



## COI QUERY

<b>Country of Origin</b>	<b>THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION</b>
<b>Title</b>	<b>Major developments regarding human rights and military service</b>
<b>Reference period</b>	1 October 2023 to 8 November 2024
<b>Topic(s)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <a href="#">Recent developments in the war in Ukraine</a></li><li>2. <a href="#">Political and human rights situation</a></li><li>3. <a href="#">Legislative developments</a></li><li>4. <a href="#">Treatment of certain profiles related to the expression of political opinion</a></li><li>5. <a href="#">LGBTIQ persons</a></li><li>6. <a href="#">Military service</a></li></ol>
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## COI QUERY RESPONSE – The Russian Federation

### Major developments regarding human rights and military service

#### 1. Recent developments in the war in Ukraine

In the reference period, Russia continued its offensive in Ukraine, advancing in the Donetsk region,<sup>1</sup> particularly around Toretsk, Chasiv Yar, and Pokrovsk.<sup>2</sup> In early October 2024, Russian forces gained control of Vuhledar, Donetsk region,<sup>3</sup> and by mid-October 2024 advanced on the village of Levadne, Zaporizhzhia region.<sup>4</sup> That same month, Russian military forces also intensified their military operations near Kupiansk, Kharkiv region.<sup>5</sup> As of mid-October 2024, Russia was occupying 18 % of Ukrainian territories.<sup>6</sup> As of 31 August 2024, the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (HRMMU) recorded over 36 000 civilian casualties, with nearly 11 800 civilians killed.<sup>7</sup> Data from October 2024 shows that almost 3.7 million people were internally displaced, while more than 6.7 million had fled Ukraine.<sup>8</sup> Widespread Russian attacks on Ukrainian cities caused significant damage to civilian infrastructure, including residential buildings, schools, hospitals, and energy infrastructure.<sup>9</sup>

In early August 2024, Ukraine conducted a military offensive into Russia's Kursk region,<sup>10</sup> 'transferring hostilities' onto Russian territory and disrupting Russian logistics along the northern border. During the incursion, Ukrainian forces reportedly captured more than 600 Russian soldiers, including conscripts,<sup>11</sup> resulting in several exchanges of prisoners of war (POWs) between the two countries.<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, Ukraine accused Russian forces of executing Ukrainian POWs in the Kursk border region.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Economist (The), Russia continues to advance in eastern Ukraine, 10 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>2</sup> RBC – Ukraine, Russia advancing in Kursk and Donbas: Is Ukrainian front at risk of collapsing?, 22 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>3</sup> Reuters, Russia captures Vuhledar after two years of Ukrainian resistance, 2 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>4</sup> AP, Russia says it captured a southern Ukraine village in a push before winter comes, 14 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>5</sup> RBC – Ukraine, Russia advancing in Kursk and Donbas: Is Ukrainian front at risk of collapsing?, 22 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>6</sup> Cfr, War in Ukraine, 16 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>7</sup> OHCHR, Ukraine: Worsening impact on civilians of Russia's attack, torture of prisoners of war, 1 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>8</sup> UNHCR, Regional Bureau for Europe, Ukraine Situation, Flash Update #74, 23 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>9</sup> OHCHR, Ukraine: Worsening impact on civilians of Russia's attack, torture of prisoners of war, 1 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>10</sup> Tokariuk, O., Ukraine's gamble in Kursk restores belief it can beat Russia – it requires a Western response, Chatham House, 19 August 2024, [url](#)

<sup>11</sup> Zhmailo, D., What Has Ukraine Achieved in the Kursk Offensive?, The Moscow Times, 29 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>12</sup> BBC News, Russia and Ukraine swap prisoners after Kursk offensive, 24 August 2024, [url](#); ISW, Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, 14 September 2024, [url](#); Reuters, Russia, Ukraine each bring home 95 prisoners of war in swap brokered by UAE, 19 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>13</sup> RFE/RL, Ukraine Alleges New Killings of POWs by Russian Forces, 13 October 2024, [url](#)



## 2. Political and human rights situation

During the presidential elections held on 15-17 March 2024, President Putin secured nearly 88 % of the votes,<sup>14</sup> allowing him to remain in power until at least 2030.<sup>15</sup> According to observers, the elections were marked by significant electoral violations, including falsifications<sup>16</sup> and absence of independent monitoring organisations.<sup>17</sup> Anti-war candidates, journalist Yekaterina Duntsova<sup>18</sup> and politician Boris Nadezhdin<sup>19</sup>, were disqualified from participating in the elections.<sup>20</sup> In May 2024, the Russian Ministry of Justice (MoJ) added Duntsova to the list of ‘foreign agents’.<sup>21</sup>

As noted by SOVA Research Center,<sup>22</sup> the trends of 2022, where ‘all three branches of government’ were engaged in ‘suppressing anti-war protests’, continued throughout 2023.<sup>23</sup> The laws adopted after February 2022 were used to suppress dissent and anti-war expression,<sup>24</sup> resulting in severe restrictions on freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and association.<sup>25</sup> As noted by the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Mariana Katzarova, in the period between September 2023 and September 2024, the human rights situation in Russia deteriorated further, with the authorities employing ‘systematic human rights violations as part of a governmental strategy to control all spheres of life, both public and private’ and to stifle anti-war dissent.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, in August 2024, Human Rights Watch reported that the human rights situation in Russia was facing ‘an ever-worsening crisis’.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Moscow Times (The), Fraud, Violations and Pressure: Election Observers Describe Russian 2024 Presidential Vote, 20 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>15</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/57/59], 13 September 2024, [url](#), para 2

<sup>16</sup> Moscow Times (The), Fraud, Violations and Pressure: Election Observers Describe Russian 2024 Presidential Vote, 20 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>17</sup> AP, Putin extends rule in preordained Russian election after harshest crackdown since Soviet era, 19 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>18</sup> Reuters, Yekaterina Duntsova barred from running against Putin in election, 23 December 2023, [url](#)

<sup>19</sup> Guardian (The), Russian anti-war candidate Boris Nadezhdin banned from election, 8 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>20</sup> Global Voices, Hundreds of thousands supported anti-war candidate in Russia but he was banned from elections, 8 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>21</sup> RFE/RL, Russia Declares Barred Presidential Candidate, Soldiers’ Wives Group ‘Foreign Agents’, 31 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>22</sup> SOVA Research Center is a group of researchers formed after the closure of SOVA Center for Information and Analysis in August 2022, which focuses on issues on nationalism and extremism in Russia, see SOVA, About us, 3 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>23</sup> SOVA, Inappropriate Enforcement of Anti-Extremist Legislation in Russia in 2023, 2 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>24</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/54/54], 15 September 2023, [url](#), paras 7, 12; Human Rights Watch, Russia – Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#); USDOS, Russia 2023 Human Rights Report, 22 April 2024, [url](#), p. 20; SOVA, Inappropriate Enforcement of Anti-Extremist Legislation in Russia in 2023, 2 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>25</sup> AI, The State of World Human Rights, April 2024, [url](#), p. 316

<sup>26</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/57/59], 13 September 2024, [url](#), paras 1-2

<sup>27</sup> Human Rights Watch, Update on Human Rights in the Russian Federation and the Continuing Need for a Special Rapporteur on Russia, 28 August 2024, [url](#)



Political opponents, human rights defenders, journalists, artists, religious figures, and persons expressing views diverging from State narratives, particularly regarding the war in Ukraine, faced ‘severe consequences’,<sup>28</sup> including politically motivated charges,<sup>29</sup> detentions, and harassment at federal, regional, or local levels.<sup>30</sup> As noted by OVD-Info,<sup>31</sup> administrative and criminal charges were used against people voicing anti-war opinions, defending mobilised soldiers, or addressing environmental or social issues.<sup>32</sup> According to Human Rights Watch, people prosecuted in 2023 included both prominent opposition members and ordinary people without prior activism backgrounds.<sup>33</sup> The UN Special Rapporteur noted further that ‘[a]ge, stature, and valued contributions to society offer[ed] no protection against State-driven persecution.’<sup>34</sup>

In August 2024, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) reported that between 700 and 1 372 persons were detained in Russia on ‘politically motivated charges’.<sup>35</sup> As of 8 August 2024, OVD-Info reported that over 1 000 people faced criminal charges related to their anti-war position, with more than half of them being prosecuted under military censorship articles.<sup>36</sup> According to human rights organisation Memorial, there was a total of 778 political prisoners in Russia, including 426 persons imprisoned in relation to religion. In addition, 599 persons faced persecution without being deprived of liberty.<sup>37</sup>

On 1 August 2024, 16 political prisoners, including politicians, journalists, human rights defenders, and activists, serving various prison sentences in Russia<sup>38</sup> were released in a prisoner exchange involving Russia and seven other countries.<sup>39</sup> Alexei Navalny, who was reportedly meant to be a part of the exchange deal,<sup>40</sup> died in February 2024 in a penal colony in Yamal-Nenets region, north of the Arctic Circle,<sup>41</sup> where he was serving a three-decade

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<sup>28</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/57/59], 13 September 2024, [url](#), para 36

<sup>29</sup> USDOS, Russia 2023 Human Rights Report, 22 April 2024, [url](#), p. 20

<sup>30</sup> USDOS, Russia 2023 Human Rights Report, 22 April 2024, [url](#), p. 34

<sup>31</sup> OVD-Info is an independent human rights group which works on the ground in Russia, collecting data about political repressions in the country, see OVD-Info, About us, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>32</sup> OVD-Info, Repressions Report. Summary of the First Seven Months of 2024, 3 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>33</sup> Human Rights Watch, Russia – Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>34</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/57/59], 13 September 2024, [url](#), para 41

<sup>35</sup> OHCHR, Russia: All remaining human rights defenders, journalists and anti-war critics convicted in sham trials must be released, say UN experts, 2 August 2024, [url](#)

<sup>36</sup> OVD-Info, Repressions Report. Summary of the First Seven Months of 2024, 3 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>37</sup> Memorial, Список политзаключённых (без преследуемых за религию) [List of political prisoners (without those persecuted for religion)], n.d., [url](#), accessed 8 November 2024

<sup>38</sup> Guardian (The), Who’s who among the prisoner exchange between Russia and the west?, 1 August 2024, [url](#);

BBC News, Who are the prisoners in the Russia-West swap, 2 August 2024, [url](#)

<sup>39</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/57/59], 13 September 2024, [url](#), para 39

<sup>40</sup> RFE/RL, White House Confirms That Navalny Was Part Of Prisoner Exchange Talks, 1 August 2024, [url](#)

<sup>41</sup> Barents Observer (The), Aleksei Navalny dies in Arctic prison camp, 16 February 2024, [url](#)



penal sentence.<sup>42</sup> Following the death of Navalny, the Council of the European Union included two penal colonies where he was incarcerated along with 33 members of judiciary and the penitentiary system to its sanctions list.<sup>43</sup> For information on the treatment of people who came to express their tribute to Navalny, see chapter [4.1. Protesters](#).

In detention, political prisoners faced torture and ill-treatment, including prolonged punitive solitary confinement<sup>44</sup> in disciplinary cells and *incommunicado* detentions, for instance when being transferred from pretrial detention facilities to prisons.<sup>45</sup> On 10 October 2024, Memorial reported that at least 49 people were subjected to enforced psychiatric treatment as a punishment for their political stance. As noted by Memorial, authorities used mental health as a pretext for punishment of various ‘undesirable’ groups.<sup>46</sup> Among the persons subjected to forced transfer to a psychiatric hospital were journalist Maria Ponomarenko,<sup>47</sup> human rights activist Olga Suvorova,<sup>48</sup> as well as people convicted for dissemination of ‘false’ information about the actions of the Russian army in Ukraine.<sup>49</sup>

### 3. Legislative developments

In 2023, the laws adopted in 2022 to suppress anti-war expression, such as those on ‘false’ information about and discreditation of Russian armed forces and institutions<sup>50</sup> as well as the legislation on ‘foreign agents’ and ‘undesirable organisations’, were further expanded.<sup>51</sup> At the same time, several new provisions were added to the Code of Administrative Offences and the Criminal Code.<sup>52</sup> In April 2023, following the International Criminal Court’s (ICC) arrest warrants for President Putin and Children’s Rights Commissioner Maria Lvova-Belova,<sup>53</sup> Article 284.3 was introduced into the Criminal Code to punish assistance to foreign entities, to which Russia is not a party, prosecuting Russian government officials or persons engaged in military service or participating in volunteer formations.<sup>54</sup> The penalties under Article 284.3 range from a fine

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<sup>42</sup> Reuters, Putin foe Alexei Navalny dies in jail, West holds Russia responsible, 16 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>43</sup> Council of the EU, Death of Alexei Navalny: EU sanctions 33 individuals and two entities under its Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime, 22 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>44</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/57/59], 13 September 2024, [url](#), para 40

<sup>45</sup> Human Rights Watch, Russia – Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>46</sup> Centr Memorial, Facebook, 10 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>47</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/57/59], 13 September 2024, [url](#), para 42

<sup>48</sup> Meduza, ‘Compulsory medical measures,’ How punitive psychiatry returned to Russia in wartime, 9 August 2024, [url](#)

<sup>49</sup> Moscow Times (The), Punitive Psychiatry: An Increasingly Common Tool in Russia’s Crackdown on Activists, 28 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>50</sup> SOVA, Inappropriate Enforcement of Anti-Extremist Legislation in Russia in 2023, 2 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>51</sup> Human Rights Watch, Russia – Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>52</sup> SOVA, Inappropriate Enforcement of Anti-Extremist Legislation in Russia in 2023, 2 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>53</sup> Human Rights Watch, Russia – Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>54</sup> SOVA, Inappropriate Enforcement of Anti-Extremist Legislation in Russia in 2023, 2 May 2024, [url](#)



of 300 000 roubles [approximately 3 000 euros<sup>55</sup>] to up to five years in prison.<sup>56</sup> Simultaneously, the scope of Article 280.4 of the Criminal Code ‘Public calls to carry out activities against the state security’ was expanded to include calls for prosecution of Russian officials and members of military forces,<sup>57</sup> with a maximum punishment of up to seven years in prison.<sup>58</sup>

