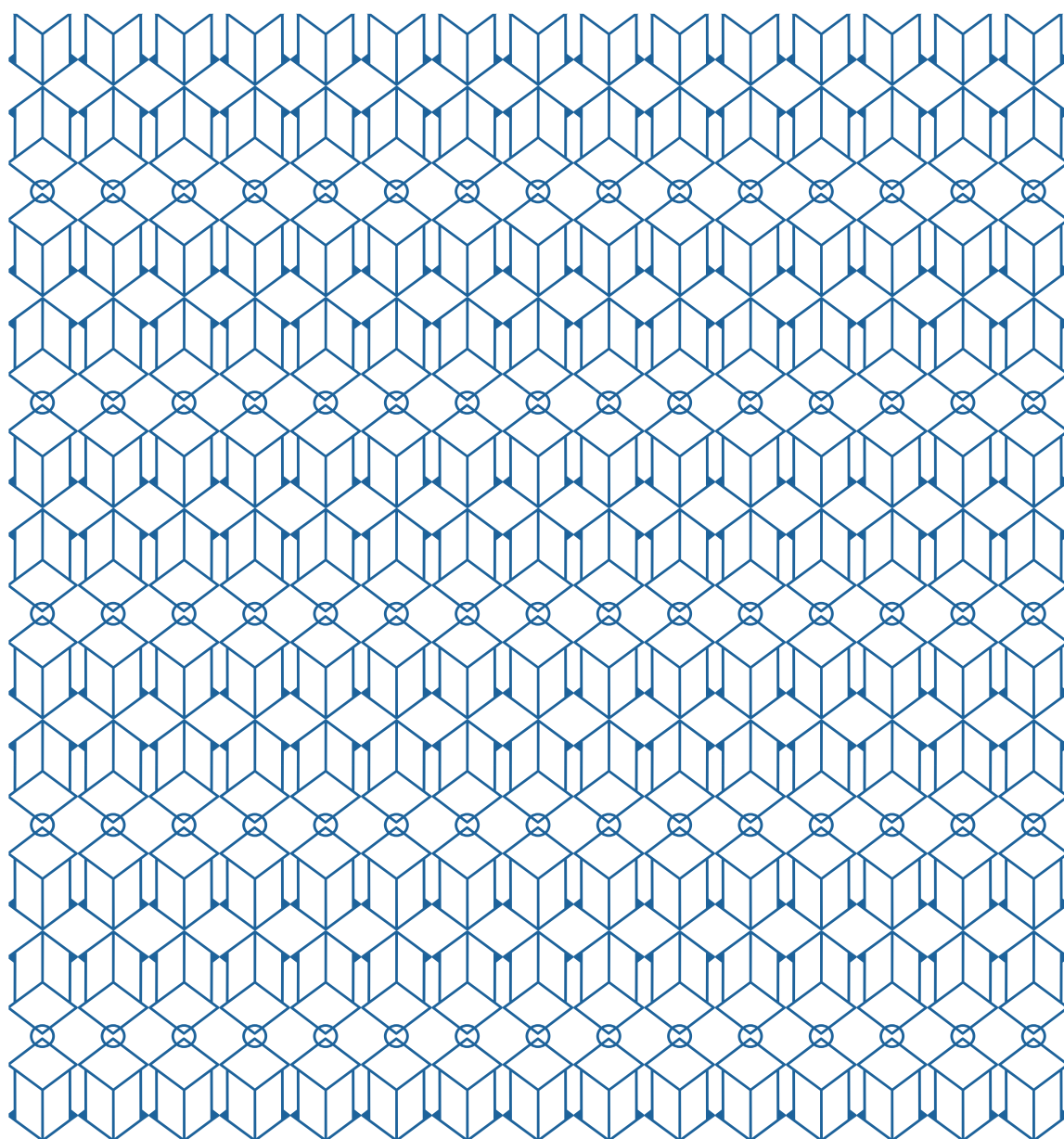


Xenophobia, Freedom of Conscience and Anti-Extremism in Russia in 2024



SOVA Research
Center.
A collection of
annual reports



Moscow, 2025

Xenophobia, Freedom of Conscience and Anti-Extremism in Russia in 2024

Настоящий материал (информация)
произведен и (или) распространен
иностранным агентом
Исследовательский центр «Сова»
либо касается деятельности
иностранного агента
Исследовательский центр «Сова»

