases were brought against femme activist Darya Serenko and journalist Alexander Nevzorov. A criminal case under the second part of this article can be initiated if a person has previously been brought to administrative responsibility twice because of non-compliance with «foreign agency» obligations. In 2023, the number of court judgements under the relevant administrative article increased sharply.

Journalist Alsu Kurmasheva, who is **charged** under the third part of the same article (failure to submit information to the Ministry of Justice for inclusion of herself in the register of «foreign agents»), has been in a pre-trial detention centre in Kazan since October. The law enforcers claim that Kurmasheva received information about mobilised teachers at a local university. She faces up to five years in prison on this charge.

«Undesirable» organisations

About **33** new «undesirable» organisation became known at the beginning of the 2024



In April, the list of «undesirable» organisations was extended to include Feminist Anti-War Resistance, the Anti-War Community of Antalya (an organisation of Russian activists who emigrated to Turkey), two Canadian schools of international politics (Munk School at the University of Toronto and Norman Paterson School at Carleton University), the Russian-Canadian Democratic Commonwealth, Friedrich Naumann and Boris Nemtsov foundations. The Ukrainian human rights organisation Centre for Civil Liberties, which won the Nobel Prize in 2022 (along with Belarusian human rights activist Ales Bialiatski and the Russian Memorial), was also deemed «undesirable» in Russia.

The activists of the movement «Pomorie is not a rubbish dump!» announced their dissolution due to increased repressions. The reason for their decision was the inclusion of Greenpeace and the World Wildlife Fund, as well as the recognition of the Arkhangelsk environmental «42» movement as a «foreign agent».

«Extremist organisations»

In April, the Ministry of Justice asked the Supreme Court to recognise the «Anti-Russian Separatist Movement» as an extremist organisation. Over the past month, OVD-Info failed to find any information about the existence of such an organisation. We would like to remind you that earlier organisations recognised by the Justice Ministry's lawsuits were, in particular, **thieves' notions**, **LGBT** and **school murders** (banned in Russia as extremist and terrorist ones).



Jehova's Witnesses faced prosecution because of their religious beliefs

Despite the ECHR's demand to stop criminal prosecutions of Jehovah's Witnesses, Russian law enforcers continue to bring cases against followers of the denomination as «extremists». In April alone, new cases against believers in [Karelia](#), [Karachay-Cherkessia](#), [Krasnodar Krai](#), [Saratov Oblast](#) and [Sakhalin](#) became known.

PRESSION ON NAWALNY'S FOLLOWERS

4

4 journalists ended up in jail because of connections to Navalny's structure

7

years in prison given to a programmer from the Moscow region on charges of participating in Navalny's "underground headquarters"

At least 4 journalists — [Antonina Favorskaya](#) (SOTAvision), [Olga Komleva](#) (RusNews), [Sergey Karelin](#) (collaborated with Associated Press, The Guardian, etc.) and [Konstantin Gabov](#) (Reuters) — were imprisoned as suspects in a case against Navalny's followers. Gabov and Karelin are charged with preparing materials for the YouTube channel Navalny LIVE, while Favorskaya is charged with preparing videos for social networks of the politician's structures. It is not known what exactly Komleva is charged with. She herself links her prosecution to the coverage of the [Baymak case](#).

The prosecution of those accused by law enforcers of financing the Anti-Corruption Foundation after the organisation was declared «extremists» continues. In April, such a case was brought against entrepreneur Vitaly Samoilik

from Tyumen. A court in the same city imposed a 300,000-ruble fine on activist Anton Kovrik on similar charges; in Orel, teacher Ilya Startsev was fined 400,000 rubles; and in Irkutsk, local resident Alexei Kamkin was sentenced to three years of probation.

Lilia Chanyшева, the former head of Navalny's headquarters in Ufa, had her sentence increased to 9.5 years in a penal colony at the request of the prosecutor's office. The sentence of activist Rustem Mulyukov, who was tried in the same case with her, was left unchanged, despite the presence of a serious illness.