In February 2024, the Criminal Code was amended to allow for the confiscation of money, valuables, or property for the dissemination of ‘false’ information about the Russian armed forces and government bodies (Article 207.3), as well as for public calls for activities against state security (Article 280.4).<sup>59</sup> Additionally, the amendments allowed for the confiscation of money and property in relation to other provisions of the Criminal Code, such as providing assistance to international organizations of which Russia is not a member (Article 284.3), illegal border crossing (Article 322), failure to comply with orders (Article 332), desertion (Article 338), and some other offenses.<sup>60</sup> In July 2024, property confiscation was applied against self-exiled journalist Alexander Nevzorov and his wife, whom the court in St. Petersburg recognised as an ‘extremist group’.<sup>61</sup>

### **3.1. Legislation on undesirable organisations and foreign agents**

#### **Undesirable organisations**

Legislation on ‘undesirable organisations’ (Federal Law No. 129-FZ of 23 May 2015 and its amendments) enabled Russian authorities to designate a foreign or international organisation as ‘undesirable’ if it is considered a threat to Russia’s constitutional order, defence, or security. This designation bans the organisation from operating in Russia and forbids Russian citizens from receiving funding from such organisation and distributing its materials, including online.<sup>62</sup>

The list of ‘undesirable organisations’ is managed by the MoJ.<sup>63</sup> According to data of OVD-Info, 56 organisations were designated as ‘undesirable’ in the period between 1 January 2024

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<sup>55</sup> The calculations in this query response were made using the exchange rates for October 2024 as per the conversion rate provided by the European Commission. See, EC, Exchange rate (InforEuro), n.d., [url](#)

<sup>56</sup> Russia, Уголовный кодекс Российской Федерации от 13.06.1996 N 63-ФЗ (ред. от 25.10.2024) [The Criminal Code of the Russian Federation of 13.06.1996 N 63-FZ (version 25.10.2024)], n.d., [url](#), Art. 284.3

<sup>57</sup> SOVA, Inappropriate Enforcement of Anti-Extremist Legislation in Russia in 2023, 2 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>58</sup> Russia, Уголовный кодекс Российской Федерации от 13.06.1996 N 63-ФЗ (ред. от 25.10.2024) [The Criminal Code of the Russian Federation of 13.06.1996 N 63-FZ (version 25.10.2024)], n.d., [url](#), Art. 280.4

<sup>59</sup> Digital Policy Alert, Russia: Implemented Law amending Criminal Code and Criminal Procedure clarifying responsibility for crimes against the security of the Russian Federation (Bill No. 533912-8/Law No. 11-FZ), n.d., [url](#); Meduza, Putin signs law enabling asset seizure for convictions related to desertion, genocide, and ‘fake news’ about army, 14 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>60</sup> Meduza, Putin signs law enabling asset seizure for convictions related to desertion, genocide, and ‘fake news’ about army, 14 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>61</sup> Reuters, Russia says exiled journalist and his wife are ‘extremist group’, 3 July 2024, [url](#)

<sup>62</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/54/54], 15 September 2023, [url](#), paras 26-27

<sup>63</sup> USDOS, Russia 2023 Human Rights Report, 22 April 2024, [url](#), pp. 54-55; ECHR, Case of Andrey Rylkov Foundation and Others v. Russia, 18 September 2024, [url](#)



and 31 July 2024.<sup>64</sup> In total, there were 186 organisations in the list,<sup>65</sup> comprising major international sponsors of human rights organisations, such as Open Society Foundation and European Endowment for Democracy, human rights organisations, including Transparency International, European Platform for Democratic Elections, and Agora-Law Sofia Foundation, think tanks, including Chatham House and Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, as well as environmental organisations, faith organisations, student and academic exchange organisations, trade unions, and major Russian-language media organisations, such as Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), TV Rain, Novaya Gazeta – Europe, Meduza, etc.<sup>66</sup> As noted by Human Rights Watch, the legislation on ‘undesirable organisations’ was largely used to outlaw independent Russian media working in exile.<sup>67</sup>

In August 2023, amendments to the Code of Administrative Offences and Criminal Code introduced penalties for engaging in activities of foreign NGOs without registered offices in Russia,<sup>68</sup> effectively criminalising ‘any forms of cooperation with most civil society groups outside the country’.<sup>69</sup> The amendments of August 2024 expanded the criteria for designating an organisation as ‘undesirable’ to include ‘foreign and international organisations whose founders or participants are government bodies of foreign States’, simultaneously introducing tougher criminal penalties.<sup>70</sup>

Initially, people participating in the activities of an ‘undesirable organisation’ face administrative liability (Article 20.33 of the Code of Administrative Offences) which escalates to criminal liability under Article 284.1 of the Criminal Code<sup>71</sup> if the offence is repeated. While the administrative punishment for natural persons involved in the activities of an ‘undesirable’ organisation is a fine ranging from 5 000 [48 euros] to 15 000 roubles [145 euros], the criminal liability can result in up to 4 years in prison for participation in the activities of an ‘undesirable’ organisation, up to 5 years for financing such activities, and up to 6 years for organising them.<sup>72</sup>

As reported by OVD-Info, the number of police reports on administrative offences for participating in activities of an ‘undesirable’ organisations increased in the first half of 2024. The administrative cases were initiated against ‘undesirable’ media journalists, people who

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<sup>64</sup> OVD-Info, Repressions Report. Summary of the First Seven Months of 2024, 3 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>65</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/57/59], 13 September 2024, [url](#), para 26

<sup>66</sup> ECHR, Case of Andrey Rylkov Foundation and Others v. Russia, 18 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>67</sup> Human Rights Watch, Russia – Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>68</sup> SOVA, Inappropriate Enforcement of Anti-Extremist Legislation in Russia in 2023, 2 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>69</sup> AI, The State of World Human Rights, April 2024, [url](#), p. 318

<sup>70</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/57/59], 13 September 2024, [url](#), para 29

<sup>71</sup> Russia, Кодекс Российской Федерации об административных правонарушениях, от 30.12.2001 N 195-ФЗ (ред. от 29.10.2024) [Code of Administrative Offences of the Russian Federation, of 30.12.2001 No 195 -FZ (amended on 29.10.2024), n.d., [url](#), Art. 20.33

<sup>72</sup> Russia, Уголовный кодекс Российской Федерации от 13.06.1996 N 63-ФЗ (ред. от 25.10.2024) [The Criminal Code of the Russian Federation of 13.06.1996 N 63-FZ (version 25.10.2024)], n.d., [url](#), Art 284.1



gave interviews to ‘undesirable’ media, and people employed by ‘undesirable’ organisations before they were designated as ‘undesirable’.<sup>73</sup>

## Foreign agents

As noted by the UN Special Rapporteur, the MoJ has ‘significantly accelerated the rate of designating “foreign agents”’ after the start of the full-scale invasion in Ukraine.<sup>74</sup> In 2023, 172 persons and 54 entities were designated as ‘foreign agents’.<sup>75</sup> As of 8 November 2024, the list of ‘foreign agents’ had 881 names, consisting of natural persons and organisations.<sup>76</sup> In the period between 1 January 2024 and 8 August 2024, 93 entities were added to the list.<sup>77</sup>

In 2023, based on court records, as reported by OVD-Info, at least 412 administrative cases were filed in courts regarding non-compliance with labelling and reporting requirements imposed on ‘foreign agents’.<sup>78</sup> As reported by an independent outlet Mediazona, starting in late 2023, authorities began issuing repeated protocols for non-compliance, exposing over hundred ‘foreign agents’ to potential criminal charges, noting that receiving two administrative fines within one year triggers the third time liability under Article 330.1 of the Criminal Code on ‘systematic evasion of duties’ of foreign agents.<sup>79</sup> As of August 2024, at least 20 people faced charges under Article 330.1,<sup>80</sup> with RFE/RL journalist Alsu Kurmasheva being the first ‘foreign agent’ to be criminally prosecuted.<sup>81</sup> As noted by BBC Russian Service, a maximum penalty for failure to submit documents for inclusion in the ‘foreign agents’ registry or for not displaying the ‘foreign agent’ label was two years in prison. If a person was engaged in gathering information on military topics, Article 330.1 would be invoked immediately, potentially resulting in a prison sentence of up to five years. As of September 2024, there were no sentences issued under Article 330.1 of the Criminal Code.<sup>82</sup>

In May 2024, the State Duma passed a law which prohibited ‘foreign agents’ from participating in elections at all levels, including as candidates and election monitors. The law was reportedly applied already in mid-June, when local politician Anna Karulicheva was designated as a ‘foreign agent’ just hours before a committee meeting on her candidacy for the municipal elections in St. Petersburg.<sup>83</sup> Moreover, the legislation enabled the removal of elected officials if they were designated as ‘foreign agents’. Furthermore, ‘foreign agents’

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<sup>73</sup> OVD-Info, Repressions Report. Summary of the First Seven Months of 2024, 3 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>74</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/57/59], 13 September 2024, [url](#), para 17

<sup>75</sup> AI, The State of World Human Rights, April 2024, [url](#), p. 318

<sup>76</sup> GOGOV, Реестр иностранных агентов в России [Register of foreign agents in Russia], 8 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>77</sup> OVD-Info, Repressions Report. Summary of the First Seven Months of 2024, 3 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>78</sup> OVD-Info, «Cutting off the air supply»: how the authorities are persecuting so-called ‘foreign agents’ in the face of war — an analysis of legislation, 26 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>79</sup> Mediazona, Fine after fine. Over one hundred Russian “foreign agents” are on the verge of criminal prosecution, 17 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>80</sup> OVD-Info, Repressions Report. Summary of the First Seven Months of 2024, 3 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>81</sup> Human Rights Watch, Russia – Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>82</sup> BBC News Russkaya Sluzhba, От Невзорова до Монеточки: в России стали чаще возбуждать уголовные дела против «иноагентов» [From Nevzorov to Monetochka: criminal cases against ‘foreign agents’ have become more frequent in Russia], 10 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>83</sup> OVD-Info, Repressions Report. Summary of the First Seven Months of 2024, 3 September 2024, [url](#)



became barred from working for the public authorities, accessing state funding, or engaging in election monitoring.<sup>84</sup>

### **3.2. War censorship laws**

The common name ‘war censorship’ laws is used for Article 207.3 of the Criminal Code punishing the dissemination of ‘false’ information about the Russian military forces and state institutions and Articles 20.3.3 of the Code of Administrative Offences and 280.3 of the Criminal code on the discreditation of Russian military and state institutions.<sup>85</sup> Both legal norms were adopted to silence anti-war voices<sup>86</sup> and to prevent independent reporting about the war in Ukraine.<sup>87</sup> The criminal liability for the discreditation of Russian military and state institutions is enacted for a repeated offense committed within one year.<sup>88</sup> For the details about the legislation, see chapter 4.1. War censorship laws of the EUAA October 2023 query [Major developments in the Russian Federation in relation to the treatment of political opposition and dissent](#). In February 2024, legislation allowing confiscation of property of persons convicted of ‘spreading of false information about the Russian army’ was signed into law.<sup>89</sup>

As reported by Mediazona in August 2024, from the adoption of the legislation in early March 2022 to August 2024, Article 20.3.3 of the Code of Administrative Offences on the discreditation of Russian military and state institutions was used to file over 10 000 charges, including more than 5 600 at the end of 2022 and almost 3 000 at the end of 2023.<sup>90</sup> As noted by OVD-Info, Article 20.3.3. was used as ‘the most popular tool for persecution of anti-war expression,’ with people being fined for such actions as participating in anti-war gatherings and staging solitary protests, distributing anti-war leaflets, wearing clothes and accessories in the colours of the Ukrainian flag, and sharing information about attacks on civilians.<sup>91</sup> In May 2024, a platform Re:Russia noted that administrative prosecution was actively pursued ‘for both-semi public and private statements against the war or in support of Ukraine’, as well as for expressing of such opinions on social media. The source highlighted that this trend revealed a shift in the ‘red lines’ of what is considered punishable, with people facing prosecution for likes and reactions on social media, including those related to posts

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<sup>84</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/57/59], 13 September 2024, [url](#), para 22

<sup>85</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/57/59], 13 September 2024, [url](#), para 37

<sup>86</sup> Human Rights Watch, Russia – Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>87</sup> SOVA, Inappropriate Enforcement of Anti-Extremist Legislation in Russia in 2023, 2 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>88</sup> AI, Russia: Under the ‘Eye of Sauron’: Persecution of Critics of the Aggression Against Ukraine, 20 July 2023, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>89</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europe, Putin signs law allowing seizure of property for ‘spreading false information’ about military, 14 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>90</sup> Mediazona, К августу 2024 года в России составили уже более 10 000 протоколов за антивоенные высказывания [By August 2024, more than 10,000 protocols for anti-war statements have already been drawn up in Russia], 14 August 2024, [url](#)

<sup>91</sup> Human Rights House Foundation, OVD-Info: Russian Civil Society Demands an End to Prosecution of Anti-War Protests, 25 April 2023, [url](#)



from 2022-2023.<sup>92</sup> According to OVD-Info, criminal cases under article 280.3 of the Criminal Code for the repeated discreditation of Russian military and state institutions were initiated against 213 persons.<sup>93</sup>

According to the Judicial Department of the Supreme Court, as conveyed by independent investigative media outlet IStories, in the first half of 2024, 40 persons received criminal convictions for spreading of ‘false’ information about Russian military forces and state institutions and 28 persons for discrediting them, compared to 21 and 15 persons respectively in the first half of 2023.<sup>94</sup>

As noted by Amnesty International (AI), university professors and schoolteachers lost their jobs for expressing criticism regarding the Russia’s invasion in Ukraine.<sup>95</sup> In one case, a philologist at St. Petersburg State University was dismissed from her position after providing expert testimony in a court to support an activist charged with dissemination of ‘false’ information.<sup>96</sup>

### **3.3. Anti-terrorism and anti-extremism legislation**

Since February 2022, Russian authorities have increasingly misused anti-terrorism and anti-extremism laws against political opposition, peaceful protesters,<sup>97</sup> lawyers, people expressing criticism,<sup>98</sup> and certain religious groups,<sup>99</sup> such as Jehovah’s Witnesses<sup>100</sup> and members of Muslim organisations.<sup>101</sup> As noted by the UN Special Rapporteur, punishments under both charges could reach up to life imprisonment. As of August 2024, the Federal Financial Monitoring Service (Rosfinmonitoring) included 611 organisations and 15 339 persons, including 52 children, on its list of extremists and terrorists, which is used to block their financial assets.<sup>102</sup> As noted by Oleg Kozlovsky, researcher on Russia with Amnesty International (AI), the designation of people as ‘terrorists’ and ‘extremists’ allowed authorities to ‘cut them off from financial services and basic income’ without a court order.<sup>103</sup>