UDC 323.1(470+571)(082.1)“2024”
ББК 66.094я43+66.3(2Рос),54я43
X 44

X44 **Xenophobia, Freedom of Conscience and Anti-Extremism in Russia in 2024:**
A collection of annual reports by SOVA Research Center [Kravchenko Maria,
Sibireva Olga, Yudina Natalia / Ed. by Verkhovsky Alexander] – Moscow: SOVA
Center, 2025. – 158 pp.: tables, graphs.

ISBN 978-5-6049776-5-1

Reports focus on challenges in the realization of the rights to freedom of conscience and the principle of state secularism, and on overuse and misuse of anti-extremism laws.
The appendix provides details and statistics on the hate crimes and the prosecution of “extremist crimes.” All data were compiled on June 30, 2025.



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Neo-Nazis on the Rise: Hate Crimes and Countering Them in Russia in 2024

This report by SOVA Center focuses on the phenomenon of hate crimes, that is, criminal offenses committed on the grounds of ethnic, religious, or similar hostility or prejudice¹, and on the state’s countermeasures to such crimes.

Russian legislation also classifies crimes motivated by political and ideological enmity as hate crimes. The inclusion of these types of enmity in the definition of hate crime is quite rare in democratic countries and remains controversial. We do not consider such crimes in our report unless they are committed by groups oriented toward committing hate crimes in general, for xenophobic motives.

Summary

The results of the past year are alarming. Since the spring of 2023, we have recorded a rapid increase in racist violence, and this growth continued at a rapid pace in the first half of 2024 until the end of spring, although it has slowed down since summer. It is primarily youth bands that engage in this kind of violence, reviving the traditions of the Nazi skin-head autonomous groups of the 2000s. These new “Nazi-autonomists” target both traditional victim groups, perceived by them as “ethnic outsiders,” and the most vulnerable and defenseless, such as the homeless or drunks. No one, including women and children, is immune from attacks and subsequent public humiliation following the publication of the videos of the attacks. The far-right seems to be reviving all the forms of violence developed in the 2000s, including attacks “by association” against people dating the wrong kind of partner. The level of brutality towards the victims is also increasing.

The number of attacks against material objects and property has seen a less marked increase. Especially concerning, however, is the growing share of the most serious acts, such as arson and explosions.

The number of convictions for hate crimes has also increased. Law enforcement has demonstrated willingness to prosecute such attacks, and the number of the apprehended perpetrators is on the rise. Long prison terms were given to members of both new and old

1. Hate Crime Law: A Practical Guide. Warsaw: OSCE/ODIHR, 2009 (available on the website of the OSCE in several languages: <http://www.osce.org/odihr/36426>).
Verkhovsky Alexander. Criminal Law on Hate Crime, Incitement to Hatred and Hate Speech in OSCE Participating States. The Hague, 2015 (available on the website of SOVA Center: <https://www.sova-center.ru/upload/iblock/49b/osce-laws-eng-16.pdf>).

far-right gangs. But not only to them: in particular, the first group of participants in the anti-Semitic pogrom at the Makhachkala airport went to prison at the end of the year.