PERSECUTION OF POLITICIANS, ACTIVISTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCATES

Alexander Chernyshov, the former chairman of the Centre for Historical Memory (the successor to the Perm-based Memorial), was given a three-year suspended sentence in a case of attempted smuggling of cultural property: he was accused of attempting to smuggle the organisation's archive abroad. The prosecutor's office appealed the sentence: the prosecution insists on a real prison term.

A court in Komi has **arrested** four members of the Free Russia Forum (Garry Kasparov, Yevgeniya Chirikova, Gennady Gudkov and Ivan Tyutrin) in absentia in a terrorist association case. It is not known whether the law enforcers consider the Free Russia Forum to be «a terrorist community» or whether they are referring to some other project.

REPRESSIONS AGAINST THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY

Sergei Burtsev, the Minister of Youth Policy in the Samara Region, **resigned** after being publicly accused

of homosexuality by a member of the State Duma Alexander Khinshtein. A few days before posting about Burtsev, Khinshtein **wrote** that the Samara Regional Prosecutor's Office began investigating Denis Leontovich, an employee of the regional agency for the implementation of youth policy, on social media «on the grounds of LGBT propaganda».

The reasons for fines under the «LGBT propaganda» article in April included, among other things, **videos and pictures** saved on VKontakte, the showing of the film «**V for Vendetta**» and **the phrase «the gay renaissance»**.

FREEDOM OF SPEECH-RELATED PERSECUTIONS

Administrative Prosecutions

OVD-Info collects information on politically motivated prosecutions under the articles of the Code of Administrative Offences of **displaying prohibited symbols, distributing extremist materials, inciting hatred and insulting the authorities**. In April, the reasons for such persecution were:

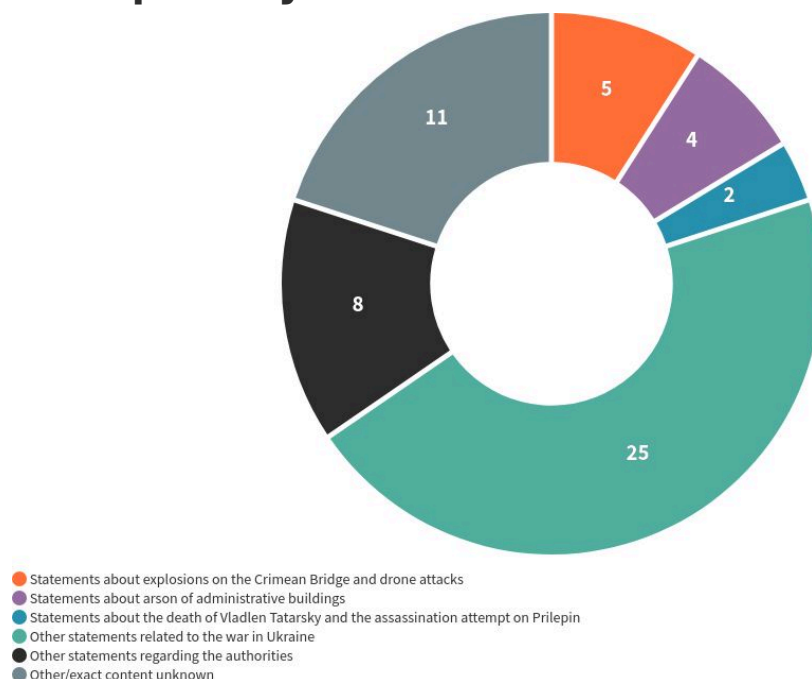
- WiFi-network «**Slava Ukraini**»;
- Leaflet «**Let's Stop SVO (war)**»;
- Navalny's team's video (**about Putin's palace**);
- Another video made by Navalny's team («**I know everyone who tried to kill me**»);
- Alexei Navalny obituary**;
- Publicly expressed **doubts** about the competence of traffic police officers;
- Facebook **logos** on the websites of kindergartens «Solnyshko» and «Rodnichok».