As reported by SOVA Research Center, the total number of terrorism-related prosecutions in 2023 reached 2 382, marking an approximate 7 % increase compared to 2022. Of these

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<sup>92</sup> Re:Russia, Soviet and non-Soviet: The Scale of Repression in Russia at the beginning of 2023 has decreased slightly, but the regime’s level of repressiveness remains high, 30 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>93</sup> OVD-Info, Anti-war criminal cases, Criminal repression for anti-war stance in Russia, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>94</sup> IStories, The Traitors, the spies, the terrorists, 18 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>95</sup> AI, The State of World Human Rights, April 2024, [url](#), p. 317

<sup>96</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europe, Academic fired from St. Petersburg university after supporting jailed artist in court, 12 October 2023, [url](#); AI, The State of World Human Rights, April 2024, [url](#), p. 317

<sup>97</sup> AI, Russia: Surge in abuse of anti-terrorism laws to suppress dissent, 19 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>98</sup> AI, The State of World Human Rights, April 2024, [url](#), pp. 316. 318

<sup>99</sup> AI, The State of World Human Rights, April 2024, [url](#), p. 316; USDOS, Russia 2023 Human Rights Report, 22 April 2024, [url](#), p. 35

<sup>100</sup> Human Rights Watch, Russia – Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#); SOVA Research Center, Inappropriate Enforcement of Anti-Extremist Legislation in Russia in 2023, 2 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>101</sup> AI, The State of World Human Rights, April 2024, [url](#), p. 318; Human Rights Watch, Russia – Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>102</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/57/59], 13 September 2024, [url](#), para 67

<sup>103</sup> AI, Russia: Surge in abuse of anti-terrorism laws to suppress dissent, 19 February 2024, [url](#)



cases, 548 were initiated for ‘a public justification of terrorism committed on the Internet’. In 2023, extremism-related crimes amounted to 1 340, reflecting an approximate 14 % decline from 2022, when the number of extremism-related offences surged by over 48 % from 2021. According to the documentation by SOVA, in 2023, 360 people were improperly convicted under anti-extremism laws (240 people in 2022), including 172 persons ‘arbitrarily convicted for public statements’ (55 in 2022) and 195 ‘for involvement in banned organizations’ activities’ (185 in 2022), mostly linked to religious associations.<sup>104</sup>

In an email correspondence with EUAA, a human rights lawyer, who preferred to remain anonymous for security reasons, noted that there were ‘hundreds’ of criminal cases under extremism and terrorism charges initiated every year against political opponents and people expressing criticism to the authorities.<sup>105</sup> As noted by OVD-Info, law enforcement agencies continued to pursue criminal charges for ‘statements’ regarded ‘as calls for terrorist, extremist or anti-state activities’ or as justifying such activities. Criminal prosecution could arise for journalistic articles, online posts, or private conversations.<sup>106</sup> In July 2024, a military court sentenced director Yevgenia Berkovich and writer Svetlana Petriyuchuk to six years in prison on charges of ‘justifying terrorism’ for a theatrical play about women marrying ISIS fighters.<sup>107</sup> The same month, a pianist Pavel Kushnir died in pretrial detention in a result of a hunger strike after being ‘charged with “inciting terrorism” for posting anti-war videos.’<sup>108</sup>

People transferring money to Ukrainian armed forces<sup>109</sup> or to ‘extremist’ organisations also faced criminal prosecution,<sup>110</sup> with sources reporting that activists were investigated<sup>111</sup> and convicted for donating money to Navalny’s organisations<sup>112</sup> or for supporting the Ukrainian armed forces.<sup>113</sup>

In 2024, the number of entities classified as ‘extremist’ increased.<sup>114</sup> In February 2024, a court in Khabarovsk designated the movement ‘I/We are Sergei Furgal’ as extremist even though it was never a registered organisation, but a slogan used by supporters of Furgal, a former governor of Khabarovsk, sentenced in 2023 to 22 years in prison for murder.<sup>115</sup> In June 2024, the Supreme Court banned the so-called ‘anti-Russian separatist movement’ as an extremist organisation, despite the fact that no formal entity by that name existed. MoJ, which filed the ‘extremism’ claim with the Supreme Court in April 2024, reportedly defined the movement as

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<sup>104</sup> SOVA, Inappropriate Enforcement of Anti-Extremist Legislation in Russia in 2023, 2 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>105</sup> Human rights lawyer, Email correspondence, 14 November 2024

<sup>106</sup> OVD-Info, Repressions Report. Summary of the First Seven Months of 2024, 3 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>107</sup> BBC News, Russian court jails theatre figures over IS wives play, 9 July 2024, [url](#)

<sup>108</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/57/59, 13 September 2024, [url](#), para 50

<sup>109</sup> Moscow Times (The), Russia Arrests Four Accused of Helping Ukraine Army, 17 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>110</sup> AI, Russia: Surge in abuse of anti-terrorism laws to suppress dissent, 19 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>111</sup> Moscow Times (The), Moscow Activist Kotov Detained for Allegedly Donating to Navalny’s ‘Extremist’ Groups, 22 August 2024, [url](#)

<sup>112</sup> AI, The State of World Human Rights, April 2024, [url](#), p. 318

<sup>113</sup> Kyiv Independent (The), Russia jails teenager for allegedly sending money to Ukrainian army, 2 July 2024, [url](#); RFE/RL, Russian Teacher Gets 20 Years In Prison For Transferring Cash To Ukraine, 20 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>114</sup> OVD-Info, Repressions Report. Summary of the First Seven Months of 2024, 3 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>115</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europe, Russia deems support for jailed ex-Khabarovsk governor ‘extremist’, 22 February 2024, [url](#)



‘international public movement to destroy the multinational unity and territorial integrity of Russia’.<sup>116</sup> Following the designation, 55 organisations, including Free Russia, Free Buryatia, and Free Yakutia foundations<sup>117</sup> as well as other organisations of indigenous people and Russia’s ethnic minorities,<sup>118</sup> were banned as its ‘structural subdivisions’.<sup>119</sup> As noted by OVD-Info in September 2024, the designation of an organisation as extremist brings a prohibition of the use of its symbols and distribution of its materials, exposing persons identified as its ‘supporters’ to potential criminal prosecution.<sup>120</sup>

For the information on the use of anti-extremism legislation in relation to LGBTIQ people, please refer to the chapter [5. LGBTIQ persons](#).

### **3.4. Treason and espionage charges**

In October 2024, IStories reported on a sharp increase in convictions on treason and espionage charges. According to IStories, based on data of the Judicial Department of the Supreme Court, 52 persons were convicted under treason charges in the first half of 2024, compared to 39 people in the first half of 2023. For espionage, convictions rose from 2 in the first half of 2023 to 18 in the first half of 2024.<sup>121</sup>

A notable rise in treason prosecutions against persons accused of fighting for or aiding Ukraine was particularly reported.<sup>122</sup> Thus, Justice Info Foundation reported that 92 % of the convictions on treason or attempted treason charges in the first half of 2024 ‘were related to actions in favour of Ukraine’ (44 out of 28 convictions).<sup>123</sup> In June 2024, a schoolteacher from Lipetsk was sentenced to 20 years in prison on charges of ‘high treason and assisting terrorist activities’ for sending 20 000 roubles [193 euros] to the Azov Assault Brigade of Ukraine’s National Guard.<sup>124</sup> In July 2024, a 21-year-old student from Tomsk received a 9-year prison sentence for donating 30 US dollars to the Armed Forces of Ukraine.<sup>125</sup>

Besides people perceived as supporting Ukraine, there was also a reported rise in treason charges and convictions involving scientists. In September 2024, a court in Moscow convicted the director of a major scientific institute, located in Novosibirsk, to 15 years in prison for allegedly providing classified information to China, after sentencing his colleague to 14 years

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<sup>116</sup> Moscow Times (The), Russia Bans Nonexistent ‘Anti-Russian Separatist Movement’, 7 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>117</sup> OVD-Info, Repressions Report. Summary of the First Seven Months of 2024, 3 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>118</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/57/59], 13 September 2024, [url](#), para 69

<sup>119</sup> OVD-Info, Repressions Report. Summary of the First Seven Months of 2024, 3 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>120</sup> OVD-Info, Repressions Report. Summary of the First Seven Months of 2024, 3 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>121</sup> IStories, The Traitors, the spies, the terrorists, 18 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>122</sup> JusticeInfo.Net, Russia: A Surge of Treason Cases for Supporting Ukraine, 26 July 2024, [url](#); Guardian (The), Top Russian physicist jailed for 15 years for ‘state treason’, 3 September 2024, [url](#); Pavlov, I., Email correspondence, 15 November 2024

<sup>123</sup> JusticeInfo.Net, Russia: A Surge of Treason Cases for Supporting Ukraine, 26 July 2024, [url](#)

<sup>124</sup> RFE/RL, Russian Teacher Gets 20 Years In Prison For Transferring Cash To Ukraine, 20 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>125</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europe, Russian student sentenced to 9 years for ‘treason’ after donating \$30 to Ukraine, 13 July 2024, [url](#)



in prison in May 2024 for allegedly sharing details of ‘Russia’s hypersonic missile programme’ with German intelligence.<sup>126</sup>

## 4. Treatment of certain profiles related to the expression of political opinion

### 4.1. Protesters

Freedom of assembly in Russia remained severely suppressed,<sup>127</sup> with authorities tightening legal restrictions against peaceful protests.<sup>128</sup> As reported by SOVA Research Centre, protest activities continued in 2023, but they were limited to individual or small group protests rather than large-scale demonstrations.<sup>129</sup> Authorities denied permission for anti-governmental protests<sup>130</sup> or restricted them by offering inconvenient or remote locations, reflecting selective and discriminatory enforcement. Unauthorised gatherings were swiftly dispersed by police.<sup>131</sup>

In January 2024, large-scale protests erupted in Bashkortostan following the four-year prison sentence handed down to Fail Alsynov, a prominent local environmental activist.<sup>132</sup> Alsynov, who was a co-founder of NGO Bashkort, which advocated for preservation of natural and cultural heritage of Bashkirs since 2014<sup>133</sup> and was closed in May 2020 after being designated as ‘extremist’,<sup>134</sup> was convicted on charges of ‘incitement of hatred’ (Article 282 of the Criminal Code)<sup>135</sup> for a speech he delivered at an environmental rally in April 2022, opposing gold mining in the region.<sup>136</sup> Demonstrations began outside the courthouse in the town of Baymak, where the verdict was announced, and quickly spread to Ufa, the regional capital.<sup>137</sup> The protest were reportedly joined by ‘thousands’ of people supporting Alsynov,<sup>138</sup> making it one of the largest protests since February 2022.<sup>139</sup> In response, Russian riot police used violence, including tear gas and batons to disperse the crowds.<sup>140</sup> According to OVD-Info, as of 8 August 2024, more than 80 people were facing prosecution in connection with these protests. In July 2024, a court delivered a first verdict, sentencing a 50-year-old farmer to five years in

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<sup>126</sup> Guardian (The), Top Russian physicist jailed for 15 years for ‘state treason’, 3 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>127</sup> Human Rights Watch, Russia – Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#); AI, The State of World Human Rights, April 2024, [url](#), pp. 316-317

<sup>128</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 2023 [A/HRC/54/54], [url](#), para 76

<sup>129</sup> SOVA Research Center, Inappropriate Enforcement of Anti-Extremist Legislation in Russia in 2023, 2 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>130</sup> AI, The State of World Human Rights, April 2024, [url](#), p. 317

<sup>131</sup> USDOS, Russia 2023 Human Rights Report, 22 April 2024, [url](#), p. 16

<sup>132</sup> OVD-Info, Repressions Report. Summary of the First Seven Months of 2024, 3 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>133</sup> Batani Foundation, Fail Alsynov: Defender of Bashkir Land, Language, and Rights, Cultural Survival, 18 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>134</sup> RFE/RL, Police Violently Disperse Thousands Protesting Russian Bashkir Activist’s Jailing, 17 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>135</sup> OVD-Info, “Our home is here”: On the ground at the Bashkortostan protests, 26 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>136</sup> RFE/RL, Police Violently Disperse Thousands Protesting Russian Bashkir Activist’s Jailing, 17 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>137</sup> Meduza, Investigators accuse protesters of ‘armed resistance’ amid continuing crackdown in Russia’s Bashkortostan, 22 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>138</sup> RFE/RL, Police Violently Disperse Thousands Protesting Russian Bashkir Activist’s Jailing, 17 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>139</sup> RFE/RL, Police Violently Disperse Thousands Protesting Russian Bashkir Activist’s Jailing, 17 January 2024, [url](#); Meduza, Investigators accuse protesters of ‘armed resistance’ amid continuing crackdown in Russia’s Bashkortostan, 22 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>140</sup> BBC News, Russia protest: Crowds clash with riot police as activist jailed, 17 January 2024, [url](#)



prison for mass rioting and violence against police. Two detainees reportedly died while in custody,<sup>141</sup> and another one was reportedly hospitalised due to beatings in detention.<sup>142</sup> In total, as reported by OVD-Info, 163 administrative and 80 criminal cases were initiated against the participants.<sup>143</sup>

People who came to honour Alexei Navalny after his death in at the prison colony by laying flowers at the monuments of victims of Soviet political repressions and holding ‘solo demonstrations and rallies’<sup>144</sup> faced police intimidation, detention, and arrest.<sup>145</sup> OVD-Info reported that at least 397 protesters were arrested between 16 and 19 February in 39 cities across the country, with 208 persons arrested in St. Petersburg, 65 in Moscow, and 30 in Nizhny Novgorod.<sup>146</sup> The Special Rapporteur noted that nearly 600 people were detained and at least 163 ‘were put into administrative detention’, while some ‘were tortured and ill-treated by police, with impunity’. Moreover, at least 119 persons were arrested on the day of Navalny’s funeral, ‘after the Russian authorities issued a public warning against any form of tribute to him.’<sup>147</sup>

As noted by OVD-Info, more than 135 persons were detained in connection with the March 2024 presidential elections, as Navalny’s supporters encouraged people to gather at polling stations at noon on 17 March, the last day of voting, to express their disagreement with the Russian government. According to OVD-Info, people who participated in this action or supported it on social media, as well as independent observers, ‘faced threats and pressure.’<sup>148</sup>

