

Sasha Skochilenko in the Vasileostrovsky District Court of St. Petersburg, November 16, 2023 / Photo: Alexandra Astakhova, Mediazona

22.12.2023

Repressions Report. November 2023

The ban on the «international LGBT movement», the sentencing of Sasha Skochilenko, and the case of the singer Sharlot — OVD-Info reports on the main news for November in our chronicle of political pressure.

Текст на русском

EXTRADITIONS, DEPORTATIONS, AND ABDUCTIONS

In the early days of this month, new information **emerged** regarding the abduction of Lev Skoryakin, a «Left Block» activist, from a shelter located in Bishkek. Initially, Skoryakin had been repeatedly apprehended by the security forces of Kyrgyzstan. Subsequently, he was transferred into the custody of Russian authorities. Skoryakin is involved in a legal case stemming from the «Happy Chekist Day» event. Back in December 2021, «Left Block» members displayed a banner bearing this slogan near the FSB's South-Western District office in Moscow, highlighting it with the use of flares. Skoryakin had departed from Russia in early 2023.

Rafail Shepelev, a member of the «Artpodgotovka» movement banned in Russia, who had been living in Georgia since September 2021, disappeared in October. Human rights organizations **suspect** that Russian military personnel transported him from an area under their control. He is currently in a Russian detention centre following a series of arrests on administrative charges. He is accused of participating in the activities of a terrorist organisation and justification of terrorism

Evgenia Baltatarova, who is being persecuted for spreading «knowingly false information» about the Russian army, was **denied** refugee status by the authorities of Kazakhstan. Activists Aikhal Ammosov (Igor Ivanov) from Yakutia in Eastern Siberia and Natalia Narskaya from the Moscow region **were granted** certificates of asylum seeker status in Kazakhstan.

Journalist Vladislav Ivanenko from the publication Properm.ru was **deported** to Kazakhstan after his Russian residence permit was cancelled. Previously, Ivanenko had not been prosecuted under either administrative or criminal charges. At the moment of deportation, the court had suspended the decision to cancel his documentation, yet he was not allowed to be present at the hearing. Azizbek Inamov, a defendant in the «Hizb ut-Tahrir» case, was **deported** to Uzbekistan after being released from a prison: in this country, he faces new criminal prosecution, also due to alleged ties with the aforementioned organisation. Inamov had spent 11 years incarcerated.

PERSECUTIONS RELATED TO ANTI-WAR STANCE

783

individuals became defendants of the “Anti-War Case”
by the end of November 2023

>22

verdicts were issued against opponents of the war
in November 2023

In November, a St. Petersburg court **sentenced** artist Sasha Skochilenko to seven years in prison: she was charged with spreading «fakes» about the army because she had replaced price tags in a supermarket with leaflets containing information about the war in Ukraine.

Yegor Balazeikin, a 17-year-old schoolboy, was **sentenced** to six years in prison for an attempt to set on fire two military enlistment offices. The Kaliningrad Regional Court **passed** a sentence of seven and a half years in prison for activist Igor Baryshnikov in the case of military «fakes». All three suffer from severe illnesses, and their condition has deteriorated significantly during their stay in the pre-trial detention centre.

Alexey Gorinov and **Vladimir Kara-Murza**, who were imprisoned due to disagreement with the war, as well as **Victoria Petrova**, **Yevgeny Bestuzhev**, and **Artyom Kamardin**, who are in the pre-trial detention centre, have been facing pressure and torture. A new case has been **filed** against journalist Maria Ponomarenko, convicted in the case of «fakes»: she is charged with assaulting two prison employees who forcibly took her to a disciplinary commission.