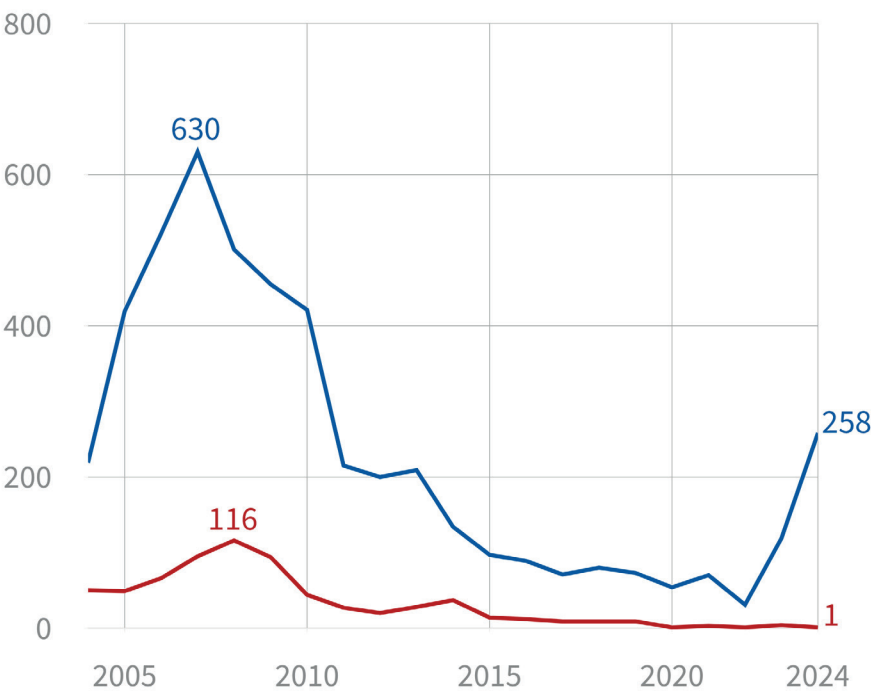
However, law enforcement officers are, unfortunately, clearly not keeping up with the increasing rates of violence.

Systematic Racist and Neo-Nazi Violence

According to SOVA Center’s monitoring data, in 2024, ideologically motivated violence affected 259 people, one of whom died. In addition, three people received serious death threats. Thus, the increase in the number of ideologically motivated attacks recorded a year ago continued and even accelerated: in 2023, we have reported 123 victims and one death threat². According to our data, the level of violence has returned to that of 2011 (243 victims). And we should also keep in mind that the data for last year are not final, as we learn about many attacks with a delay.³

Hate Crimes Victims: **Dead** and **Injured**

SOVA Center Data for 2004–2024



Source: SOVA Research Center, 2025

2. Here and below, the data are provided as of February 17, 2025.
3. Compare, for example, to the data of the previous report: Yudina N. The New Generation of the Far-Right and Their Victims. Hate Crimes and Counteraction to Them in Russia in 2023 // SOVA Center. 2024. 14 February (<https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2024/02/d47069/>).

Our data on hate crimes in Russia cannot be compared with any other statistics, since no other open statistics exist. And we are unable to include any data on the republics of the North Caucasus in our calculations as our methodology does not work there⁴. We also know very little about incidents between different minority groups motivated by ethnic hatred. As a result, our data are incomplete and can in no way reflect the level of racist violence in Russia. But we can assess the dynamics and major trends at least to some extent, because our methodology has not changed since 2004.

We have repeatedly reported on the difficulties associated with collecting information⁵. Monitoring based on the media and social networks and reports of victims' appeals to human rights organizations and the police remains difficult. But since the spring of 2023, newly emerging neo-Nazi autonomous youth groups have returned to the practice of telling the stories of their "exploits" by posting videos of "direct action" online, and the lion's share of our statistics comes from our monitoring of far-right Telegram channels⁶.

Judging by reports and data on the detainees, most of the attackers are very young people, often 13-14 years old, who are stylistically copying their predecessors of the early 2000s. This continuity can also be seen in the names of the new wave groups, directly repeating the old acronyms (the new NS/WP⁷, Sparrows Crew, etc.).

According to the anti-fascist Nazi Video Monitoring Project, which records not only serious hate crimes, but also smaller incidents not included in our counts, 61 videos showing 42 attacks were published in the far-right channels in December 2024 alone; 58 videos of 58 attacks in November, and 54 videos of 64 attacks in October⁸.

4. All the more so, the four regions of Ukraine included in the Russian jurisdiction in the fall of 2023 are not taken into account. But Crimea is: the real regime there in recent years is already very similar to that of the regions of southern Russia.

5. See: Yudina N. The State Has Taken Up Racist Violence Again. Hate Crimes and Counteraction to Them in Russia in 2021 // SOVA Center. 2022. 10 February (<https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2022/02/d45774/>).