In November 2023, relatives of men mobilised during the ‘partial’ mobilisation formed a movement *Put Domoj* (Way Home), after ‘several anti-mobilisation protests and pickets’ took place in Moscow and other cities.<sup>149</sup> In mid-January 2024, security forces reportedly tried to detain participants at Moscow pickets who came to lay flowers at Eternal Flame near the Kremlin.<sup>150</sup> In other places, including St. Petersburg, authorities denied protest organisers permission to hold demonstrations, with some relatives reporting ‘intimidation, including police visits and warnings against challenging the Kremlin’s policies in Ukraine’.<sup>151</sup> ‘Sporadic

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<sup>141</sup> OVD-Info, Repressions Report. Summary of the First Seven Months of 2024, 3 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>142</sup> Meduza, Investigators accuse protesters of ‘armed resistance’ amid continuing crackdown in Russia’s Bashkortostan, 22 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>143</sup> OVD-Info, Хроника политпрессинга. Итоги первых семи месяцев 2024 года [Chronicle of Political Pressing. Results of the first seven months of 2024], 8 August 2024, [url](#)

<sup>144</sup> OVD-Info, Information on protests in memory of Alexei Navalny 16-19<sup>th</sup> February, 22 February 22 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>145</sup> AI, Russia: Authorities brutally suppress mourners of Aleksei Navalny, 19 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>146</sup> OVD-Info, Information on protests in memory of Alexei Navalny 16-19<sup>th</sup> February, 22 February 22 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>147</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/57/59], 13 September 2024, [url](#), para 35

<sup>148</sup> OVD-Info, Repressions Report. Summary of the First Seven Months of 2024, 3 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>149</sup> Moscow Times (The), White Scarves and Flowers: Wives and Mothers of Mobilized Soldiers Take Resentment to the Kremlin, 16 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>150</sup> Euronews, Wives of Russian soldiers lay flowers in Moscow to protest against the Kremlin, 15 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>151</sup> Moscow Times (The), White Scarves and Flowers: Wives and Mothers of Mobilized Soldiers Take Resentment to the Kremlin, 16 January 2024, [url](#)



demonstrations' by various groups of wives demanding their husbands' return continued for months.<sup>152</sup> At the end of May 2024, MoJ designated *Put Domoj* and its main activist, Maria Andreeva, 'foreign agents' and accused the wives of mobilised soldiers of promoting participation in unauthorised protests and spreading 'false information' about Russian authorities' decisions and policies.<sup>153</sup>

As reported by the UN Special Rapporteur, no police officers implicated in the torture and mistreatment of the protesters in 2022, including those responsible for sexual violence, were held accountable.<sup>154</sup>

#### **4.2. Political opponents and activists**

Since the full-scale invasion in Ukraine, '[p]rosecution and imprisonment of prominent opponents of the regime for their public statements, including anti-war ones, has become a trend,' as authorities used 'show trials' as a tool 'of ideological control', as reported by SOVA Research Center. Throughout 2023, opposition activists faced an increase in charges, particularly, with authorities using charges on participation in an 'extremist' association' against Alexei Navalny supporters.<sup>155</sup>

In April 2024, a programmer from Moscow region was sentenced to seven years in prison on charges of participation in Navalny's 'underground headquarters'.<sup>156</sup> In July 2024, the Supreme Court upheld the August 2023 sentence for Daniel Kholodny, the former technical director of Navalny's YouTube channel,<sup>157</sup> sentenced to eight years in prison for participation in the activities of an extremist association'.<sup>158</sup> Two regional Navalny office leaders, Lilia Chanysheva and Ksenia Fadeyeva, coordinators of the offices in Bashkortostan and Tomsk, sentenced to nine-and-a-half and nine years in prison,<sup>159</sup> were exchanged in the August 2024 prison exchange between Russia and western countries.<sup>160</sup>

The Russia-based Socio-Ecological Union (RSEU)<sup>161</sup> reported that in 2023 authorities initiated 10 criminal cases and at least 78 administrative protocols against environmental activists. The source noted that more than 174 environmental activists and 29 organisations [informal

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<sup>152</sup> Reuters, Russian soldiers' wives demand defence minister return their men from the front, 3 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>153</sup> Moscow Times (The), Минюст объявил иноагентом движение жен мобилизованных «Путь домой» [MoJ declared the movement of wives of mobilized people "Way Home" a foreign agent], 1 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>154</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/57/59, 13 September 2024, [url](#), para 33

<sup>155</sup> SOVA, Inappropriate Enforcement of Anti-Extremist Legislation in Russia in 2023, 2 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>156</sup> OVD-Info, Repressions Report. Summary of the First Seven Months of 2024, 3 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>157</sup> Moscow Times (The), Russian Supreme Court Upholds Navalny's 19-Year 'Extremism' Sentence, 22 July 2024, [url](#)

<sup>158</sup> SOVA, Inappropriate Enforcement of Anti-Extremist Legislation in Russia in 2023, 2 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>159</sup> Moscow Times (The), Russian Supreme Court Upholds Navalny's 19-Year 'Extremism' Sentence, 22 July 2024, [url](#)

<sup>160</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/57/59], 13 September 2024, [url](#), para 39

<sup>161</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](#)



translation] ‘faced pressure’ during the year, with 32 activists reporting attacks. The instances of ‘pressure’ were recorded in 36 regions, with Moscow seeing the highest number of cases (51), followed by Krasnodar region (21).<sup>162</sup> At the end of August 2025, RSEU-established Environment Crisis Group, noted that at least 74 environmental activists had ‘faced pressure’ in relation for expressing dissent against the war in Ukraine, with the highest number of incidents recorded in Arkhangelsk region, the Komi Republic, and Moscow. According to the source, 11 environmental activists were found guilty in criminal cases, while 9 activists were under criminal prosecution. Based on the description of the cases given by the source, environmental activists were largely prosecuted for the dissemination of ‘false’ information about the Russian army (six out of 14 described cases) and the discreditation of the Russian army (3 cases), other charges included vandalism, the use of violence against a policeman, the rehabilitation of Nazism, participation in an armed group, and illicit manufacture of explosives.<sup>163</sup>

In an email correspondence with EUAA, a human rights lawyer who preferred to remain anonymous, explained that there were some cases where close relatives of political opponents, as well as activists and journalists, were ‘targeted.’ According to the source, ‘most often’ this happened at the border crossing upon their entry or exit from Russia. The source noted that they knew at least five cases where the relatives of political opponents, activists, and journalists were interrogated, and their mobile phones were ‘searched and copied,’ which they considered ‘as a threat or warning to their family members.’ Family members risked house searches and interrogations, where there was ‘a politically motivated criminal investigation against their relatives.’<sup>164</sup>

### **4.3. Journalists**

Throughout 2023, Russian authorities applied pressure on media outlets to constrain independent reporting on sensitive topics, such as the war in Ukraine, corruption, environmental problems, and criticism of local or federal authorities.<sup>165</sup> Reports on these subjects, as well as on anti-government protests and conduct of the Russian military forces in Ukraine, were often labelled as extremist or justifying terrorism, leading to criminal charges against journalists who covered these topics.<sup>166</sup> Moreover, journalists perceived to have ties to opposition figures, including Navalny’s Anti-Corruption Foundation were detained under ‘extremism and terrorism’ charges.<sup>167</sup> Other charges used against journalists included the

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<sup>162</sup> EKG, Обзор за 2023 год [Review for 2023], 30 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>163</sup> EKG, Обзор эпизодов давления на экоактивистов по «антивоенным» статьям [Review of episodes of pressure on eco-activists under ‘anti-war’ articles], 26 August 2024, [url](#)

<sup>164</sup> Human rights lawyer, Email correspondence, 14 November 2024

<sup>165</sup> USDOS, Russia 2023 Human Rights Report, 22 April 2024, [url](#), p. 34

<sup>166</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/54/54], 15 September 2023, [url](#), para 54

<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, [A/HRC/57/59], 13 September 2024, [url](#), para 46





charges on discreditation of the Russian army and the governmental institutions, incitement to hatred, and propaganda of LGBTIQ.<sup>168</sup>

In its 2024 Index, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) ranked Russia 162<sup>nd</sup> out of 180 countries, citing widespread bans on independent media, with many outlets labelled as ‘foreign agents’ or ‘undesirable organisations’ and noting that journalists were increasingly charged with spreading of ‘false’ information extremism, and justification of terrorism.<sup>169</sup> According to OVD-Info, in the period between 1 January 2024 and 23 October 2024, 272 journalists<sup>170</sup> were charged under the Code of Administrative Offences, a significant increase from 68 in 2023. In addition, during the same period of 2024, 162 journalists were fined (compared to 106 during the whole year of 2023), 34 journalists detained (25 in 2023), and 13 arrested (23 in 2023). Additionally, five journalists were labelled as ‘extremist’ or ‘terrorist’ (two in 2023) and eight were placed on the police wanted list (3 in 2023). Furthermore, six journalists reportedly received threats (12 in 2023) and five were physically assaulted (11 in 2023).<sup>171</sup>

As of 1 August 2024, 292 media actors were classified as ‘foreign agents’ or ‘undesirable organisations’, accounting for about one-third of the total 810 persons and organisations included in the respective lists of the Russian MoJ, making media the most targeted sector.<sup>172</sup> As reported by OVD-Info, between 1 January 2024 and 23 October 2024, 41 journalists were added to the list of ‘foreign agents’ (79 in the whole year of 2023) and 6 were recognised as ‘undesirable organisations’ (13 in 2023).<sup>173</sup>

In its annual data, Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) noted that 22 journalists were imprisoned in Russia as of 1 December 2023, including 6 journalists on ‘false news’ charges.<sup>174</sup> According to OVD-Info, as of 8 August 2024, at least five journalists were in pre-trial detention on suspicion of involvement in ‘Navalny’s “extremist” structures.’<sup>175</sup> As noted by RFS, 34 journalists and 6 media workers remained in detention as of 8 November 2024.<sup>176</sup>

In April 2024, independent media outlet Verstka reported that the most common legal charges against journalists was spreading ‘false news’.<sup>177</sup> In August 2024, a journalist, who had been in detention since July 2022, was sentenced to 8 years in prison for reporting on war crimes by Russian military forces in Bucha and Mariupol by a court in Altay region.<sup>178</sup> In September 2024, a journalist, who had first reported about desertion cases among the

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<sup>168</sup> AI, The State of World Human Rights, April 2024, [url](#), p. 317

<sup>169</sup> RFS, Russia, n.d., [url](#), accessed 8 November 2024

<sup>170</sup> The statistics of OVD-Info include persons involved in creating, publishing, or distributing media content across traditional outlets, unregistered publications, and social media. See, OVD-Info, Persecution of journalists since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine: data, 23 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>171</sup> OVD-Info, Persecution of journalists since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine: data, 23 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>172</sup> RFS, Russia: Independent media are the primary targets of Kremlin laws against “foreign agents” and “undesirable organisations”, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>173</sup> OVD-Info, Persecution of journalists since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine: data, 23 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>174</sup> CPJ, 22 Journalists Imprisoned in Russia, 1 December 2023, [url](#)

<sup>175</sup> OVD-Info, Repressions Report. Summary of the First Seven Months of 2024, 3 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>176</sup> RFS, Russia, n.d., [url](#), accessed 8 November 2024

<sup>177</sup> Verstka, Не менее 26 журналистов осуждены или находятся под арестом в России [At least 26 journalists have been convicted or are under arrest in Russia], 30 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>178</sup> IPI, Editor-in-chief of Listok newspaper sentenced to 8 years in prison for covering Ukraine war, 30 August 2024, [url](#)



National Guard forces and had remained in detention since April 2022, was sentenced to five-and-a-half years imprisonment by a court in Khakassia.<sup>179</sup>

Besides arrests, administrative fines, and criminal charges, journalists faced extrajudicial harassment,<sup>180</sup> including direct threats to their physical safety due to their reporting activities.<sup>181</sup> The violent assault against journalist Elena Milashina and human rights lawyer Alexander Nemov in Chechnya in July 2023<sup>182</sup> remained unsolved, as well as the killings of prominent journalists in 2000s.<sup>183</sup> As reported by RFS in December 2023, approximately 1 500 to 1 800 journalists left Russia after February 2022, with over 45 % of journalists in exile reporting various threats, including intimidation, cyber-harassment, and even murder attempts.

#### **4.4. Human rights defenders and lawyers**

After the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Russian authorities forcibly closed several prominent human rights NGOs,<sup>184</sup> including the Moscow Helsinki Group, the Sakharov Centre, the SOVA Centre, and *Chelovek i Zakon* (Man and Law) in the Mari El Republic<sup>185</sup> citing non-compliance to ‘foreign agent’ regulations or other technicalities.<sup>186</sup> As reported by Frontline Defenders, human rights defenders in Russia faced significant challenges, including harassment, surveillance, police raids, physical attacks, threats, arbitrary detention, ill-treatment, and killings. The situation was particularly dire for those advocating for LGBTIQ rights, ethnic and religious minorities and activists in the North Caucasus and Crimea.<sup>187</sup>

Lawyers performing their professional duties by handling high-profile political cases<sup>188</sup> and assisting clients facing politically motivated prosecution,<sup>189</sup> such as opposition activists, anti-war protesters, human rights defenders, victims of human rights violations,<sup>190</sup> and political prisoners,<sup>191</sup> found themselves under severe pressure, including administrative and criminal

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<sup>179</sup> CPJ, Russian court sentences journalist Mikhail Afanasyev to 5 ½ years in prison for ‘fake news’, 7 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>180</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/54/54], 15 September 2023, [url](#), para 54

<sup>181</sup> USDOS, Russia 2023 Human Rights Report, 22 April 2024, [url](#), p. 39

<sup>182</sup> OC Media, Russian journalist and lawyer attacked in Chechnya, 4 July 2023, [url](#)

<sup>183</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/54/54], 15 September 2023, [url](#), para 53

<sup>184</sup> Human Rights Watch, Russia – Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>185</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/54/54], 15 September 2023, [url](#), para 84

<sup>186</sup> AI, The State of World Human Rights, April 2024, [url](#), p. 318

<sup>187</sup> Frontline Defenders, #Russian Federation, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>188</sup> AI, The State of World Human Rights, April 2024, [url](#), p. 319

<sup>189</sup> USDOS, Russia 2023 Human Rights Report, 22 April 2024, [url](#), pp. 17-18

<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 [A/HRC/54/54], 15 September 2023, [url](#), para 95