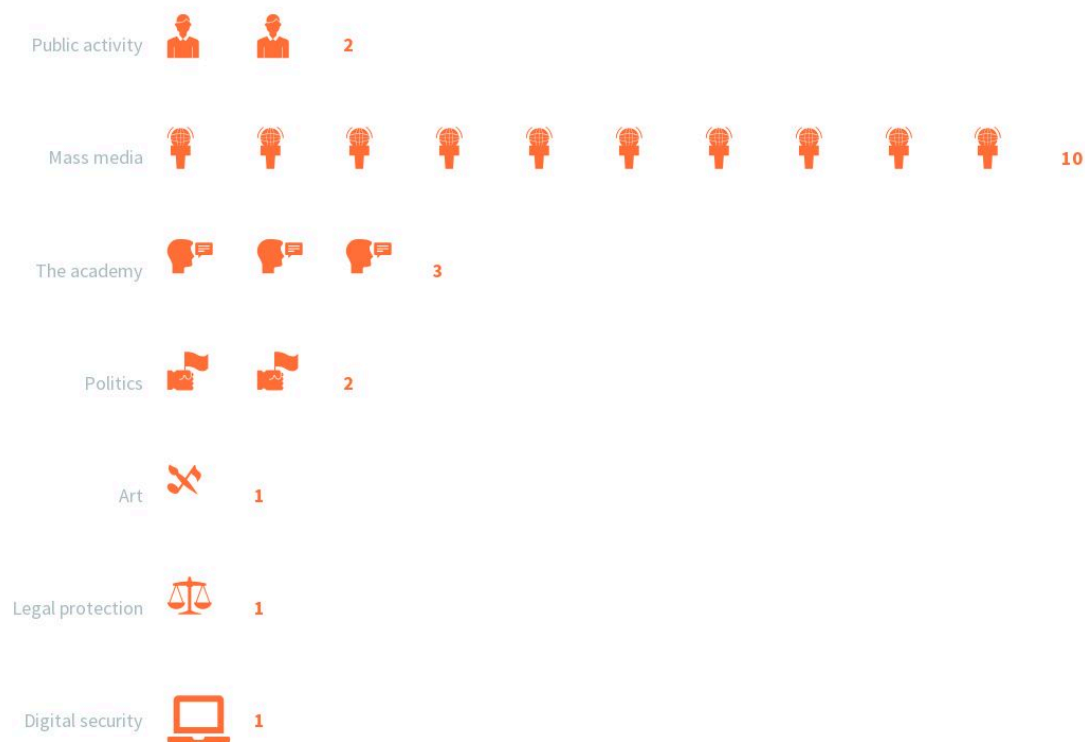
OVD-Info maintains a regularly updated **infographic** on people facing criminal prosecution because of their anti-war standpoint. You can find out how the anti-war repressions progressed from October 24 to November

23 current in our [Persecution of the anti-war movement report](#).

«FOREIGN AGENTS» AND «UNDESIRABLE» ORGANISATIONS

«Foreign agents»

20 new «foreign agents» were added to the registry in November 2023



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

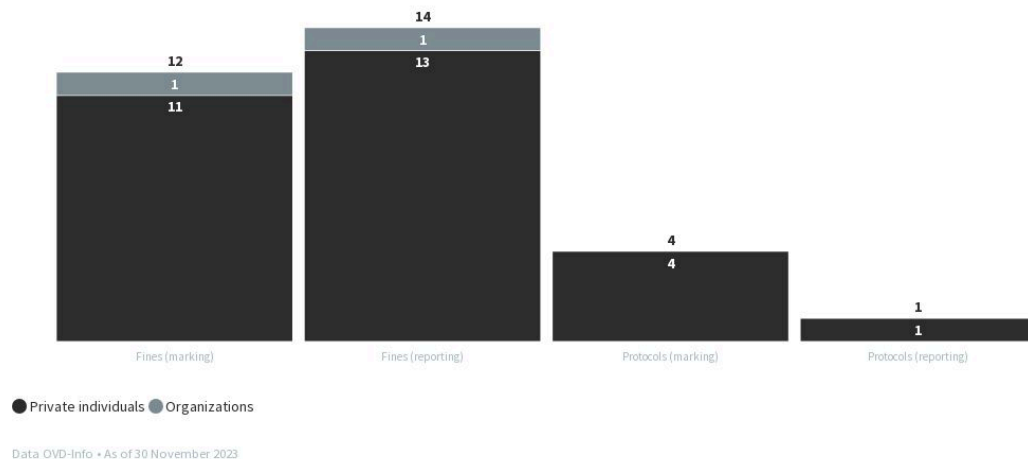
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The Ministry of Justice has [published](#) another addition to the existing regulations on «foreign agents»: now data on the former name, surname and patronymic or former names of legal entities, in case they were changed earlier, will also be added to the registry.

