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20.07.2023

Repressions Report. June 2023

Русская версия

Pressure on activists' family members, torture in a detention center, and the consequences of #FreeNavalny June 4th protests — OVD-Info covers the main news for the month of June in our report on political repressions.

PROSECUTION FOR ANTI-WAR STANCE

>614

individuals became defendants of the “anti-war case” by the end of June 2023



verdicts were issued against opponents of the war in June 2023

The **death** of Anatoly Berezikov, an activist from Rostov, in a detention centre was among the most significant events of the month. Berezikov has been detained since May 10th: on that day, his apartment was raided and the activist was detained presumably for spreading anti-war leaflets in the city. Courts arrested Berezikov three times; he told human rights defenders that police threatened and tortured him. After Berezikov's death, the Investigative Committee **reported** that it opened a criminal case under the article for incitement to suicide. However, in relation to this case, it was the offices of the activist's defense attorneys that were **searched** instead of employees of the detention centre.



Aleksandr Berezikov who died in the Rostov-on-Don detention centre /
Photo: Aleksandr Berezikov's social media

In June, Crimean performance artist Bogdan Ziza was **sentenced** to 15 years in prison for pouring yellow and blue paint on the front of Yevpatoria city administration building and for throwing a Molotov cocktail at it. The day before the sentence, Ziza declared a hunger strike demanding freedom for political prisoners. A 19-year-old from Yaroslavl, Valeriya Zotova, was **sentenced** to six years in prison for an attempted arson of the office where aid for the Russian military had been collected. Zotova's mother, Svetlana was criminally **charged** for the justification of terrorism. Human rights defenders **pointed** out that both cases have signs of being fabricated.

OVD-Info regularly updates **infographics** about the people criminally prosecuted for their anti-war stance. You can learn about the development of anti-war repressions from May 22 through June 21 of this year in our **Wartime Repressions Report**.

PRESSURE ON FAMILY MEMBERS

Family members of activists prosecuted for political reasons often encounter violation of their own rights; sometimes administrative and criminal charges are brought against them too. Such measures are often used to put pressure on the activists.

In June, a 96-year-old mother of a defendant in the “anti-war case” was **transferred** under state custody. Evgeniya Baryshnikova is paralyzed and needs round-the-clock care. In June, her son, Igor Baryshnikov, who took care of her, was **sentenced** to 7.5 years in prison for spreading “fake news” about the Russian army; he himself has a suspected cancer condition. OVD-Info tells the story of this family in the article **“This sentence will kill them both.”**

Moscow-region activist Fedor Shchetinin reported that his parents' house was **searched**, allegedly because of his connections to the **“Russian Volunteer Corps.”** Children

of pastor Nikolai Ulitin, who was detained and charged with collaboration with an “undesirable” organization, were issued an **administrative fine** for participating in activities of such an organization.

Mother of Chechen activists, Zarema Mousaeva, was **sentenced** to five and a half years in prison for fraud and violence towards the police. Shortly before that, the woman was **hospitalised**: while in detention, her eyesight significantly worsened, and she could barely walk.

The father of Navalny’s ally Ivan Zdanov, Yuri, **encountered** pressure in prison: someone placed a blade in his pillow, and he was sent to a punishment cell for that.

REPRESSIVE LAWMAKING

In June, the Russian Constitutional Court **declared** that it does not see any problems with the administrative article on “discrediting” the army and considered it compliant with the Constitution. The judges refused to consider 13 complaints filed by OVD-Info together with other human rights activists — including those from “Memorial” and “Russia Behind Bars.”

Vladimir Putin signed a law expanding the administrative article on distribution of extremist materials. It can now also be used to **penalise** the distribution of materials that are not included in the corresponding list. In addition, the Duma passed in its first reading bills on responsibility for **aiding “foreign agents”** and for **participation** in unregistered foreign NGOs.

“FOREIGN AGENTS” AND “UNDESIRABLE ORGANIZATIONS”

“Foreign Agents”

>861

people added to the register of persons "affiliated" with
"foreign agents"

30

new "foreign agents" added to the register in June 2023

New "Foreign Agents"



Data: [Inoteka](#) • As of June 30, 2023

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“Undesirable” Organizations

4

organisations were declared “undesirable” in June 2023

In June, the General Prosecutor’s Office declared the human rights group “Agora”, “Novaya Gazeta Evropa”, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), and the Christian organization “TCNN Covenant of Churches” “undesirable”. According to the ministry, the activities of human rights defenders, journalists and believers from these organizations “pose a threat to the constitutional order” of Russia, and the WWF prevents the development of the domestic economy.