<sup>191</sup> USDOS, Russia 2023 Human Rights Report, 22 April 2024, [url](#), p. 16



charges as well as physical violence.<sup>192</sup> In October 2023, three lawyers of Alexei Navalny were arrested on charges of ‘participation in an extremist association’<sup>193</sup> for enabling contact between Navalny and his supporters while he was in jail; they faced up to six years in prison.<sup>194</sup> The trial began on 12 September 2024 and was conducted behind closed doors.<sup>195</sup> No information about the course of the trial was found within the time constraints of this query. Two other Navalny’s lawyers had left Russia and were put under trial in absentia.<sup>196</sup>

## 5. LGBTIQ persons

Institutional discrimination<sup>197</sup> and hostility toward LGBTIQ persons in Russia increased after the adoption of the so-called ‘anti-gay propaganda’ law in 2013, which banned the ‘promotion of non-traditional sexual relations’ to minors.<sup>198</sup> The law’s vague wording allowed for selective enforcement, leading to censorship of positive or neutral expressions related to sexual orientation and gender identity.<sup>199</sup> In December 2022, the 2013 legislation was expanded to prohibit the so-called ‘gay propaganda’ among adults, effectively outlawing any media or public representation of LGBTIQ relations as well as advocating for the rights of LGBTIQ people.<sup>200</sup>

In July 2023, a newly introduced law prohibited gender-affirming medical treatment,<sup>201</sup> health care for trans people,<sup>202</sup> as well as ‘legal gender recognition for transgender people’.<sup>203</sup> The law also revoked previously registered marriages of transgender people, prohibited adoption and guardianship of children by transgender persons,<sup>204</sup> prohibited changes to gender markers in official documents, and permitted ‘coercive medical interventions on intersex children.’<sup>205</sup> In its 2024 ranking, ILGA-Europe placed Russia at the lowest level, noting that Russian legislation made ‘legal gender recognition completely impossible.’<sup>206</sup> As reported by openDemocracy, ‘intersex and gender non-confirming people’ who tried to amend their

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<sup>192</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/54/54], 15 September 2023, [url](#), para 95

<sup>193</sup> AI, The State of World Human Rights, April 2024, [url](#), p. 319

<sup>194</sup> Human Rights Watch, Russia – Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>195</sup> Guardian (The), Three Navalny lawyers go on trial in Russia for ‘extremism’, 12 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>196</sup> Defenders Belarus, In Russia, Navalny’s attorneys are being tried: Three attorneys behind bars and listed as ‘terrorists’, two more managed to leave but are arrested in absentia, 15 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>197</sup> INHS, Authoritarian backlash on LGBTQ rights: a case of Russian anti LGBTQ laws and the increase in the level of hate crime that they triggered, 2 August 2024, [url](#)

<sup>198</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/54/54], 15 September 2023, [url](#), para 37

<sup>199</sup> Conversation (The), Putin’s Russia: first arrests under new anti-LGBT laws mark new era of repression, 8 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>200</sup> France24, Russia adds ‘LGBT movement’ to ‘terrorists and extremists’ blacklist, 22 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>201</sup> Human Rights Watch, Russia – Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#); AI, The State of World Human Rights, April 2024, [url](#), p. 319

<sup>202</sup> Human Rights Watch, Russia – Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>203</sup> AI, The State of World Human Rights, April 2024, [url](#), p. 319

<sup>204</sup> AI, The State of World Human Rights, April 2024, [url](#), p. 319; Human Rights Watch, Russia – Events of 2023, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>205</sup> Human Rights Watch, Russia – Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>206</sup> ILGA-Europe, 2024 Rainbow Map, n.d., [url](#)



documents prior to the legislation were unsuccessful as their applications were rejected by civil registry offices.<sup>207</sup> In January 2024, LGBTIQ rights NGO Sphere reported on three instances where police asked, called or sent summonses to transgender people to ask about circumstances in which they got gender transition certificates: two of these cases were recorded in Arkhangelsk region and one in St. Petersburg.<sup>208</sup>

Sources noted that LGBTIQ people in Russia were subjected to so-called conversion therapy,<sup>209</sup> including through deceit and abduction organised by parents<sup>210</sup> and relatives.<sup>211</sup> In March 2024, independent media Current Time reported that at least 12 institutions and private practices located in Moscow, Moscow region, Rostov region, the North Caucasus and other regions in Russia were offering LGBTIQ conversion therapy services.<sup>212</sup>

On 30 November 2023, the Russian Supreme Court, in a closed hearing,<sup>213</sup> ruled in favour of the MoJ lawsuit and recognised the 'international public LGBT movement' as an extremist organisation,<sup>214</sup> effectively banning it. The MoJ accused the movement 'of inciting social and religious discord',<sup>215</sup> even though no such organisation existed. The ruling of the Supreme Court raised concerns regarding the risk of arbitrary targeting of LGBTIQ persons and activists, as it could serve as a basis for administrative and criminal charges.<sup>216</sup> In the aftermath of the ruling, several LGBTIQ organisations and activists either stopped their activities or left Russia. Shortly after the Supreme Court's ruling, police conducted raids on LGBTIQ-friendly clubs across multiple cities, taking photos of owners' documents and intimidating them.<sup>217</sup> On 1 March 2024, the MoJ 'included the 'international public LGBT movement' and its structural divisions in the list of extremist organisations'.<sup>218</sup>

In mid-December 2023, authorities started imposing punishments under Article 20.3 of the Code of Administrative Offenses on propaganda or public demonstration of symbols of extremist organisations for the display of rainbow-decorated objects as symbols of LGBT identity.<sup>219</sup> The first convictions on administrative charges were recorded in the first months of 2024 and included a punishment with a fine of 1 000 roubles [approximately 10 euros] for a

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<sup>207</sup> openDemocracy, Russia's draconian new law is forcing trans people to flee the country, 26 July 2023, [url](#)

<sup>208</sup> Sphere, Telegram, 19 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>209</sup> Reuters, Russian sexologists to target homosexuality, other 'disorders' under new rules , 29 June 2023, [url](#);

Moscow Times (The), Conversion Therapy Is a Symptom of Russia's Crisis. I Know, I Survived It, 4 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>210</sup> Washington Post (The), In Russia, parents are having gay children abducted to be 'cured', 22 December 2023, [url](#)

<sup>211</sup> BBC News, Tricked into conversion therapy in Russia for being trans, 28 July 2024, [url](#)

<sup>212</sup> Current Time, Журналистское расследование впервые запечатлело сеансы конверсионной терапии ЛГБТК-персон в России. Главное из фильма проекта "Система" [Investigative journalism captures for the first time the conversion therapy sessions of LGBTQ persons in Russia. Highlights from the film of the Sistema project], 4 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>213</sup> Human Rights Watch, Russia – Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#); SOVA Research Center, Inappropriate Enforcement of Anti-Extremist Legislation in Russia in 2023, 2 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>214</sup> Human Rights Watch, Russia – Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

AI, The State of World Human Rights, April 2024, [url](#), p. 319; AI, The State of World Human Rights, April 2024, [url](#), p. 319; SOVA, Inappropriate Enforcement of Anti-Extremist Legislation in Russia in 2023, 2 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>215</sup> Human Rights Watch, Russia – Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>216</sup> USDOS, Russia 2023 Human Rights Report, 22 April 2024, [url](#), p. 89

<sup>217</sup> AI, The State of World Human Rights, April 2024, [url](#), p. 319

<sup>218</sup> SOVA, Inappropriate Enforcement of Anti-Extremist Legislation in Russia in 2023, 2 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>219</sup> SOVA, Inappropriate Enforcement of Anti-Extremist Legislation in Russia in 2023, 2 May 2024, [url](#)



man who displayed an LGBTIQ flag in a social media post by a court in Volgograd city and five-day administrative detention for a woman wearing earrings with an image of a rainbow in Nizhny Novgorod.<sup>220</sup> In the period between 31 January 2023 and 8 November 2024, Sova Research Center recorded 32 cases, in which people were prosecuted under Article 20.3 for the display of LGBTIQ symbols. In the cases described by the source, penalties varied from fines of 1 000 to 2 000 roubles [approximately 10 – 19 euros] to up to 15 days of arrest, with most of the described cases involving posts in social media and Telegram.<sup>221</sup> Furthermore, as noted by IStories, around 200 cases related to ‘LGBT propaganda’ (Article 6.21 of the Code of Administrative Offences<sup>222</sup>) were brought before the courts in 2023 and 113 in the first half of 2024.<sup>223</sup>

The first use of criminal charges for ‘membership in an extremist organisation’ against people related to LGBTIQ activities was reported in March 2024 in Orenburg,<sup>224</sup> where the owner<sup>225</sup> and two employees of an LGBTIQ club were arrested and placed in pre-trial detention in a closed hearing.<sup>226</sup> No information on the outcome of the court trial was found within the time constraints of this query. In October 2024, a 22-old female owner of a gay club in Chita was charged with extremism and placed under house arrest, following a police raid at the club.<sup>227</sup> Two oral sources contacted by EUAA in November 2024 noted that at least five criminal cases for participation in an extremist organisation were initiated against LGBTIQ people: next to the cases described above, the criminal proceedings were reported in the cities of Ulyanovsk, Samara, and Kirov.<sup>228</sup>

As of 1 August 2024, 25 persons and organisations providing LGBTIQ support were included to the list of ‘foreign agents’.<sup>229</sup> Among the organisations designated as ‘foreign agents’ was Centre T, which focuses on the rights and welfare of transgender people<sup>230</sup> and the Rainbow Association, an LGBTIQ human rights organisation.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> Reuters, Russia makes first convictions for ‘LGBT extremism’ following ban, 1 February 2024, [url](#); HRW, Russia: First Convictions Under LGBT ‘Extremist’ Ruling, 15 February 2024, [url](#)

<sup>221</sup> SOVA, Преследование по ч. 1 ст. 20.3 КоАП за символику ЛГБТ-движения. 2024 год [Prosecution under Article 20.3, Part 1 of the Administrative Code for symbols of the LGBT movement. 2024], 8 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>222</sup> OVD-Info, “An ideology for War”: Why Putin Needs Queerphobia Today, 30 November 2023, [url](#)

<sup>223</sup> IStories, The Traitors, the spies, the terrorists, 18 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>224</sup> France 24, Russia adds ‘LGBT movement’ to ‘terrorist and extremist’ blacklist, 22 March 2024, [url](#); Conversation (The), Putin’s Russia: first arrest under new anti-LGBT laws mark new era of repression, 8 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>225</sup> Conversation (The), Putin’s Russia: first arrest under new anti-LGBT laws mark new era of repression, 8 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>226</sup> BBC News, Two arrested in Russia’s first LGBTIQ+ extremism case, 20 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>227</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europe, Owner of Siberian gay club charged with ‘extremism’ and placed under house arrest, 28 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>228</sup> Human rights lawyer, Email correspondence, 14 November 2024; Pavlov, I., Email correspondence, 15 November 2024

<sup>229</sup> RFS, Russia: Independent media are the primary targets of Kremlin laws against “foreign agents” and “undesirable organisations”, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>230</sup> Human Rights Watch, Russia – Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>231</sup> USDOS, Russia 2023 Human Rights Report, 22 April 2024, [url](#), p. 90



Sources noted intimidation faced by LGBTIQ people by state actors in Russia,<sup>232</sup> such as arbitrary detentions and ‘false accusations of criminal activity’.<sup>233</sup> As noted by USDOS, the police failed to investigate instances of extrajudicial violence towards LGBTIQ people in Russia.<sup>234</sup> While no recent data on violence towards LGBTIQ people was found within the time constraints of this query, a 2022 article from the independent outlet Bumaga quoted lawyer Sergey Golubok stating that he was unaware of any hate-motivated crimes against LGBTIQ people being effectively investigated.<sup>235</sup> In June 2024, NGOs Coming out and SOS North Caucasus noted that hate crimes in Russia were not ‘effectively investigated and punished’, with the police refusing to include the hate motive in the investigations of murders of LGBTIQ people.<sup>236</sup>

### **Situation of LGBTIQ people in Chechnya**

Instances of violence against LGBTIQ people by state actors were particularly reported in Chechnya where police and security forces were reportedly involved in abductions, and torture of LGBTIQ persons, including with the use of sexual violence,<sup>237</sup> as well as in attacks, harassment, and threatening of LGBTIQ activists.<sup>238</sup> As noted by the UN Special Rapporteur, when LGBTIQ people were released from police custody in Chechnya, ‘their families were often given free rein to murder them as “honour killings”, without facing any legal consequences’.<sup>239</sup>

The UN Special Rapporteur also reported on six known cases in which ‘LGBT persons were abducted by Chechen law enforcement and threatened with long prison sentences or death, unless they signed a contract to join the war against Ukraine.’<sup>240</sup> In September 2024, NGO SOS North Caucasus reported on seven cases from before the announcement of ‘partial’ mobilisation in 2022, where Chechen security forces subjected gay men to threats of detention on fabricated cases with the information of their sexual orientation to be revealed to their cell mates unless they volunteered to fight in Ukraine or paid a ransom of 1.5 million roubles [14 490 euros]. According to the NGO, three of the detained men were compelled to volunteer as they could not afford the payment. In 2023, as reported by the same source,

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<sup>232</sup> UN, UN experts condemn Russian Supreme Court decision banning “LGBT movement” as “extremist,” 7 December 2023, [url](#); USDOS, Russia 2023 Human Rights Report, 22 April 2024, [url](#), p. 86; Bondarenko, I., et al, Why does the Kremlin Need Queerphobia?, Carnegie Endowment, 6 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>233</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/54/54], 15 September 2023 [url](#), para 41

<sup>234</sup> USDOS, Russia 2023 Human Rights Report, 22 April 2024, [url](#), p. 86

<sup>235</sup> Bumaga, How hate crimes are committed against LGBT people in St Petersburg and how investigations into these crimes conclude, 13 May 2022, [url](#)

<sup>236</sup> Coming out and SOS North Caucasus, Input on Killing of LGBTIQ+ persons in Russia, June 2024, [url](#), pp. 2-3

<sup>237</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/57/59], 13 September 2024, [url](#), para 97

<sup>238</sup> USDOS, Russia 2023 Human Rights Report, 22 April 2024, [url](#), p. 86

<sup>239</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/57/59], 13 September 2024, [url](#), para 97

<sup>240</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/57/59], 13 September 2024, [url](#), para 97



Chechen law enforcement officers detained several LGBTIQ people during a raid, with women being released to their relatives and men forced to join the volunteers to fight in Ukraine.<sup>241</sup>