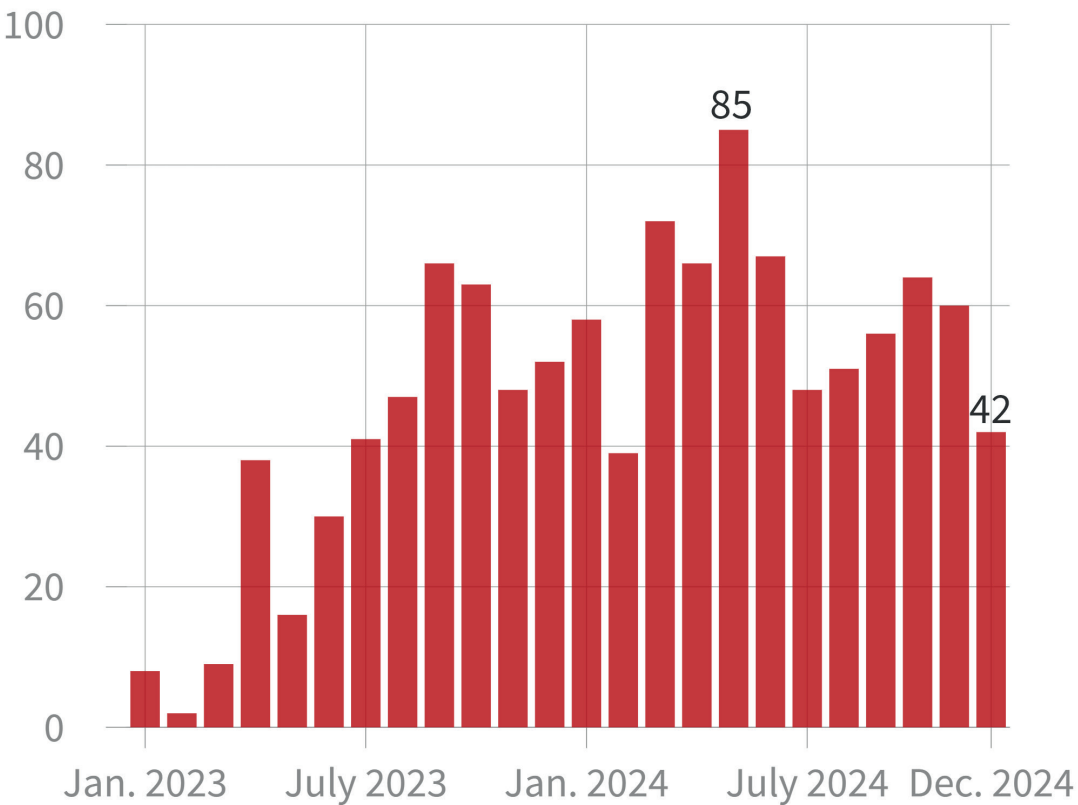
6. For more on this see: Alperovich Vera. Nationalists "tame" and "wild". Public activity of far-right groups, summer-fall 2023 // SOVA Center. 2024. 12 January (<https://www.sova-center.ru/racism-xenophobia/publications/2024/01/d49146/>).

7. The Supreme Court recognized NS/WP as a terrorist organization // SOVA Center. 2021. 21 May (<https://www.sova-center.ru/racism-xenophobia/news/counteraction/2021/05/d44261/>).

8. Advanced attack statistics // Telegram channel Nazi Video Monitoring Project. 2023. 29 November (<https://nvmproject.com/advanced-stats>).

Hate Crimes: Methodology of the Nazi Video Monitoring Project

Including minor cases of violence



Source: Nazi Video Monitoring Project, 2025

Most of the attacks occurred in the spring. Judging by the introductions to videos in Telegram channels, the far-right is reviving the tradition of attacks commemorating significant dates: some were timed to coincide with Hitler's birthday on April 20, the "day of hatred and revenge" on May 5, once set for 40th day since the death of the famous neo-Nazi Maxim Bazylev (Adolf), and the day of memory of another ultra-right cult figure, the leader of the St. Petersburg neo-Nazi Combat Terrorist Organization, Dmitry Borovikov, shot dead during his arrest on May 19, 2006. In addition, at least four major attacks in March were declared revenge for the March 22 terrorist attack at Crocus City Hall⁹. The summer saw a noticeable decline in the activity of neo-Nazi militant groups, only partially offset by the intensification in the fall.