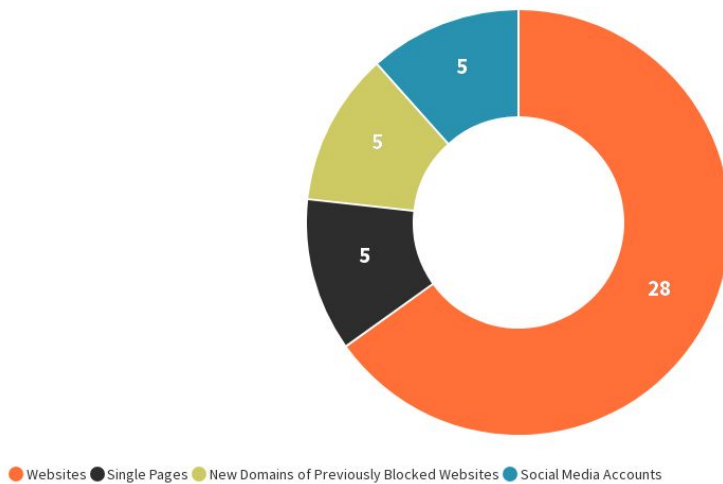
FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Blockings

>43

politically-motivated website blockings in June 2023

Politically Motivated Blockings



Data OVD-Info • As of June 30, 2023

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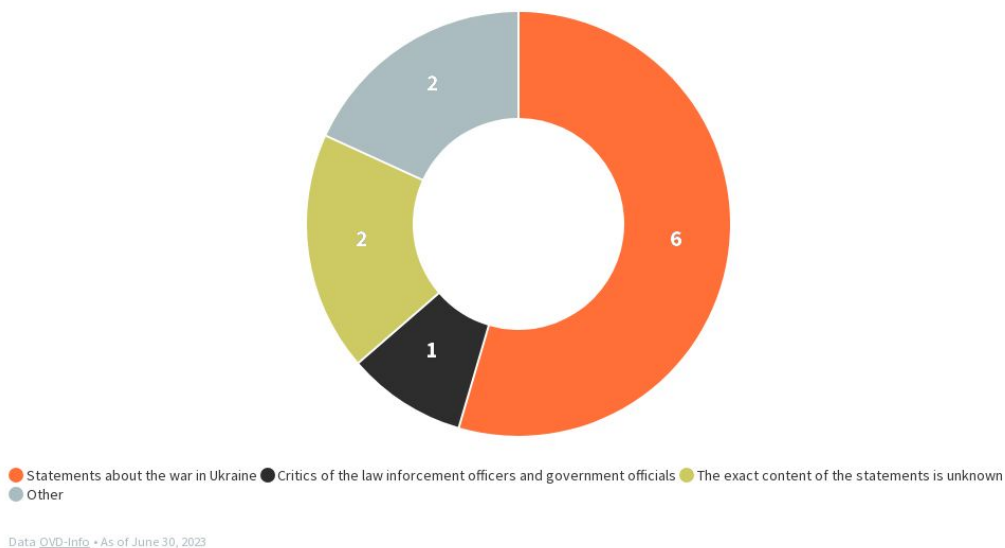
Russian state agencies continued to restrict access to information related to the war in Ukraine and other socially important topics. In particular, the **websites** and “Odnoklassniki” **page** of OVD-Info, the **website** of the St. Petersburg editorial board of “Novaya Gazeta”, as well as a service for **sending** appeals to deputies were blocked.