Among others the registry includes former Prime Minister of the Russian Federation [Mikhail Kasyanov](#), a [VPN service provider Hidemy.name](#), the founder of «Nochlezhka» charity

Grigory Sverdlin (he was also placed on the wanted list), the student media «Groza» and investigative journalist Andrei Soldatov. Earlier, a case was filed against Soldatov on charges of the spreading of «fakes» about the army.

Administrative reports and fines for "foreign agents" due to the lack of proper labeling or reporting



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«Undesirable» organisations

5

new “undesirable organizations” became known in November 2023

In November, three **Jehovah’s Witnesses** organisations (registered in the USA, Ukraine, and Germany) were added to the list of «undesirable» organisations. Alongside them, the **Civic Council**, an organisation based in Poland which helps Russians to join the Ukrainian Armed Forces, as well as the **Centre for European Policy Analysis** (USA), were both branded «undesirable».

In Moscow, St Petersburg, and Irkutsk (a city in Central Siberia), the homes of followers of the Falun Gong religious organisation (deemed «undesirable» in 2020) were **searched**. References to materials related to Falun Gong **resulted** in a fine being imposed on the Falun Dafa Information Center. Two administrative offence reports were **filed** against the European University in St Petersburg on the grounds of participating in the activities of «undesirable» organisations, following the detection of books in the university library that were deemed to have been published with the support of «undesirable» organisations, namely the Open Society Foundation and the Kennan Institute.

Similar cases were initiated against the politician **Dmitry Gudkov** and the creator of Serditaya Chuvashia (Angry Chuvashia, a Middle Volga region) media, **Semyon Kochkin**. In the former case, the reason was Gudkov's participation in a conference organised by the Free Russia Forum, whilst the justification of the latter was purportedly related to reposts made about the Free Buryatia Foundation.

«EXTREMIST» ORGANISATIONS AND COMMUNITIES

13

Jehovah's Witnesses sentenced in November 2023

In Chelyabinsk, Western Siberia, Jehovah's Witness Evgeny Bushev was **sentenced** to seven years in prison for engaging in religious discussions with people. In November, other members of his faith from **Primorye**, Far East, **Novokuznetsk**, Western Siberia, **Tula**, Central of European Russia, **Khabarovsk**, Far East and the **Saratov region**, Lower Volga, received suspended sentences and fines. Mass searches of believers' homes were conducted in **Iturup** (Sakhalin

region) and **Saratov**. At least four Jehovah's Witnesses had new criminal charges brought against them.

A 56-year-old «USSR citizen» from the Altai Republic, Western Siberia, was **sentenced** to five years in a general regime penal colony, whilst another follower of the movement from Dagestan, Caucasus, Zaynulla Abdullaev, was **sentenced** to a 3,5 year suspended sentence.

PRESSURE ON ALEXEI NAVALNY AND HIS SUPPORTERS

In November, Alexei Navalny was once again **sent** to solitary confinement and letters from his wife were **withheld** by prison censorship authorities on the grounds of them «containing signs of preparing to undertake criminal activity». Later, it was revealed that yet **another case** was brought against the politician, this time under the charge of hate-motivated vandalism. The details of the case remain unknown.

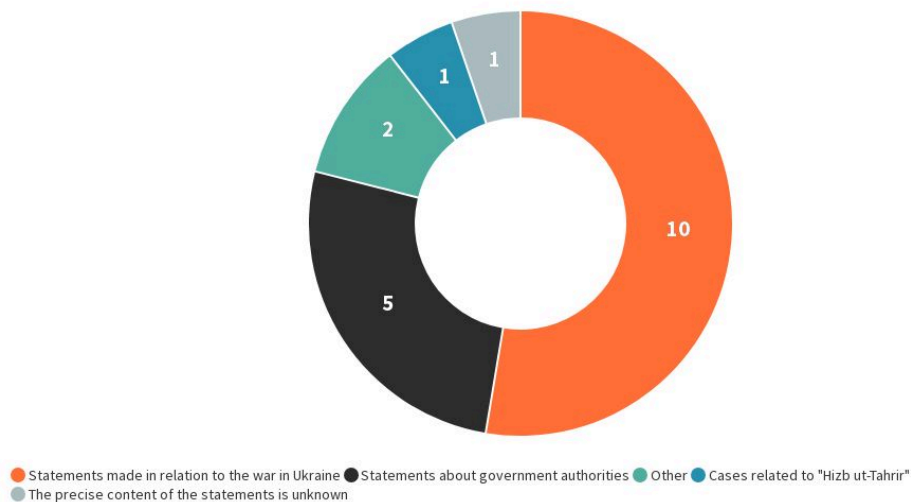
The former head of Navalny's Tomsk, Western Siberia, headquarters, Ksenia Fadeeva, was **sent** to the pre-trial detention on charges related to an «extremist community». In St Petersburg, a 25-year-old programmer named Anton Z was **detained** on suspicion of donating to Navalny's structures after they were banned.