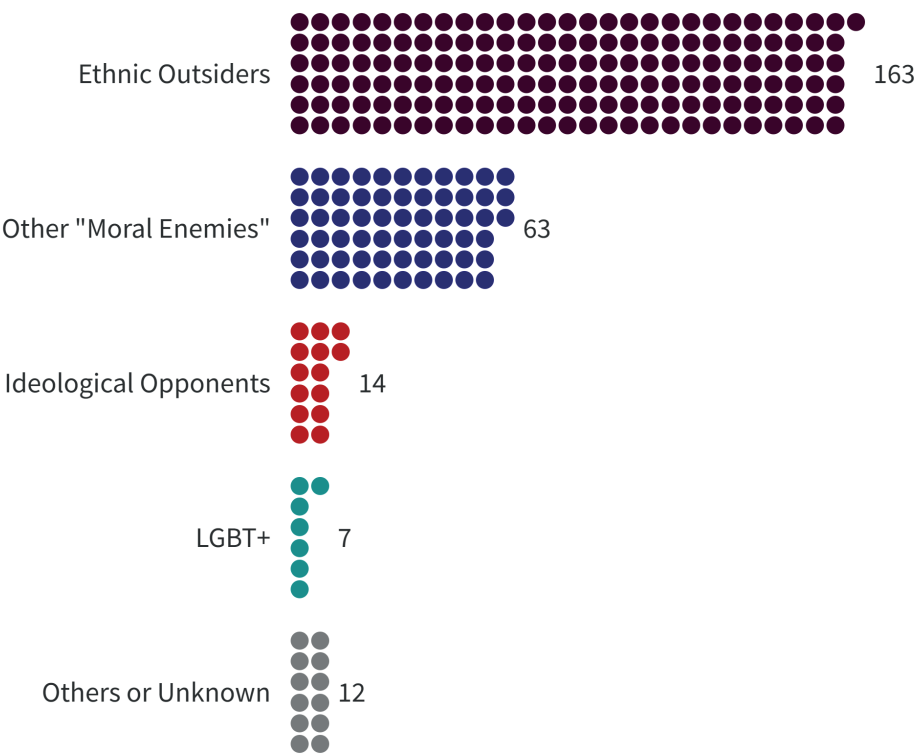
9. On the nationalists' reaction to the terrorist attack, see: Far-right publishes scenes of torture during the detention of alleged terrorists and calls for xenophobic attacks // SOVA Center. 2024. 25 March (<https://www.sova-center.ru/racism-xenophobia/news/racism-nationalism/2024/03/d49524/>).

In 2023, we wrote that the attacks perpetrated by the new autonomous groups did not seem particularly brutal¹⁰ and the vast majority of the episodes were more like hooligan antics rather than dangerous violence. At the same time, we also expressed concerns that the brutality of attacks would inevitably increase. Unfortunately, our fears were justified: already in the winter of 2024, despite the decrease in the total number of videos of attacks, the number of serious group beatings with hammers and brass knuckles gradually began to grow. Fortunately, so far the “direct action” has resulted in almost no murders.

Unfortunately, it can be very difficult to determine where exactly the attack took place. Often we cannot even identify the region. Based on fragmented data, we have recorded attacks in 19 regions of the country in the past year (26 regions in 2023). Moscow is leading in terms of the level of violence, replacing St. Petersburg, which was number one for the two previous years. It is followed by the Moscow, the Novosibirsk, and the Kostroma regions and Krasnoyarsk Krai. In addition to Moscow and St. Petersburg, attacks were carried out for the second consecutive year in the Volgograd, the Moscow, the Nizhny Novgorod, the Novosibirsk, the Tyumen, the Chelyabinsk, and the Yaroslavl regions, in Krasnoyarsk Krai, and in Stavropol Krai