As noted in a joint report by NGO Coming out and SOS North Caucasus, in cases of extrajudicial executions of LGBTIQ persons in Chechnya, ‘various state and non-state actors’ of the republic, connected with each other through ‘corruption schemes, nepotism, and state-enforced practices of collective responsibility’ were working together to hide the fact of a committed crime.<sup>242</sup> USDOS reported that Chechen authorities ignored claims of extrajudicial killings and mass torture of LGBTIQ people, even denying the actual existence of LGBTIQ persons in the republic.<sup>243</sup>

## 6. Military service

### 6.1. General developments

On 16 September 2024, President Putin ordered the increase of the Russian Armed Forces (RAF) to 2.38 million personnel, including 1.5 million active servicemen,<sup>244</sup> up from the increase to 1.32 million ordered on 1 December 2023.<sup>245</sup>

#### The use of the electronic register

At the end of April 2024, the Russian government announced a decree on the establishment of the ‘Unified register of information on citizens subject to initial military registration, citizens on the military register, and citizens not on the military register but obliged to be on the military register.’<sup>246</sup> The unified digital register should combine personal data about Russians from a range of government institutions, such as the tax service, law enforcement, the pension fund, and medical facilities,<sup>247</sup> and have detailed records of persons eligible for military service.<sup>248</sup> Besides the Ministry of Defence (MoD), the Federal Security Service (FSB) and other security agencies would also have access to the electronic register.<sup>249</sup> While conscripts to obligatory military service were reportedly the main group for whom the unified digital

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<sup>241</sup> SOS North Caucasus, Чеченские силовики принудительно отправляют на войну задержанных геев [Chechen security forces forcibly send detained gay men to war], 4 September 2024, [url](#); Novaya Gazeta Europe, Chechen security forces accused of forcing detained gay men to fight in Ukraine, 5 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>242</sup> Coming out and SOS North Caucasus, Input on Killing of LGBTIQ+ persons in Russia, June 2024, [url](#), p. 3

<sup>243</sup> USDOS, Russia 2023 Human Rights Report, 22 April 2024, [url](#), p. 5

<sup>244</sup> Reuters, Putin orders Russian army to become second largest after China’s at 1.5 million-strong, 16 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>245</sup> RFE/RL, ‘The Only Option’: To Escape War In Ukraine, More Russian Soldiers Are Deserting, 2 December 2023, [url](#)

<sup>246</sup> Meduza, Уже осенью в России заработает единый реестр электронных повесток. Что важно знать потенциальным призывникам? [A unified register of electronic summonses will be launched in Russia as early as autumn. What is important for potential conscripts to know?], 29 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>247</sup> openDemocracy, Russia plans crackdown on men avoiding the draft, 11 April 2023, [url](#); EUAA, Major developments in the Russian Federation in relation to military service, 3 October 2023, [url](#), p. 7

<sup>248</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europe, Three Russian regions begin to test issuing digital military conscription notices, 18 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>249</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](#)



register was intended to prevent draft evasion,<sup>250</sup> it could be also used for drafting people in the reserve in case of mobilisation.<sup>251</sup>

On 18 September, the test period of a digital military draft system started being tested through the website [реестрповесток.пф](https://reestrpovestok.pf),<sup>252</sup> translated as 'draft notice register'.<sup>253</sup> According to information on the website, the system was tested in the Ryazan and Sakhalin regions, as well as in the Mari El Republic.<sup>254</sup> As explained by the Ministry of Digital Development in mid-September 2024, sending out summonses during the testing period was purely informational and did not impose any legally binding actions.<sup>255</sup> The electronic register had to be taken into use from 1 November 2024.<sup>256</sup> However, as reported by RFE/RL on 1 November 2024, the implementation date was postponed to January 2025.<sup>257</sup> When being called up for military service, a person would also receive a notification through the state government services portal, Gosuslugi.<sup>258</sup>

According to the law, a draft notice would be considered delivered seven days after it was lodged in the electronic register, requiring the person to report to the military enlistment office (military commissariat) within this time.<sup>259</sup> From the day when the draft notice is lodged in the register, the person will be prohibited from leaving Russia.<sup>260</sup> 20 days after a draft notice was entered into the register, the person would face other restrictions<sup>261</sup>: a ban on registration as an individual entrepreneur and self-employed, a ban on registration of ownership rights to real estate, as well as on the transfer of ownership rights to real estate as a result of sale and purchase transactions, donation, inheritance and in other cases, ban on the right to drive a car and registration of a car with the State Automobile Inspection Service, and a prohibition to

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<sup>250</sup> Moscow Times (The), Russia Test-Launches Military Summons Website, 18 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>251</sup> Meduza, Уже осенью в России заработает единый реестр электронных повесток. Что важно знать потенциальным призывникам? [A unified register of electronic summonses will be launched in Russia as early as autumn. What is important for potential conscripts to know?], 29 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>252</sup> Prizyv k sovesti, Telegram, 18 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>253</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europe, Three Russian regions begin to test issuing digital military conscription notices, 18 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>254</sup> Moscow Times (The), Russia Test-Launches Military Summons Website, 18 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>255</sup> Prizyv k sovesti, Telegram, 18 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>256</sup> BBC Monitoring, Briefing: Russia setting up electronic 'single register' of men subject to draft, 29 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>257</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>258</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europe, Three Russian regions begin to test issuing digital military conscription notices, 18 September 2024, [url](#); 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>259</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>260</sup> Meduza, Уже осенью в России заработает единый реестр электронных повесток. Что важно знать потенциальным призывникам? [A unified register of electronic summonses will be launched in Russia as early as autumn. What is important for potential conscripts to know?], 29 April 2024, [url](#); Moscow Times (The), Russia Test-Launches Military Summons Website, 18 September 2024, [url](#); Prizyv k sovesti, Telegram, 18 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>261</sup> Prizyv k sovesti, Telegram, 18 September 2024, [url](#); Meduza, Уже осенью в России заработает единый реестр электронных повесток. Что важно знать потенциальным призывникам? [A unified register of electronic summonses will be launched in Russia as early as autumn. What is important for potential conscripts to know?], 29 April 2024, [url](#)



conclude credit agreements (including mortgage agreements) and loan agreements.<sup>262</sup> After appearing at a military enlistment office, the restrictions, including the travel ban,<sup>263</sup> were to be lifted.<sup>264</sup>

## **6.2. Conscription to obligatory military service**

A 12-months long military service is obligatory for all men in Russia aged between 18 and 30 years old.<sup>265</sup> The raise of the upper age of conscription into obligatory military service from 27 to 30 years was enforced on 1 January 2024.<sup>266</sup> Starting from the spring draft, young men who turned 27 years old by 1 January 2024 were to be subjected to conscription.<sup>267</sup> The number of conscripts to be enlisted during the 2024 autumn draft, lasting from 1 October 2024 to 31 December 2024, was set at 133 000.<sup>268</sup> With 150 000 conscripts drafted during the spring 2024 draft, the total number of conscripts in 2024 was projected at 283 000.<sup>269</sup> In 2023, 147 000 young men were conscripted during the spring draft and 130 000 during the autumn draft.<sup>270</sup>

In the spring and autumn drafts of 2024, conscription was reportedly organised in the Russian-occupied Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson regions as well as in illegally annexed Crimea.<sup>271</sup> As noted by the Representative Office of the President of Ukraine in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, the spring 2024 conscription campaign was the 19<sup>th</sup> conscription campaign conducted by Russia in Crimea since 2015, conscripting in total around 44 500 young men.<sup>272</sup> According to Ukrainian officials, Russian authorities threatened Crimea residents who tried to avoid conscription with criminal prosecution, with 206 out of 520 recorded cases having occurred after February 2022.<sup>273</sup>

In March 2024, a Single conscription point (SCP, Russian: *Ediny Punkt Prizyva*) building was opened in Moscow,<sup>274</sup> as ‘an innovation,’ reportedly planned to be gradually implemented

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<sup>262</sup> Meduza, Уже осенью в России заработает единый реестр электронных повесток. Что важно знать потенциальным призывникам? [A unified register of electronic summonses will be launched in Russia as early as autumn. What is important for potential conscripts to know?], 29 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>263</sup> Takie dela, «Цифровой ГУЛАГ шагает по стране» [‘A digital gulag is marching across the country’], 23 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>264</sup> Prizyv k sovesti, Telegram, 18 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>265</sup> Euronews, Russia’s autumn conscription: How many of the 133,000 draftees will end up in Ukraine?, 1 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>266</sup> Reuters, Putin signs decree on spring military conscription, 31 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>267</sup> Mkala.ru, Осенний призыв в армию – 2024: сроки, условия проведения и отсрочки [Autumn call-up to the army - 2024: terms, conditions and deferrals], 30 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>268</sup> Euronews, Russia’s autumn conscription: How many of the 133,000 draftees will end up in Ukraine?, 1 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>269</sup> Moscow Times (The), Russian Military to Draft 133K Conscripts in Fall Call-Up, 30 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>270</sup> Statista, Number of military conscripts in Russia, from 2023, to 2023, by draft, September 2023, [url](#)

<sup>271</sup> UNN, Russia starts conscription in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine – National Resistance Center, 2 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>272</sup> TSN, Starting from April 1, the 19<sup>th</sup> illegal conscription campaign has started in the occupied Crimea, 2 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>273</sup> OstróV, Мобілізація в Криму: заманюють грошима та безкоштовною землею [Mobilisation in Crimea: lured by money and free land], 4 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>274</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



across all regions.<sup>275</sup> According to the official webpage of the SCP, the procedures conducted at SCP were registration, initial appointment, medical commission, and conscription board.<sup>276</sup> As reported by conscripts' rights defenders, SCP kept personal files and summoned young men through draft notices. Upon entry to the building, smartphones were confiscated, and attorneys were not allowed. The lack of communication means, as well as the inability of potential conscripts to leave SCP due to the use of an individual card for internal movement in the building, reportedly forced young men to undergo medical examinations outside the draft period, even if they were entitled to a deferral.<sup>277</sup> There was no information available in which regions SCP would be opened next.<sup>278</sup>

### **a) Use of irregular methods of conscription**

As noted in a report by four Russian organisations offering legal help to conscripts and soldiers,<sup>279</sup> instances of forced conscription during the draft campaigns were reported 'throughout the entire period of the full-scale war'.<sup>280</sup> During the autumn draft of 2023, according to legal advice group *Prizyv k sovesti*, forced conscription was reportedly more widespread than before, with legal aid groups reporting on such violations as involvement of police,<sup>281</sup> disregarding of health conditions, and seizing young men at their places of study.<sup>282</sup> In Moscow, young men were also reportedly seized from dormitories, apartments, streets, subway, and mosques.<sup>283</sup> Moreover, threats of prison and violence were reported at military enlistment offices and assembly points. In some instances, young men delivered to military enlistment offices or assembly points during raids, were able to leave them, while several people who had been sent to military units managed to obtain non-combat roles by refusing to take part in military service.<sup>284</sup>

During the spring 2024 conscription campaign, Russian officials reportedly conducted a mass roundup of residents of Simferopol district of occupied Crimea during one of the major Muslim holidays at the end of April 2024, as reported by the Crimean resistance movement Atesh.<sup>285</sup> In May 2024, as reported by Mediazona, around 50 young men trying to obtain deferrals from

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<sup>275</sup> Prizyv k sovesti, Telegram, 11 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>276</sup> Russia, Mos.ru, Ediny punkt prizyva, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>277</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>278</sup> Prizyv k sovesti, Telegram, 11 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>279</sup> The authors of the report are the coalition Call to Conscience (Prizyv k sovesti), Citizen. Army. Law (Grazhdanin, Armiya, Pravo), Conscript school (Shkola prizyvnik), and the Movement of Conscientious Objectors (Dvizhenie soznatelnyh otkaznikov).

<sup>280</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](#), pp. 3-4

<sup>281</sup> Prizyv k sovesti, Instrukcii 'Prizyva k sovesti' [Instructions from Prizyv k sovesti], 2023, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>282</sup> Prizyv k sovesti, Instrukcii 'Prizyva k sovesti' [Instructions from Prizyv k sovesti], 2023, n.d., [url](#); 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>283</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>284</sup> Prizyv k sovesti, Instrukcii 'Prizyva k sovesti' [Instructions from Prizyv k sovesti], 2023, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>285</sup> Ostrov, Мобілізація в Криму: заманюють грошима та безкоштовною землею [Mobilisation in Crimea: lured by money and free land], 4 May 2024, [url](#)



military service due to medical reasons were “lured” to an assembly point in Moscow to be prepared for departure to military units.<sup>286</sup>

Starting from the first week of October 2024, young men were reportedly unlawfully detained, with some being pressured into signing military contracts or subjected to conscription procedures.<sup>287</sup> As reported by *Prizyv k sovesti* (Call to Conscience), students were frequently summoned for ‘data verification’ or medical examinations. Reportedly, there were also cases, when students were taken to military enlistment offices despite having a valid deferral, with officials attempting to draft them on the spot.<sup>288</sup>

As noted by a human rights lawyer, conscripts in Moscow and St. Petersburg faced ‘more pressure in the second halves of the conscription periods.’ According to the source, young men in these cities were ‘less willing to join’ the military service, while the enlistment quotas of conscripts in these cities were higher, in the result of which military commissariats were ‘actively using police’ to meet the quota. The source also noted that another trend was ‘the pressure to so-called new Russian citizens’ – former migrants who had been naturalised in Russia but were avoiding military service. As reported by the source, police raids were conducted on diasporas’ places of residence to look for the conscripts, with practices ‘depending on the regional policies of the law enforcement agencies.’<sup>289</sup>

## **b) Alternative civilian service**

The right to alternative civilian service (ACS) as a replacement of the statutory military service is provided by the Russian Constitution.<sup>290</sup> Sources noted that while the interest towards ACS increased after the start of the full-scale war in Ukraine,<sup>291</sup> it was increasingly difficult to substitute military service with alternative civilian service,<sup>292</sup> with only a small proportion of conscripts called for military service undertaking ACS.<sup>293</sup> No information on the number of applications for ACS in 2023 or 2024 was found.