The Persecution of Journalists and Bloggers

A criminal case for libel and disclosure of family secrets has been opened against Evgeniy Anisimov, the owner of the «Beautiful Russia» channel. The reason for opening the case were videos about the involvement of businessman Bogdan Novorok in the appropriation of land in Yekaterinburg, a major city in Siberia. In April, it has also come to light that a case for libel and violation of the right to privacy has been opened against the authors of an oppositional Telegram channel «Antipode. Dagestan».

Cases for incitement to terrorism, extremism and anti-state activities

>55 politically-motivated cases for incitement to terrorism, extremism and anti-state activities have been opened by the end of March 2024



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In April, Tatyana Lukyanova, an activist from Khabarovsk in the Russian Far East, was charged with inciting hatred after holding a picket in support of the former governor of the region, Sergei Furgal. According to the security forces, in this

way she expressed a negative attitude towards the actions of «the employees of the court, the police, the prosecutor's office and penal colony No. 6 of the Altai Region in connection with the prosecution of the ex-governor of the Khabarovsk Region Sergei Furgal.» On the island of Sakhalin, an 85-year-old human rights activist Mark Kuperman became involved in a criminal case for incitement to extremism: security forces claim that he had sent several people a file entitled «The plan for Western participation in regime change in Russia. Humanitarian occupation.»

Cases on Nazism rehabilitation and Symbol desecration



criminal cases were opened in April 2024 for lighting cigarettes from the Eternal Flame

Security forces continued to pursue individuals committing 'inappropriate acts' near Eternal Flame monuments.

In Sakhalin and the Leningrad region, cases were opened for lighting cigarettes from the flame, while in the Kirov region, a case was initiated for burning wires. In annexed Sevastopol, a man was prosecuted for urinating on the flame. Additionally, posts containing «disrespectful information» about memorable dates in Russia, in the Novosibirsk and Rostov regions, as well as the St. George ribbon, led to the initiation of further cases.

A 57-year-old priest of a Greek Catholic parish in the Omsk region, Igor Maksimov, has become a defendant in a criminal case on charges of rehabilitating Nazism and insulting religious feelings. According to investigators, he had «discovered a stylised icon-like image of the Ukrainian collaborators of Nazism, Stepan Bandera, against the background of the Holy Mother of God.» The regional

department of the Ministry of Justice demanded that the church parish be liquidated. However, Joseph Werth, the Ordinary of the Transfiguration Diocese in Novosibirsk, stated that Maksimov had no connection to the parish.

PERSECUTION RELATED TO FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Eleven defendants in the case of the Telegram channel «Chto Delat!» (What to do!), which, according to security officials, disseminated calls for participation in «mass riots», have been **sentenced** to terms ranging from 5 years and 2 months to 8 years in prison.

Baymak protests case



people are prosecuted in a case concerning protests in support of Bashkir activist Fail Alsynov

The former leader of the Bashkort movement, Fail Alsynov, has been **sentenced** to 4 years in prison for addressing a national gathering about environmental issues. Several dozen individuals are currently held in pre-trial detention centres on charges related to their participation in the January protest outside the initial court hearing.

Following a violent arrest, one of the defendants in the case, Zaki Ilyasov, **fell** into a coma. Many of those accused reported facing violence. Tragically, two detainees in this criminal case, **Rifat Dautov** and **Minniyyar Bayguskarov**, have died. Local media reported that Bayguskarov committed suicide due to pressure from security forces, while the cause of Dautov's death has not been disclosed to his relatives.

REPRESSIONS AGAINST ANNEXED CRIMEA RESIDENTS

Crimean resident Dlyver Salimov has been **sentenced** to a year in a penal colony for verbally abusing a gas station attendant over a cap bearing the letter Z. Meanwhile, Alexander Tyurenko, who urinated on symbols of the war in Ukraine, received a suspended sentence, later **replaced** with a custodial one. In a separate incident, 50-year-old Simferopol resident Nikolai Mazanka was **detained** by Russian security forces for allegedly engaging in discussions about Ukraine in the yard of his own home.