Cases of Calls to Terrorism or Extremism

11

new criminal cases under articles on calls to terrorism or extremism due to negative statements about the authorities, reported to OVD-info in June 2023

Cases Related to Calls for Terrorism or Extremism



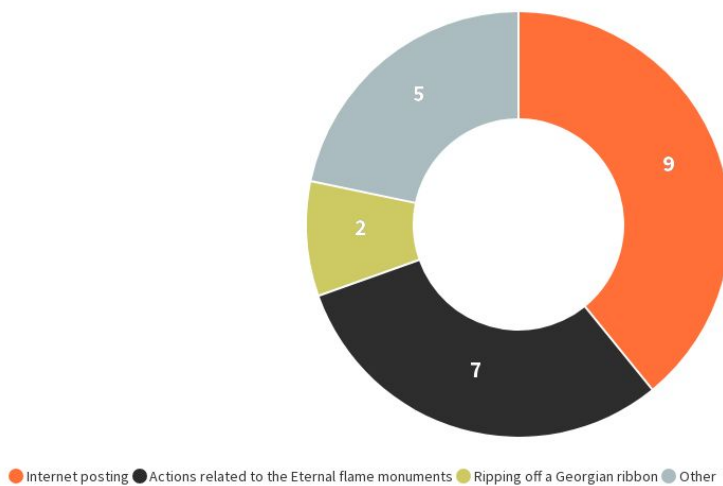
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In June, a military court **sentenced** Ruslan Ushakov, author of a telegram channel titled “Nastoyashchee prestuplenie” (“*True Crime*” — *OVD-Info*), to eight years in prison. In his posts, the man wrote about the shelling of Mariupol and the killing of civilians in Ukraine and allegedly “called for violence against Vladimir Putin.” During the trial, Ushakov **said** that he was tortured by electrocution after being detained.

Maria Mekhedova, a pediatrician from Blagoveshchensk, was **prosecuted** for justifying terrorism over a comment about the death of Vladlen Tatarsky: according to investigators, the woman wrote “I never thought I would ever be happy about this. God forgive me for this.” A case under this article was also **opened** against TikTok influencer Alexander Nemenok (known under the pseudonym “Petya Benzobakov” (“*Peter Gas-tank*” — *OVD-Info*), who spoke out against the war and criticized Vladimir Putin and the Russian elites.

Criminal Cases Related to the Article on the “Rehabilitation of Nazism” and Damage to Symbols

23 Cases Related to the Article on “Rehabilitation of Nazism”



Data [OVD-Info](#) • As of June 30, 2023

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At the end of the month, the criminal case under the article on the “rehabilitation of Nazism” **was initiated** against the former Saint Petersburg State University assistant professor Mikhail Belousov: he allegedly “denied connections between Hitler's racial theory and the course of World War II,” and also spoke about the history of WWII being falsified. Prior to that, the professor was **fired** from the university because of his comment “a direct and open endorsement of Ruscism is repulsive” regarding the creation of a spontaneous memorial at the university to a student who died in the war with Ukraine.

Criminal cases under this article were also initiated in connection to a **conversation** between a convicted Crimean activist and a cellmate, a **repost** of Feminist Anti-War Resistance's publication dedicated to May 9, a **picture** of Adolf Hitler and some **publications** “discrediting Russian history” on social media.

In addition, a man was **convicted** in the Astrakhan region, a region in Southern Russia, for tearing down the Russian flag from a Russian court building, and in St. Petersburg a

case was **opened** in connection to a graffiti with the word “Rashka”.

Criminal Cases Related to the Article on the “LGBT Propaganda”



Alexander Sinko in a solitary protest against the law banning sex reassignment, St. Petersburg, June 15, 2023 / Photo provided by Alexander Sinko

Cases Related to «LGBT Propaganda» Known to OVD-Info



As of June 30, 2023

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In June, OVD-Info became aware of nine reports that were drawn up against Internet providers and online movie theaters for posting “LGBT propaganda.” In particular,

Russian law enforcement officers found “propaganda” in the films “[Blow Dry](#)”, “[Bridget Jones’s Diary](#)”, and “[The Royal Tenenbaums](#)”. Also under these articles, protocols were drawn up against St. Petersburg residents [Alexander Sinko](#) and [Elena Ioffe](#), who protested against the law banning gender reassignment.