In Novosibirsk, Central Siberia, independent candidates Ekaterina Tereshchenko and Mikhail Ryazentsev were **banned** from running for the Council of Deputies due to their alleged «involvement» in the democratic youth movement «Vesna» and Navalny's structures. The Ministry of Justice deemed that the politicians had participated in actions «initiated» by these organisations, thereby cooperating with them.

PERSECUTIONS RELATED TO FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Cases related to the calls for terrorism, extremism and anti-state activities

There have been 19 new criminal cases opened under charges related to the calls for terrorism, extremism, or anti-state activities on the grounds of negative statements made about the Russian authorities.



Data: OVD-Info • As of 30 November 2023

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Phrases such as «Off with the Tsar, save Russia», «Vova, fuck them» and the use of the word «hero» relating to the arsonist of military recruiting offices caused the instigation of criminal proceedings on charges of calls for terrorism and extremism in November 2023.

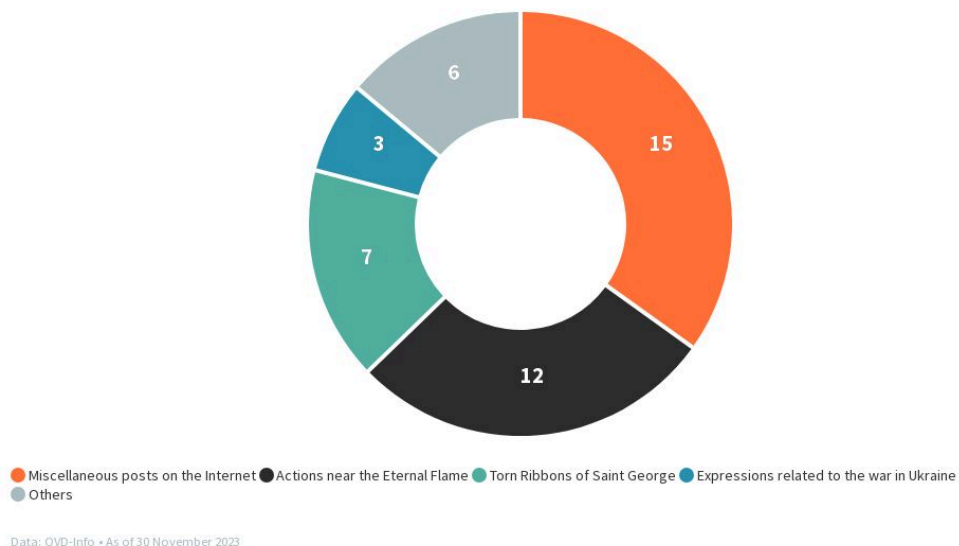
Ex-photographer of Navalny Headquarters, Alexander Strukov, was sentenced to eight years of prison and a fine; he was accused of writing comments starting with slogans «Glory to Ukraine», «Down with the checkists' power» and «Good morning everyone, down with Putin». The Crimean activist Oleg Prihodko was sentenced to four and a half years of imprisonment for public justification of terrorism and rehabilitation of nazism. He was accused of «approving of Hitler and terrorist acts» during his conversation with other

prisoners in a prison in the Vladimir region (centre of European Russia).