The duration of ACS is 18 months in branches of the armed forces and 21 months in civilian organisations,<sup>294</sup> with potential placements in the social sector,<sup>295</sup> including hospitals, nursing homes, and educational institutions.<sup>296</sup> To apply for ACS, a person has to submit his

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<sup>286</sup> Mediazona, Hunting season. Moscow conscripts seeking to avoid military service locked in assembly point, transported to army unit at night, 29 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>287</sup> Prizyv k sovesti, Telegram, 7 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>288</sup> Prizyv k sovesti, Telegram, 4 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>289</sup> Human rights lawyer, Email correspondence, 14 November 2024

<sup>290</sup> Forum 18, Russia: “Faith forbids him to take up arms, kill, or take oaths”, 19 December 2023, [url](#)

<sup>291</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>292</sup> Telegram, Адвокат Сергей Чугунов [Advocate Sergei Chugunov], 3 May 2023, [url](#); HRWF, Russia: Over 1000 conscientious objectors carrying out a civil service, 19 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>293</sup> Forum 18, Russia: “Faith forbids him to take up arms, kill, or take oaths”, 19 December 2023, [url](#)

<sup>294</sup> Lenta.ru, Что такое альтернативная гражданская служба: у кого есть право на АГС и как подать заявление [What is alternative civilian service: who is eligible for alternative civilian service and how to apply for it], 18 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>295</sup> Forum 18, Russia: “Faith forbids him to take up arms, kill, or take oaths”, 19 December 2023, [url](#); Prizyv k sovesti, Telegram, 13 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>296</sup> Forum 18, Russia: “Faith forbids him to take up arms, kill, or take oaths”, 19 December 2023, [url](#)



applications to military enlistment offices six months before the start of the draft period, which falls before April 1 for the spring draft and before October 1 for the autumn draft. Late applications can be submitted with a valid explanation for the delay.<sup>297</sup> As noted by human rights groups, after 2022, military enlistment offices were ‘actively’ using the pretext of a missed application deadline to refuse ACS.<sup>298</sup>

According to statistics by the Russian Federal Service of Labour and Employment (Rostrud), 2 022 young men were enrolled in alternative civil service as of 1 August 2024,<sup>299</sup> compared to 1 199 enrolled as of 1 August 2023<sup>300</sup> and 1 166 as of 1 August 2022.<sup>301</sup> In 2023, there were a limited number of vacancies available for ACS, with a maximum of 3 416 positions to be filled.<sup>302</sup> As noted in September 2024 by *Prizyv k sovesti*, not everyone granted ACS was assigned a placement due to shortage of available positions; however, such a person could not be sent to military service either.<sup>303</sup> According to the same source, applying to ACS became increasingly challenging in Moscow compared to other regions due to the establishment of the SCP. Until the end of June 2024, SCP officials reportedly delayed processing ACS applications, sending applicants to medical evaluations and making decisions to draft them into the army, in the result of which several applicants were sent to military units. After June 2024, however, processing of ACS applications reportedly resumed, and they were often approved.<sup>304</sup>

Reasons for refusal of ACS included missed application deadlines, insufficient substantiation why the person cannot undergo military service, false information, the lack of vacancies, and previous evasion of military service.<sup>305</sup> Although missing the application deadline was not a legally valid reason for refusal, military enlistment offices frequently cited it as a ground for ACS denial after 2022.<sup>306</sup> A refusal could be appealed in court, which automatically suspended the conscription process.<sup>307</sup> In December 2023, Forum 18 reported that four Baptist young men were denied ACS in Siberia, with only one succeeding in challenging the refusal in court. Another Baptist who applied for alternative civilian service in Kemerovo region

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<sup>297</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>298</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>299</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](#)

<sup>300</sup> Russia, Rostrud, Численность граждан, проходящих альтернативную гражданскую службу (по состоянию на 01.08.2023 г.) [Number of citizens undergoing alternative civilian service (as of 01.08.2023)], n.d., [url](#)

<sup>301</sup> Russia, Rostrud, Численность граждан, проходящих альтернативную гражданскую службу (по состоянию на 01.08.2022 г.) [Number of citizens undergoing alternative civilian service (as of 01.08.2022)], n.d., [url](#)

<sup>302</sup> Sluzhba pomoschi prizyvnikom, Альтернативная гражданская служба: условия и требования [Alternative civilian service: conditions and requirements], 21 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>303</sup> *Privyv k sovesti*, Telegram, 13 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>304</sup> *Privyv k sovesti*, Telegram, 31 July 2024, [url](#)

<sup>305</sup> Sluzhba pomoschi prizyvnikom, Альтернативная гражданская служба: условия и требования [Alternative civilian service: conditions and requirements], 21 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>306</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>307</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



was granted it by ‘a higher-level conscription service’, after an initial refusal at the district level.<sup>308</sup>

### **c) Punishments for draft evasion**

Draft evasion from statutory military service is a criminal offence, punished under Article 328 of the Criminal Code by a fine up to 200 000 roubles [1 932 euros] to imprisonment for up to two years. Draft evasion from ACS is punishable by penalties ranging from a fine of 80 000 roubles [723 euros] to arrest of up to six months.<sup>309</sup>

Since January 2024, Article 328 of the Criminal Code was applicable to persons aged 18-30, who failed to report to the military enlistment office, whether to start their military service or to secure a deferral.<sup>310</sup> As explained by legal aid groups, a criminal case for draft evasion could be initiated if a person ignored draft notices during two or more draft periods,<sup>311</sup> without having appealed the conscription decision and if draft notices were delivered in the way stipulated by law.<sup>312</sup> During the 2024 autumn draft, a draft notice was either to be delivered in person and signed by the person it was sent to or to be delivered via registered mail.<sup>313</sup>

In 2023, based on the Russian official judicial statistics, 901 persons were punished for draft evasion from military service and 3 persons from ACS.<sup>314</sup> Of them, 897 were punished with a fine, 3 received suspended sentences, and 3 were acquitted.<sup>315</sup> In the first six months of 2024, based on the data from the Judicial Department of the Supreme court of the Russian Federation, accessed by independent media outlet Verstka, 427 persons were convicted for draft evasion from military service and 1 from ACS. None of these cases resulted in a prison sentence; 99 % of those convicted were fined, with only 5 receiving a fine exceeding 100 000 roubles [966 euros].<sup>316</sup>

Failure to respond without a valid reason to a draft notice, or any type of summons, is punishable under Article 21.5 of the Code of Administrative Offenses ‘Failure of citizens to fulfill military registration obligations’ with a fine of 10 000 [97 euros] to 30 000 roubles [290 euros]. Smaller fines are applied for failure to report a change of marital status, education, place of studies or employment, residential address as well as for failure to notify the

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<sup>308</sup> Forum 18, Russia: “Faith forbids him to take up arms, kill, or take oaths”, 19 December 2023, [url](#)

<sup>309</sup> Russia, Уголовный кодекс Российской Федерации от 13.06.1996 N 63-ФЗ (ред. от 25.10.2024) [The Criminal Code of the Russian Federation of 13.06.1996 N 63-FZ (version 25.10.2024)], n.d., [url](#), Art. 328

<sup>310</sup> Pervaya Liniya, Уголовное дело за уклонение от срочной службы [Criminal case for evasion of compulsory military service], 21 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>311</sup> Prizyv k sovesti, Инструкции ‘Prizyva k sovesti’ [Instructions from Prizyv k sovesti], 2023, n.d., [url](#); Prizyv k sovesti, Telegram, 26 September 2024, [url](#); Pervaya liniya, Уголовное дело за уклонение от срочной службы [Criminal case for evasion of compulsory military service], 21 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>312</sup> Prizyv k sovesti, Telegram, 26 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>313</sup> RTVI, Осенний призыв-2024: сроки, цифровые повестки, отсрочки и меры против уклонистов [Autumn draft 2024: deadlines, digital summonses, deferrals and measures against evaders], 25 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>314</sup> Russia, Sudebnaya statistika RF [Judicial statistics of the Russian Federation], 2023, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>315</sup> Pervaya liniya, Уголовное дело за уклонение от срочной службы [Criminal case for evasion of compulsory military service], 21 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>316</sup> Verstka, Telegram, 18 October 2024, [url](#)



authorities about leaving the country for more than six months.<sup>317</sup> For more information, please refer to EUAA October 2023 query [Major developments in the Russian Federation regarding the military service](#).

#### **d) Use of conscripts in hostilities**

According to the regulatory framework, conscripted soldiers may be deployed to take part in armed conflicts after completing a minimum of four months of military service and receiving initial military specialty.<sup>318</sup> Although there is no explicit probation on the use of conscripts in hostilities after their completion of four months of service, ‘they are not generally sent’ to take part in the fighting<sup>319</sup> as ‘the involvement of conscripts in direct combat is widely unpopular in Russia’<sup>320</sup> and their non-participation in the war in Ukraine was promised by Russian officials.<sup>321</sup> However, as noted by human rights groups providing legal aid to conscripts, conscripts could be assigned to serve in regions bordering Ukraine.<sup>322</sup>

After Ukraine’s incursion into Kursk regions, reports followed about conscripts taken as POWs by the Ukrainian armed forces.<sup>323</sup> Many of these conscripts were reportedly residents of Kursk or Belgorod regions but many others were assigned from other regions,<sup>324</sup> including from the Komi Republic.<sup>325</sup> There were also reports of conscripts killed during the fighting in Kursk.<sup>326</sup> In interview with CNN, researcher Mark Galeotti described ‘the initial force’ in Kursk region as “built from wherever they can find,” including conscripts and reservists.<sup>327</sup>

After signing a contract, a conscript received the status of a contract serviceman, who can be deployed to take part in hostilities immediately. As noted by organisations offering legal help

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<sup>317</sup> Russia, Кодекс Российской Федерации об административных правонарушениях, от 30.12.2001 N 195-ФЗ (ред. от 29.10.2024) [Code of Administrative Offences of the Russian Federation, of 30.12.2001 No 195 -FZ (amended on 29.10.2024), n.d., [url](#), Art. 21.5; EUAA, Major developments in the Russian Federation in relation to military service, 3 October 2024, [url](#), p. 9

<sup>318</sup> Moscow Times (The), Russia’s use of Inexperienced Conscripts for Kursk Defense Raises Questions, 14 August 2024, [url](#); 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. 6

<sup>319</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. 6

<sup>320</sup> Moscow Times (The), Russia’s Use of Inexperienced Conscripts for Kursk Defense Raises Questions, 14 August 2024, [url](#)

<sup>321</sup> Washington Post (The), In a Ukrainian prison, cells are full of young Russian conscripts, 16 August 2024, [url](#)

<sup>322</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. 6

<sup>323</sup> Washington Post (The), In a Ukrainian prison, cells are full of young Russian conscripts, 16 August 2024, [url](#); France24, Ukraine’s capture of hundreds of Russian conscripts in Kursk region undermines Putin’s war rhetoric, 20 August 2024, [url](#); Kyiv Independent (The), Kursk Oblast conscripts among Russians returned in POW exchange, Russian organization says, 19 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>324</sup> France24, Ukraine’s capture of hundreds of Russian conscripts in Kursk region undermines Putin’s war rhetoric, 20 August 2024, [url](#)

<sup>325</sup> Barents Observer (The), As Ukraine advances in Kursk, families of north Russian conscripts cry mercy, 15 August 2024, [url](#)

<sup>326</sup> Barents Observer (The), As Ukraine advances in Kursk, families of north Russian conscripts cry mercy, 15 August 2024, [url](#); Moscow Times (The), Russia’s use of Inexperienced Conscripts for Kursk Defense Raises Questions, 14 August 2024, [url](#)

<sup>327</sup> CNN, ‘The Kursk operation has become normalized.’ As Ukraine’s Russia incursion enters third month, Putin is trying to downplay it, 12 October 2024, [url](#)



to conscripts in May 2024, the number of conscripts who had signed contracts was unknown.<sup>328</sup> Since 2023, conscripts have been able to sign up as contract soldiers from the first month of service rather than the third, as was the case previously.<sup>329</sup> Sources noted that conscripts were often coerced into signing military service contracts,<sup>330</sup> with human rights defenders documenting incidents of violence and deception.<sup>331</sup> Falsification of contracts was also reported.<sup>332</sup> In October 2024, RFE/RL noted that more than a dozen of conscripts, including from St. Petersburg and Chelyabinsk region, reportedly received payments for contract with MoD which they had not signed.<sup>333</sup> The conscripts' rights group *Shkola prizyvnik* (Conscript's School) reported the same about conscripts from Chelyabinsk and Kurgan regions.<sup>334</sup>

For conscripted soldiers, there was no possibility to choose ACS while in service or obtain early dismissal due to personal beliefs, with early dismissals being granted only for health-related reasons or 'certain social circumstances.' While constitutional law 'theoretically' permitted requests for unarmed service based on anti-war beliefs, organisations offering legal aid to conscripts reported only on one case, in which a conscript 'refuse to take the oath and military training throughout the entire term of his military service, up to dismissal.'<sup>335</sup>

### 6.3. Mobilisation

Sources noted that the presidential decree on the 'partial mobilisation' of 21 September 2022 was still in force, as it did not contain any information on the time mobilisation was to be concluded.<sup>336</sup> However, no mobilisation draft was conducted in 2023<sup>337</sup> and in the reporting period of 2024,<sup>338</sup> when the authorities focused on military recruitment by increasing financial incentives as well as through deception and threats.<sup>339</sup> As noted by *Prizyv k sovesti*, there was no information on the number of mobilised soldiers serving in the Russian armed forces as of

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<sup>328</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. 6

<sup>329</sup> Klein, M., How Russia Is Recruiting for the Long War, SWP Comment, No. 24, 27 June 2024, [url](#), p. 3

<sup>330</sup> Klein, M., How Russia Is Recruiting for the Long War, SWP Comment, No. 24, 27 June 2024, [url](#), p. 3; Reuters, Ukraine's Kursk incursion tests young Russian conscripts' mettle, 29 August 2024, [url](#); 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. 6

<sup>331</sup> Reuters, Ukraine's Kursk incursion tests young Russian conscripts' mettle, 29 August 2024, [url](#); 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. 6

<sup>332</sup> Prizyv k sovesti, Instrukcii 'Prizyva k sovesti' [Instructions from Prizyv k sovesti], 2023, n.d., [url](#); Euronews, Russia's autumn conscription: How many of the 133,000 draftees will end up in Ukraine?, 1 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>333</sup> RFE/RL, "Мы в ужасе, воевать не хотим". Срочникам платят по фальшивым контрактам ['We are terrified, we don't want to fight.' Conscripts are paid under false contracts], 20 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>334</sup> Shkola prizyvnik, Telegram, 5 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>335</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. 6

<sup>336</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. 8; Klein, M., How Russia Is Recruiting for the Long War, SWP Comment, No. 24, 27 June 2024, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>337</sup> Prizyv k sovesti, Instrukcii 'Prizyva k sovesti' [Instructions from Prizyv k sovesti], 2023, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>338</sup> Prizyv k sovesti, Telegram, 24 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>339</sup> Prizyv k sovesti, Instrukcii 'Prizyva k sovesti' [Instructions from Prizyv k sovesti], 2023, n.d., [url](#)



the end of September 2024.<sup>340</sup> Despite initiatives to amend Article 328 of the Criminal Code to introduce a prison penalty for persons evading mobilisation, such draft law was never submitted to the State Duma,<sup>341</sup> and, therefore, evading mobilisation remained without criminal liability.<sup>342</sup>

Russian legislation did not provide for ACS during mobilisation, despite ACS being a constitutional right,<sup>343</sup> affirmed by the Supreme Court<sup>344</sup> and recognised by all judicial levels.<sup>345</sup> There was no new caseload in the reporting period as there was no second wave of mobilisation.<sup>346</sup>

Under the September 2022 ‘partial’ mobilisation decree, mobilised persons are not permitted to leave military service.<sup>347</sup> Under the law, discharge from the army is allowed only upon reaching the RAF reserve age limit, a health condition that prevents military service, or if being sentenced to prison by a court. In case of procedural violations during mobilisation, such as failure of the officials to recognise grounds for exemption or deferral, it is also possible to challenge the mobilisation decision in court.<sup>348</sup>

On 1 January 2024, the age limit for soldiers, sailors, sergeants, petty officers, warrant officers, and midshipmen in the reserve of the Russian Armed Forces (RAF) was raised from 50 to 55 years. A transitional period was extended until 1 January 2028, allowing phased retirement, with persons turning 50 in 2024 remaining in the reserve until age 51, those turning 50 in 2025 remaining until age 52, etc. For officers, the age limit remained unchanged: 70 years for top officers, 65 for senior officers, and 60 for junior officers.<sup>349</sup> For information on the three tiers of the RAF reserve, please refer to EUAA 2022 report on [Military Service](#).