Hate Crime Victims by Type in 2024

SOVA Center Data

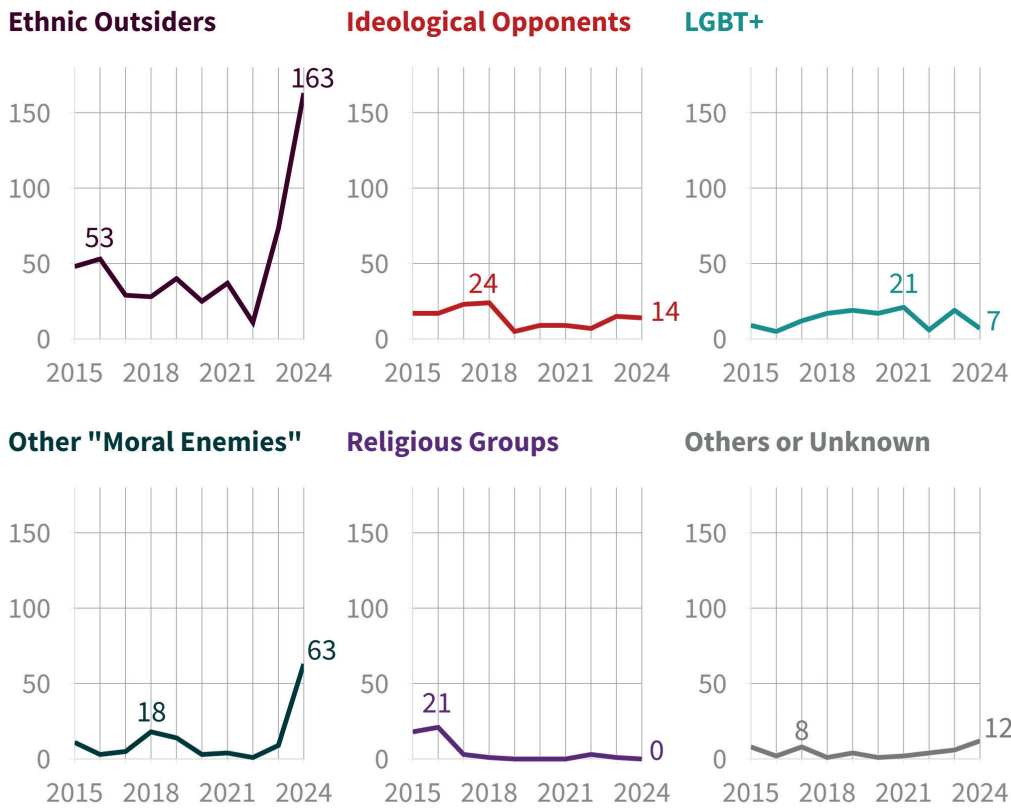


Source: SOVA Research Center, 2025

10. Minor episodes of violence were not included in our calculations.

Hate Crime Victims by Type

SOVA Center Data for 2015–2024



Source: SOVA Research Center, 2025

Attacks Against “Ethnic Outsiders”

In 2024, we recorded 163 ethnically motivated attacks, that is, attacks against those whom the attackers visually perceived as ethnic outsiders. And that’s more than double the number from a year earlier (69 assaults).

Victims in this category include natives of Central Asia and the Caucasus, dark-skinned people, and people of unidentified “non-Slavic appearance.”

As is traditionally the case, those beaten “by association” were also among the victims. For example, in October, a group of ultra-right-wingers beat up a teenage boy for dating a “Tajik girl.”

2024 saw several attacks against young children of “non-Slavic appearance,” including against children playing in the sandpit on a playground¹¹.

11. See: Racism and Xenophobia in September 2024 // SOVA Center. 2024. 11 October (<https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/news-releases/2024/10/d47094/>).

We learned about most of these attacks from far-right Telegram feeds about attacks carried out by organized groups of Nazi autonomists.

Also present were cases of routine xenophobia displayed by ordinary citizens in routine disputes, including on public transport.

According to Levada Center data published in May 2024, hostility toward migrants from Central Asia has increased in connection with the terrorist attack in Crocus City Hall. Only 22% of respondents were willing to see them in their inner circle, and another 17% – among residents of the Russian Federation (in 2021, 23% and 22% respectively), while 56% said that they would let migrants into Russia only temporarily or would ban them from entry altogether.