Imprisoned Crimeans continue to endure ill-treatment and inadequate medical care. The daughter of convicted activist Oleg Prikhodko **informed** the media that staff at the colony intend to detain her father indefinitely, with the apparent intention of keeping him in a pre-trial detention centre «until he dies» referring to «orders from above.»

JUDICIAL DEPARTMENT STATISTICS

In April, the Judicial Department of the Supreme Court **published** statistics on administrative and criminal cases heard by the courts in 2023. OVD-Info conducted an analysis and outlined the main trends in the flashcards (In Russian):



Ноль оправданных и сотни осужденных по политическим статьям. Вышла судебная статистика за 2023 год

Судебный департамент Верховного суда [опубликовал](#) статистику по административным и уголовным делам, которые рассматривали суды в 2023-м. Мы изучили её с точки зрения политических преследований — ниже приводим анализ данных по уголовным делам. Важный момент: в статистику включены приговоры, вступившие в законную силу.

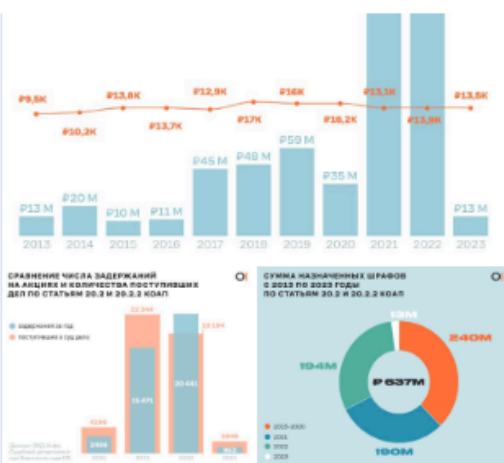
→ В 2023-м стало почти в 7 раз больше приговоров по антивоенным статьям (280.3 и 207.3 УК), чем в 2022-м — 115 против 17. Актуальное число фигурантов «антивоенного дела» и информацию о них всегда можно найти в [нашей инфографике](#).

→ В 12 раз увеличилось количество приговоров по статье о диверсии (281 УК), почти в 2,5 раза — о госизмене (275 УК). Некоторые подобные дела мы включаем в [базу политпрессинга](#), поскольку видим в них политический мотив: например, преследование за антивоенную позицию. В целом рост приговоров по этим статьям говорит о том, что методы политического давления становятся жестче.

→ 345 человек осудили по делам об оправдании

терроризма (205.2 УК) — это одна из статей, которую используют для преследований за слова. **310 из них** вынесли приговоры за публикации в интернете. В 2022-м году общая цифра осужденных по этой статье была меньше на 8 процентов

[📄 Открыть пост в Telegram: ovdinfolive/30946](#)



637 миллионов рублей — сумма штрафов по митинговым статьям за последние десять лет. Больше половины — 384 миллиона — назначили только в 2021 и 2022 году. Продолжаем рассказывать о [статистике](#), которую выпустил Судебный департамент при Верховном суде

Для анализа мы взяли две митинговые статьи КоАП:

- 20.2 — нарушение правил проведения публичной акции
- 20.2.2 — организация массового пребывания граждан, повлекшее нарушение общественного порядка

В этот раз мы не стали сравнивать цифры за 2023-й с данными предыдущего года: между ними большая разница. В 2022-м людей массово задерживали из-за акций против войны и мобилизации, в 2023-м активность снизилась — количество задержаний уменьшилось в 21 раз. Поэтому мы решили проанализировать новую статистику с разными отрезками времени и сделали графики. Некоторые выводы из них:

→ Самый высокий **средний штраф** был в 2018-м — 17 тысяч рублей. В том году люди выходили на улицы против инаугурации Путина — акции «Он нам не царь», передела границ Ингушетии с Чечней, пенсионной реформы и мусорных полигонов.

→ При этом больше всего дел по митинговым статьям поступили в

📄 [Открыть пост в Telegram: ovdifolive/31117](#)