Not custodial sentences were pronounced against a citizen of Zabaikalsky krai (Western Siberia), accused of appeals to violence against policemen, an anarchist from Tula region, centre of European Russia, for incitement to blow military recruiting offices and administrative buildings) as well as a female janitor from Chelyabinsk region, Western Siberia, who allegedly left comments in social media regarding explosions on the Crimean Bridge.

Cases on rehabilitation of nazism

In 2023, 43 cases on rehabilitation of nazism were initiated in Russia



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Two criminal cases were brought against the singer Sharlot, who had recently returned to Russia, due to two of his videos. In one of them he tears a Ribbon of Saint George, and in the second one nails Patriarch Kirill's photograph to a tree. A case about the desecration of the symbol of military glory was initiated against a man who drifted near a monument in Nizhnevartovsk, Far North.

A conditioned prison sentence and a fine were imposed on citizens of **Pskov** region, North of European Russia, and **Bryansk** region, Western of European Russia, under the charges of justification of nazism because of their comments on the Internet. A man who used the Eternal Flame to light a cigarette in Kurgan, South Urals, **was fined** 2 million rubles. A similar event in Volgograd, Lower Volga, **led** to the initiation of a criminal case against two women on charges of desecrating burial sites.

Cases on insulting religious feelings

The blogger Yurets Kravets who organised a Silent Hill-inspired performance **became involved** in a case under the charges of insulting religious feelings: during this performance the blogger was hung up onto a big wooden cross. Similar cases were opened against the singer **Sharlot** and the man called **Christolyub Vegan** (Christ-loving Vegan).

A citizen of St. Petersburg, Intigam Aliev, **was found** guilty under the same article as well as under the article on use of violence towards a police officer for calling Christians fascists because of their attitude towards the war in Ukraine and towards «people of Caucasus». He was fined 150 000 rubles.

PERSECUTION RELATED TO THE FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

In November, at least three (**1, 2, 3**) Russians were detained for participating in actions in support of Sasha Skochilenko, who had been convicted in the «fakes" case. Residents of Russian cities also faced detentions for actions in support of the **Palestinian people, women** who encountered violence, **members of the LGBTQ+ community**, and another participant in the „anti-war case“ — **Maria Ponomarenko**.



LGBTQ+ activist Alexandra Sinko with a poster that reads, «Extremism is the incitement of social discord, the propaganda of human inadequacy based on social affiliation. And who is the extremist here?» in Novosibirsk, November 28, 2023. She was summoned to compile a report on December 21. Authorities intend to charge the activist with the «LGBT propaganda» article. An OVD-Info lawyer, Vasily Dubkov, assisted her at the police department / Photo provided by Alexandra Sinko

A resident of Shuya (Ivanovo Region in the Centre of European Russia), Ekaterina Yadykova, **was persecuted** due to her photographs holding placards against the construction of a landfill. **Several activists in Khabarovsk**, Far

East, were detained for participating in the October rally in support of the former governor of the region, Sergey Furgal.

Nationalist Dmitry Vasiliev was **detained** in St. Petersburg when he decided to visit a museum instead of participating in the «Russian March.» In Moscow's Red Square, young women who wanted to take photos featuring red caviar were **detained**; the police claimed that it was «prohibited by law.»

In several regions, authorities **refused** to authorise actions organised by the relatives of mobilised individuals.

In November, actions against **the restriction of abortion rights**, in support of **a domestic violence law**, and against **the construction of landfill sites** were also not authorised.

PRESSURE ON THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY

On November 30, the Supreme Court **declared** the «international LGBTQ+ movement» an extremist organisation following a **lawsuit** by the Ministry of Justice. The motivational part of the decision is classified, but Ministry of Justice officials **claimed** in a press release that they had identified not only a unified LGBTQ+ movement but also «various signs and manifestations of extremist orientation» in its activities.

On the same day, a visualisation of a music video for Sergey Lazarev's song «Tak Krasivo» (So Beautiful) was held in the Vyborg court of St. Petersburg. Due to the «mutual disposition in space» and «individual features» of hand movements shown in the video, the channel that broadcasted it **was fined** half a million rubles under the «LGBT propaganda» law.