One of the highest indicators of the level of social distance is observed toward the Roma. Hostility toward this group has been recorded for a long time. And whereas earlier this indicator was slightly decreasing, in 2024 it increased significantly: 39% of respondents were not willing to allow Roma into Russia, and 13% were prepared to ban them from entry altogether (in April 2022, 30% and 16% respectively)¹². A vivid example of these attitudes was the violent pogrom against the local Roma in the town of Korkino, the Chelyabinsk region, after a local taxi driver was murdered in October 2024.

There are also attacks motivated by ethnic hatred against ethnic Russians. We are aware of two such assaults in 2024 (six in 2023). Both of these incidents took place in Belgorod and came to light after a video posted online by a group of teenagers calling themselves Combat Bumblebees and led by 17-year-old Emil Gafarov.

The military action in Ukraine is contributing to the overall picture of xenophobically motivated violence. Thus, on the night of August 10, a resident of St. Petersburg shot his neighbor in the eye with a gas pistol through the unscrewed peephole of the front door, believing that she was from Ukraine (in fact, she turned out to be a native of St. Petersburg). However, Ukrainians are almost never among the victims in our statistics. Probably, the reason is that they are visually difficult to identify.

Attacks Against Ideological Opponents

The number of attacks by the ultra-right against their political, ideological, or “stylistic” opponents remained approximately the same – 14 beaten (15 in 2023)¹³. Among the victims were non-political non-conformists (punks, anime fans, emo and Redan¹⁴ subculture fans etc.), ideological opponents (Communists, anti-fascists, or those who have merely been mistaken for such) and simply those who publicly expressed outrage over racist slogans.

12 . The Level of Xenophobia and Ethnic Tension, Attitudes Toward Immigrants // Levada Center. 2024.

13 May (<https://www.levada.ru/2024/05/14/uroven-ksenofobii-i-mezhnatsionalnoj-napryazhennosti-otnoshenie-k-priezzhim/>).

13 . Attacks of this type peaked in 2007 (7 killed, 118 injured); the numbers have since been steadily declining. After 2013, trends have been unstable.

14 . For more on the Redan subculture, see the chapter “Attacks on Ideological Opponents” in Yudina N. The New Generation of the Far Right and Their Victims. Hate Crimes and Counteraction to Them in Russia in 2023 // SOVA Center. 2024. 14 February (<https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2024/02/d47069/>)/

The two cases that gained media notoriety were the November 16 attack in Kostroma, where two young men returning from a film screening about murdered anti-fascist Ivan Khutorskoy were assaulted by members of the neo-Nazi Made With Hate organization, resulting in one of the victims losing an eye, and the January 12 attack against communist Ruslan Radul and his companions in the center of Rybinsk, the Yaroslavl region.

Attacks Against the LGBT+ and in “Defense of Morality”

Compared to 2023, the number of attacks against LGBT+ people decreased and returned to the levels of 2022. SOVA Center has recorded 7 victims (19 in 2023, 6 in 2022). But the only murder victim known to us was among them. It was a 44-year-old handicapped man beaten to death on a fake date in Tula by a group of teenagers calling themselves neo-Nazis¹⁵.

The attacks, seen as a “cleansing” of elements that undermine the “moral level of the nation” is, regrettably, one of the most popular types of far-right violence. Ethnically, such victims may also be “one’s own,” although “outsiders” are certainly favored. The far-right often refer to this category of victims as “biowaste” or “human garbage.” These are, first of all, the homeless¹⁶, as well as the drunk and alcoholics, drug users, and drug dealers¹⁷. Since the Occupy-Pedophiliay project was founded in the 2010s by the well-known neo-Nazi Maksim (Tesak) Martsinkevich¹⁸, this group of victims also included alleged pedophiles; they have turned out to be the largest victim group in this segment. And the popularity of such attacks is growing, apparently due to the high vulnerability of the victims.

Collecting information on this category of victims is particularly difficult due to the anti-social nature of many victims. Nevertheless, in 2024, we found out about 62 such attacks¹⁹ (15 in 2023). And this represents the second largest group of victims in our sad statistics.