OVD-Info [chronicles](#) the pressure on LGBTQ people and the censorship caused by the “propaganda” law on a regular basis.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

June 4 Protests

>136

people were detained due to protests on June 4

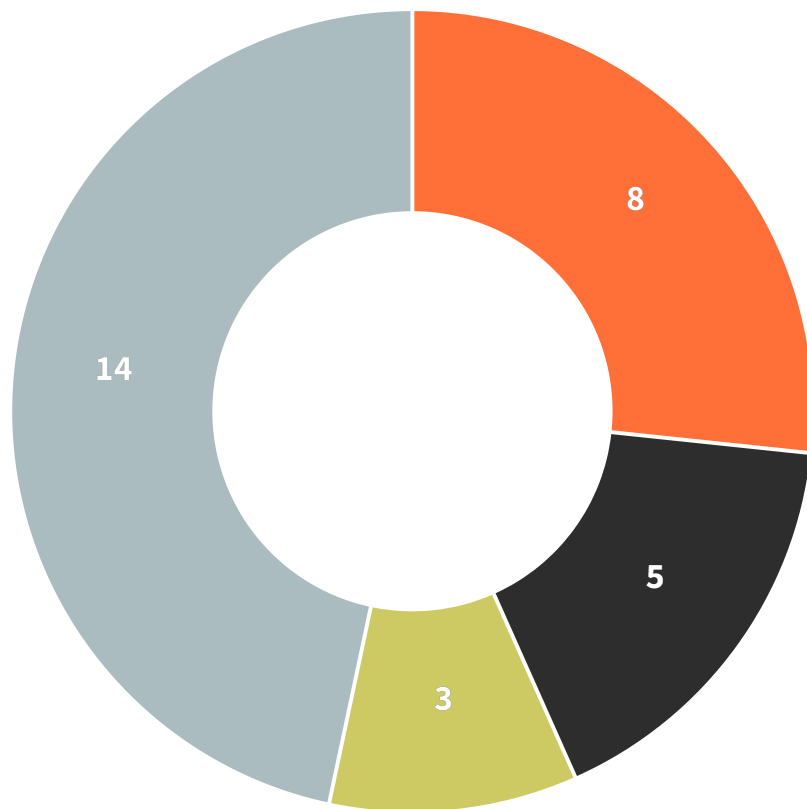
The allies of Alexei Navalny called on residents of Russian cities to protest in solidarity with the politician on his birthday — June 4. OVD-Info is aware of 136 detentions related to this rally. The project covered these stories in detail in a related [chronicle](#).

Detentions at Rallies and their Consequences

29

politically-motivated detentions (in addition to the protests against the war and in support of Alexei Navalny)

29 New Politically-Motivated Detainments (Aside from Anti-War and Pro-Navalny Protests)



Freedom to the Prisoners Ecology Social Issues Other

Data [OVD-Info](#) • As of June 30, 2023

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In June 2023 detentions continued at protests in defense of the environment, political prisoners, and social problems. Bashkir environmental activist Ilsur Irnazarov was **fined** because more people showed up at the people's assembly he organized than the local community centre could accommodate. The assembly was about the construction of quarries in the village of Temyasovo.

OVD-Info became aware of six detentions related to demands to release Sergei Furgal, ex-governor of Khabarovsk region, region in the far East of Russia. Ahead of the three-year anniversary of the politician's arrest (July 9), the police in Khabarovsk **began** visiting activists' houses demanding

“explanations”. It is not clear what kind of explanations the law enforcers were hoping to get.

Refusals to Authorize Rallies

Over the past month, OVD-Info found out about two cases in which authorities obstructed public protests related to housing and utilities. In Yakutsk (one of the largest cities in Siberia), residents of failing buildings were **not allowed** to hold a rally, citing repair work in the public garden.

In Bashkortostan (*republic of Russia located near Ural Mountains — OVD-Info*), the administration of the Tanalyk village council **did not authorize** a rally dedicated to the rehousing due to the mining development: officials claimed that this problem “is not an issue of local importance.”

VITALY KOLTSOV'S CRIMINAL CASE



Vitaly Koltsov in court / Photo: Alexandra Asktakhova for Mediazona

A Moscow resident Vitaly Koltsov was sentenced to six years in prison for throwing Molotov cocktails into a police van: this

way he wanted to express his protest against apprehensions of participants of peaceful rallies.

Koltsov was found guilty under the articles on “an intentional damage to property” and “a use of violence that does not endanger human life or health against a representative of the authorities.”