6 new protocols on the “LGBTQ-propaganda”
that OVD-info learned about in November 2023



Data [OVD-info](#) • As of 30 November 2023

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PERSECUTION OF POLITICIANS AND ACTIVISTS

Former head of Navalny’s Dagestan headquarters, Eduard Ataev, has been **sentenced** to six years and five months in prison for the possession of explosives and narcotics. Ataev denies his guilt and has also spoken about torture and the fabrication of evidence in the case.

Following the comparison of the singer Shaman with the Hitlerjugend Nazis a criminal case was **initiated** for the repeated demonstration of Nazi symbolism against the head of the Kamchatka (Far East) branch of the «Yabloko» party, Vladimir Efimov. As a result of a scuffle with the mayor of Ivanovo (Centre of European Russia), Vladimir Sharypov, local opposition deputy Leonid Denisov was **assigned** 100 hours of compulsory community service.

The home of Alexander Gliskov, the deputy of the Legislative Assembly of Krasnoyarskiy Kray (Eastern Siberia), who was critical of the local elections, was searched: he was **sent** to the pre-trial detention centre as a suspect in a bribery case. Under arrest, the man **encountered** harassment and abuse.

Rustam Fararetdinov, the brother of emigrated activist Russian Gabbasov, was **detained** in Bashkortostan, South Urals. The man was sent to the pre-trial detention centre. Gabbasov connects the pressure put on his brother with his own political activity.

In Obninsk, near Moscow region security forces **beat up** a local activist Denis Okhryamkin: they threatened him with criminal charges and demanded that the young man «admit» arson of relay cabinets on railway tracks, as well as the fact that he bribed a doctor to get deferment of military service. Okhryamkin later left Russia. A severed dog head was **left at the steps of the house** of Kemerovo (Western Siberia) environmental activist Oksana Laukart, and Petrozavodsk (North of European Russia) «Yabloko» deputy Olga Tuzhikova was **searched** for «overly close connection» with «foreign agents».

PROSECUTION OF JOURNALISTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

In Moscow, journalist Alexandra Bayazitova was **sentenced** to 5 years in prison for extortion from Promsvyazbank. «Rosderzhava» journalists Alexander Dorogov and Yan Katelevsky were **sentenced** to 10.5 years and 9.5 years respectively on charges of extortion from a traffic police officer.



«Rosderzhava» journalists Alexander Dorogov and Yan Katelevsky in Lyubertsy City Court / Photo: RusNews

A criminal case was **initiated** against human rights defender Igor Nagavkin, earlier convicted for larceny, for disrupting the work of institutions ensuring isolation from society.

REPRESSIONS AGAINST CITIZENS OF ANNEXED CRIMEA

In November, seven political prisoners from Crimea reported a significant health deterioration in Russian pre-trial detention centres, jails and prisons: civil rights activist **Irina Danilovich** and defendants in the «Hizb ut-Tahrir» case **Lenur Seydametov**, **Remzi Memetov**, **Ruslan Suleymanov**, **Timur Ibragimov**, **Abdukakhor Muminjanov** and **Ali Fedorov**.

Crimean Tatar Timur Yalkabov **encountered** abuse during imprisonment. Under the threats, he was made to shave his head. During his transfer to a Russian prison the former deputy head of the Majlis of the Crimean Tatar People, Nariman Jelal, who had been previously sentenced to 17 years

of imprisonment in the case of a gas pipeline explosion, **went missing**. It later became known that he had been **delivered** to the prison.

Crimean citizen Vladimir Blagov was **sentenced** to 2 years in a strict regime penal colony for posting images containing a «nazi symbol» on social media. Oleg Valeev was **sentenced** to 1.5 years in open prison for repeated discreditation of the Russian army. A **series of searches** were conducted over the peninsula in connection with the case of the Alushta Muslim community.

DATABASE OF POLITICALLY MOTIVATED CRIMINAL PROSECUTIONS

In November OVD-Info published the database on politically motivated criminal prosecutions dated from 2012 to the present time. The database itself, the methodology of its creation and the tools used to work with it are available on our website.

Data on politically motivated criminal prosecutions in Russia

ОВД-Инфо

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



Repressions in Russia in 2022

Along with the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the Russian authorities commenced internal repression on an unprecedented scale. There are more than 21,000 arrests and