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<sup>340</sup> Prizyv k sovesti, Telegram, 1 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>341</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. 7

<sup>342</sup> Prizyv k sovesti, Instrukcii ‘Prizyva k sovesti’ [Instructions from Prizyv k sovesti], 2023, n.d., [url](#); 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. 7;

<sup>343</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. 8

<sup>344</sup> RFE/RL, Russian Supreme Court Confirms Right of Conscripts To Perform Alternative Service, 24 November 2023, [url](#)

<sup>345</sup> Prizyv k sovesti, Instrukcii ‘Prizyva k sovesti’ [Instructions from Prizyv k sovesti], 2023, n.d., [url](#); 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. 9

<sup>346</sup> Prizyv k sovesti, Instrukcii ‘Prizyva k sovesti’ [Instructions from Prizyv k sovesti], 2023, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>347</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europe, Wives of mobilised Russian soldiers protesting outside Defence Ministry told to ‘stay home and pray’, 22 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>348</sup> Pervaya Liniya, Как уволиться с военной службы мобилизованному [How to leave military service for a mobilised person], 5 November 2024, [url](#)

<sup>349</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](#), pp. 7-8





## 6.4. Contract soldiers

Since December 2022,<sup>350</sup> to avoid a second wave of mobilisation, Russian authorities have focused their efforts on increasing the number of contract soldiers<sup>351</sup> and fighters to join various volunteer formations,<sup>352</sup> including units to be used in the fighting in Ukraine and Kursk region,<sup>353</sup> in an approach which became known as ‘covert mobilisation.’<sup>354</sup> Early October 2024, President Putin signed a law to allow persons facing criminal trial or appealing a conviction to avoid prosecution by signing a contract with MoD.<sup>355</sup> The legislation enabled anyone involved in a criminal prosecution, whether at a stage of conviction or the initiation of a criminal case, to sign a contract as a ‘price for freedom’ and to avoid incarceration by joining the Russian military forces.<sup>356</sup>

Contract soldiers are not allowed to leave military service,<sup>357</sup> including in cases of newly introduced one-year contracts:<sup>358</sup> due to the absence of the order to end the ‘partial’ mobilisation,<sup>359</sup> the contracts signed with MoD became effectively indefinite.<sup>360</sup> It also became more difficult to leave the service on medical grounds.<sup>361</sup>

In the spring of 2023, the minimum age for signing a contract was lowered to 18.<sup>362</sup> Simultaneously, in June 2023, the upper age limit was increased from 50 to 65 years.<sup>363</sup> To boost recruitment, the MoD ‘advertises high wages and generous social benefits’, with the monthly salary of contract soldiers exceeding 2 110 euros in summer 2024, a significant increase from 330 euros before the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Recruits are also offered a one-time recruitment payment of approximately 2 000 euros, with even higher incentives in some regions. These figures contrasted sharply with Russia’s average monthly income of 800 euros, and 400 euros in the poorer regions.<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>350</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. 10

<sup>351</sup> RFE/RL, *Inside Russia’s Improvised System For Mobilizing Men For The Ukraine War: An RFE/RL Investigation*, 15 May 2024, [url](#), ISW, *Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment*, 31 July 2024, [url](#)

<sup>352</sup> Klein, M., *How Russia Is Recruiting for the Long War*, SWP Comment, No. 24, 27 June 2024, [url](#), pp. 2-3

<sup>353</sup> ISW, *Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment*, 15 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>354</sup> Klein, M., *How Russia Is Recruiting for the Long War*, SWP Comment, No. 24, 27 June 2024, [url](#), pp. 2-3

<sup>355</sup> RFE/RL, *Putin Signs Law Allowing Criminal Defendants To Join Military*, 3 October 2024,

<sup>356</sup> Pavlov, I., *Email correspondence*, 15 November 2024

<sup>357</sup> Klein, M., *How Russia Is Recruiting for the Long War*, SWP Comment, No. 24, 27 June 2024, [url](#), p. 3; 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/57/59]*, 13 September 2024, [url](#), para 90

<sup>358</sup> Klein, M., *How Russia Is Recruiting for the Long War*, SWP Comment, No. 24, 27 June 2024, [url](#), pp. 3-4

<sup>359</sup> Mediazona, *34 AWOL sentences a day. Russian military courts set a new record in March 2024*, 12 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>360</sup> Luzin, P., *The Russian Army in 2024, Riddle*, 4 January 2024, [url](#); Meduza, *How getting out of the Russian army became all but impossible — even for soldiers severely disabled in combat*, 29 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>361</sup> *Prizyv k sovesti, Instrukcii ‘Prizyva k sovesti’ [Instructions from Prizyv k sovesti]*, 2023, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>362</sup> *Prizyv k sovesti, Instrukcii ‘Prizyva k sovesti’ [Instructions from Prizyv k sovesti]*, 2023, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>363</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. 11

<sup>364</sup> Klein, M., *How Russia Is Recruiting for the Long War*, SWP Comment, No. 24, 27 June 2024, [url](#), p. 3



Official data reported the enlistment of 305 000 contract soldiers by the end of 2023<sup>365</sup> and 190 000 in the first eight months of 2024.<sup>366</sup> By spring 2024, the recruitment rate for contract service had reportedly declined tenfold, despite increased financial incentives.<sup>367</sup> In August 2024, the Moscow SCP reported a more than a twofold increase in the number of Moscow residents signing contracts with MoD, rising from 97 persons in the beginning of the month to 213 toward the end. An earlier surge in contract interest was noted at the end of July 2024, after Moscow's mayor introduced a one-time bonus of 1.9 million roubles [18 355 euros] to those who signed a contract. Before that, the interest was reportedly declining during the year.<sup>368</sup>

In May 2024, four Russian organisations offering legal help to conscripts and soldiers reported that while signing a contract was voluntary, nearly daily cases of coercion or deception in recruitment were recorded. According to the source, many recruits were misled about the terms of the contract or unaware that its signing was voluntary, while others faced direct threats. The source further noted that conscripts to perform obligatory military service, prison inmates, and members of indigenous groups were reportedly particularly vulnerable to recruitment.<sup>369</sup> In 2023, during raids aimed at prospective conscripts for obligatory military service, young men were reportedly pressured or misled into signing contracts; those who refused were threatened with imprisonment or deployment to active combat zones.<sup>370</sup> As noted by a human rights lawyer, 'there were reports that the commanders asked the conscripts to signed a number of documents related to military service and put the contract inside.' The source also noted that there were 'a few cases when contracts were signed by young men who did not speak Russian (either migrants or foreigners).'<sup>371</sup>

As reported by Human Rights Watch, since autumn 2022, Russian authorities have been recruiting Central Asian migrants, offering cancellation of deportation orders and simplified pathways to Russian citizenship.<sup>372</sup> Many Central Asian migrants signed contracts with MoD for financial reasons.<sup>373</sup> However, reports also indicated the use of pressure<sup>374</sup> as well as workplace raids to issue draft notices to migrants or to bring them to enlistment offices,<sup>375</sup> with police raids having intensified since January 2024.<sup>376</sup> Migrants with Russian citizenship

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<sup>365</sup> Klein, M., How Russia Is Recruiting for the Long War, SWP Comment, No. 24, 27 June 2024, [url](#), p. 5

<sup>366</sup> RFE/RL, 'Already Dead': Siberia's Homeless Pushed To Join Russia's War On Ukraine, 2 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>367</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. 10

<sup>368</sup> Meduza, «Верстка»: в Москве после наступления ВСУ в Курской области в два раза чаще стали заключать контракт с Минобороны ['Verstka': in Moscow after the AFU offensive in Kursk region twice as often began to contract with the Ministry of Defence], 27 August 2024, [url](#)

<sup>369</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. 10

<sup>370</sup> Prizyv k sovesti, Instrukcii 'Prizyva k sovesti' [Instructions from Prizyv k sovesti], 2023, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>371</sup> Human rights lawyer, Email correspondence, 14 November 2024

<sup>372</sup> Human Rights Watch, Russia – Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>373</sup> TCA, Migrants in the Crossfire: Russia's Recruitment for Ukraine War Sparks Tensions, 22 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>374</sup> Human Rights Watch, Russia – Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#); AI, The State of World Human Rights, April 2024, [url](#), p. 320

<sup>375</sup> Human Rights Watch, Russia – Events of 2023, 11 January 2024, [url](#); Kuz.Uz, Central Asian migrants in Russia forced to join Ukraine war, 15 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>376</sup> RFE/RL, Russian Lawmakers OK Bill Obliging Naturalised Citizens To Register for Military, 31 July 2024, [url](#)



reportedly faced treats of imprisonment for refusing to be sent to fight Ukraine,<sup>377</sup> including in Southern Russia.<sup>378</sup> Furthermore, foreign nationals were also reportedly deceived about the nature of their employment or, if they had broken the law, given a choice between serving a prison sentence or joining the army.<sup>379</sup> According to Russian officials, 10 000 naturalised citizens were deployed to Ukraine as of June 2024.<sup>380</sup>

## **6.5. Punishments for disobeying orders, unauthorised absence, and desertion**

In September 2022, stricter punishments were introduced for desertion, unauthorised absence (AWOL), and defying a superior.<sup>381</sup> In April 2024, Mediazona noted on an increase in the number of criminal cases against servicemen leaving the service. According to Mediazona, since the beginning of mobilisation in September 2022, military courts have received almost 7 400 cases on unauthorised abandonment of a military unit (Article 337 of the Criminal Court), including nearly 2 300 cases lodged in the period between 1 January 2024 and 12 April 2024. Moreover, from September 2022 to April 2024, 254 court cases were initiated for desertion and 536 for failure to obey the superior's order (Article 332 of the Criminal Code).<sup>382</sup>

As noted by *Prizyv k sovesti*, the most frequent punishment for unauthorised abandonment of a military unit was a suspended prison sentence, which enabled the return of the convicted person to the frontlines.<sup>383</sup> According to Mediazona, in some instances, this condition was explicitly stated in the sentence.<sup>384</sup> According to *Prizyv k sovesti*, soldiers who refused to return to their units or refused the deployment to the frontlines for the first time, were usually charged for failure to obey the order. In most cases, the convicted soldiers received prison sentences of approximately two years in a settlement colony, the least severe form of imprisonment. In 2023, the standard sentence for desertion was 5 years in prison, while the maximum punishment recorded was 13 years in prison.<sup>385</sup> For the description of legal punishments, please refer to the EUAA 2023 query [Major developments in the Russian Federation in relation to military service](#).

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<sup>377</sup> TCA, Migrants in the Crossfire: Russia's Recruitment for Ukraine War Sparks Tensions, 22 October 2024, [url](#)

<sup>378</sup> Caucasian Knot, Anti-migration raids in Southern Russia are part of recruiting campaign of contract soldiers, 21 September 2024, [url](#)

<sup>379</sup> Klein, M., How Russia Is Recruiting for the Long War, SWP Comment, No. 24, 27 June 2024, [url](#), p. 3

<sup>380</sup> Moscow Times (The), Russia Sent 10K Naturalised Citizens to War in Ukraine, Top Investigator Says, 27 June 2024, [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 [A/HRC/57/59], 13 September 2024, [url](#), para 90

<sup>382</sup> Mediazona, 34 AWOL sentences a day. Russian military courts set a new record in March 2024, 12 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>383</sup> Prizyv k sovesti, Instrukcii 'Prizyva k sovesti' [Instructions from Prizyv k sovesti], 2023, n.d., [url](#); Mediazona, 34 AWOL sentences a day. Russian military courts set a new record in March 2024, 12 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>384</sup> Mediazona, 34 AWOL sentences a day. Russian military courts set a new record in March 2024, 12 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>385</sup> Prizyv k sovesti, Instrukcii 'Prizyva k sovesti' [Instructions from Prizyv k sovesti], 2023, n.d., [url](#)



In September 2024, the UN Special Rapporteur noted that Russian army commanders used torture and ill-treatment to punish soldiers refusing to obey orders, including ‘locking soldiers in pits in the ground, called “zindan”, without food or water.’<sup>386</sup>

In email correspondence with EUAA, a human rights lawyer noted that two-three cases where Russian military servicemen were forcefully returned from Kazakhstan and then prosecuted for AWOL. In another case, a man was kidnapped in Armenia and transferred to the Russian military base in Gyumri in Armenia before being returned to Russia.<sup>387</sup>

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<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/57/59, 13 September 2024, [url](#), para 90

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