Initially the charges did not include the article on the use of violence: when passing sentence, the court reclassified charges from an “assault on lives of law enforcement officers” to the “use of violence” against them. Prior to the verdict, the jury acquitted Koltsov under the article on assaulting the lives of law enforcement officers.

REPRESSIONS AGAINST JOURNALISTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Dmitriy Kamynin, coordinator of the “Siberia Legal” project, was **sentenced** to 18 years in a penal colony. «Siberia Legal» was covering beatings, torture and other cases of abuse of prisoners.

Tatyana Kotlyar, a human rights defender from Obninsk, was **fined** 650,000 rubles (approx. US\$7000) in a case over a “rubber apartment” — she was registering people, who weren’t able to get the city registration themselves, in her apartment. It is the sixth case on these charges against Kotlyar.

Alexander Dorogov, a journalist with the “Rosderzhava” project charged with extortion and insulting a representative of authority, **reported** that he was beaten and robbed of his personal belongings. Unidentified people **fired** at Svyatoslav Khromenkov's car, a human rights advocate working with torture victims.

PRESSURE ON ACTIVISTS AND POLITICIANS

Lilia Chanysheva, ex-head of Navalny's headquarters in the city of Ufa, was **sentenced** to seven and half years in a penal colony on two extremism-related charges and accusations of working for an NGO that infringes on individuals and their rights.

Besides, two more Navalny supporters became implicated in extremism cases. They are **Iliya Danilov**, coordinator of Navalny's headquarters in Lipetsk, and **a resident of the city of Rybinsk**, who according to the investigation, painted graffiti in support of the politician. Lev Gyammer, the ex-director of Navalny's headquarters in Krasnodar, **said** that law enforcement operatives started sending him messages on behalf of his mother who had died several years ago.

Moscow activist Dmitry Pimenov is facing **charges** of violence against a representative of authority. The young man pepper-sprayed a police officer in plainclothes who was trying to enter his apartment. Evgeny Tokarev, an activist from the city of Shakhty, became a **defendant** in a case of false denunciation after he reported being beaten by a police officer.

Activist Ulker Gashimova was **placed** in a pre-trial detention centre in Makhachkala. She was detained on her way to Serbia. Details of this case remain unknown.

“EXTREMIST ORGANIZATIONS”

At least 10 New Criminal Cases on “Extremist Organizations”



17 Sentences Related to “Extremist Organizations”



На 30 июня 2023 года

In June, law enforcement officers conducted searches in Jehovah's Witnesses homes in **Komsomolsk-on-Amur** and **Bryansk**. A new criminal case was opened against believer Dmitry Terebilov who is already serving a sentence for his religious beliefs: he had **answered** his inmate's questions about Jehovah's Witnesses while behind bars. Six more Jehovah's Witnesses from **Sochi**, **Kovrov** and **Tynda** were sentenced to prison terms in June.

REPRESSIONS ON THE TERRITORY OF ANNEXED CRIMEA



Irina Danilovich in court / Photo: “Крымский процесс”

In June, Crimean Tatar activist Ansar Osmanov was **sentenced** to 20 years in prison in the case of the Islamist party Hizb ut-Tahrir.

Activist Irina Danilovich, who was previously sentenced to seven years in a penal colony, practically lost her hearing in a pre-trial detention centre. At the end of June, her sentence was reduced by one month.

Crimean Tatars **Seyrana Khairedinova** and **Emir-Useina Kuku**, convicted on the charges of involvement in Islamist party Hizb ut-Tahrir, were hospitalized in June. The head of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People **reported** that brothers Aziz and Asan Akhmetovs, who were sentenced to a lengthy prison term on the charges of sabotage on a gas pipeline, faced torture in a pre-trial detention centre. Simferopol resident Kirill Barannik also **reported** being tortured while being in the detention centre on the charges of sabotage.

Four activists, who were driving in a motorcade with Crimean Tatar flags, were detained. Two of them were **handed** fines for holding an unauthorized rally.

Title Image: Zarema Musaeva in court / Photo: Crew Against Torture

More to read



The strangling of Crimea

Denis Shedov and Dan Storyev explain how the repression in occupied Crimea was structured and how it evolved



An informal ban. How people are getting fired for their anti-war stance and how they fight for their rights

We are telling how people defend their right to work and to their political stance.