Religious Xenophobia

Violence motivated by religious xenophobia in Russia is far less common than that motivated by ethnic xenophobia. Although, for example, Muslims as a religious group represent a constant target of hostility on far-right Internet resources, xenophobic attacks against them as members of a religious group rather than as ethnic “outsiders” are rare.

15 . In Tula, a crowd of teenage nationalists killed a disabled man for his non-traditional orientation // Myslo Telegram channel. 2024. 3 October (<https://t.me/mysloru/18553>).

16 . For more on the causes of attacks on the homeless, see, for example: Vera Alperovich, Yudina N. The Ultra-Right on the Streets: with a Pro-Democracy Poster in Their Hands or a Knife in Their Pocket: Xenophobia and Radical Nationalism in Russia, and Efforts to Counteract Them in 2012 // SOVA Center. 2013. 26 April (<https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2013/04/d26972/>).

17 . The degree of hatred is amplified by reports on far-right resources alleging that the business of transportation, possession, and distribution of drugs is carried out mostly by people from the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Africa and Roma people.

18 . Maxim “Tesak” Martsinkevich in Brief // SOVA Center. 2020. 1 October (<https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/news-releases/2020/10/d42991/>).

19 . Mostly from videos posted by the far-right themselves.

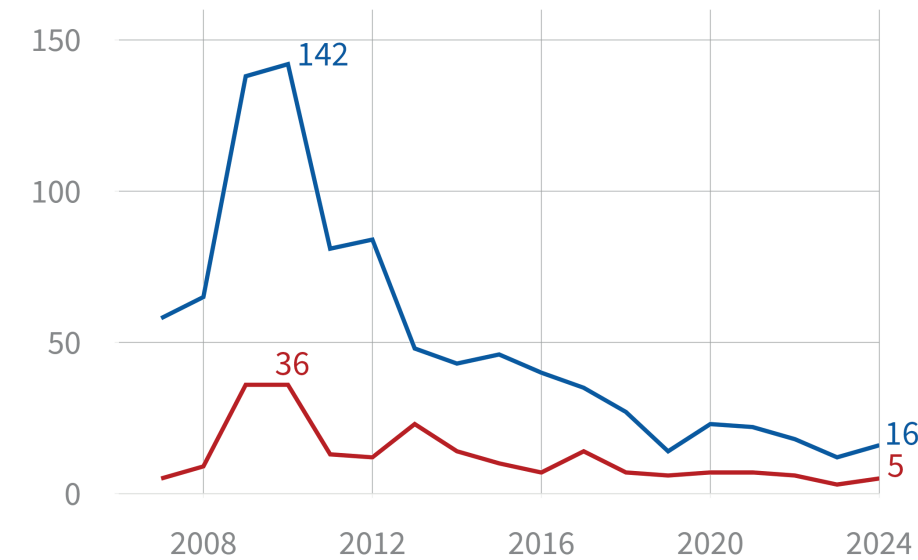
In the past year, however, we have come across several such cases. In July, at the Kolo-
menskaya metro station in Moscow, a female passenger attacked another female passen-
ger wearing a hijab with a knife and pepper spray. In September, a video emerged of a far-
right activist who sprayed gas at a woman wearing a hijab, who was outside with her two
children and a stroller.

Crimes Against Property

Crimes against property include damage to cemeteries, monuments, various cultural ob-
jects, and various property in general. The Criminal Code qualifies these cases under dif-
ferent articles, but law enforcement in this sense is not always consistent. Such actions are
usually referred to as vandalism, but for several years now we have preferred not to use this
term, since the concept of “vandalism,” not only in the Criminal Code, but also in everyday
language, clearly does not describe all possible types of damage to material objects.

Hate Crimes Against Property: from Explosions and Arsons to Graffiti and Other Damage

SOVA Center Data for 2007–2024



Source: SOVA Research Center, 2025

The number of property crimes motivated by religious, ethnic or ideological hatred, re-
corded by SOVA Center has increased: for 2024, we know of 21 cases in nine regions of
the country; for 2023, 15 cases in 13 regions.

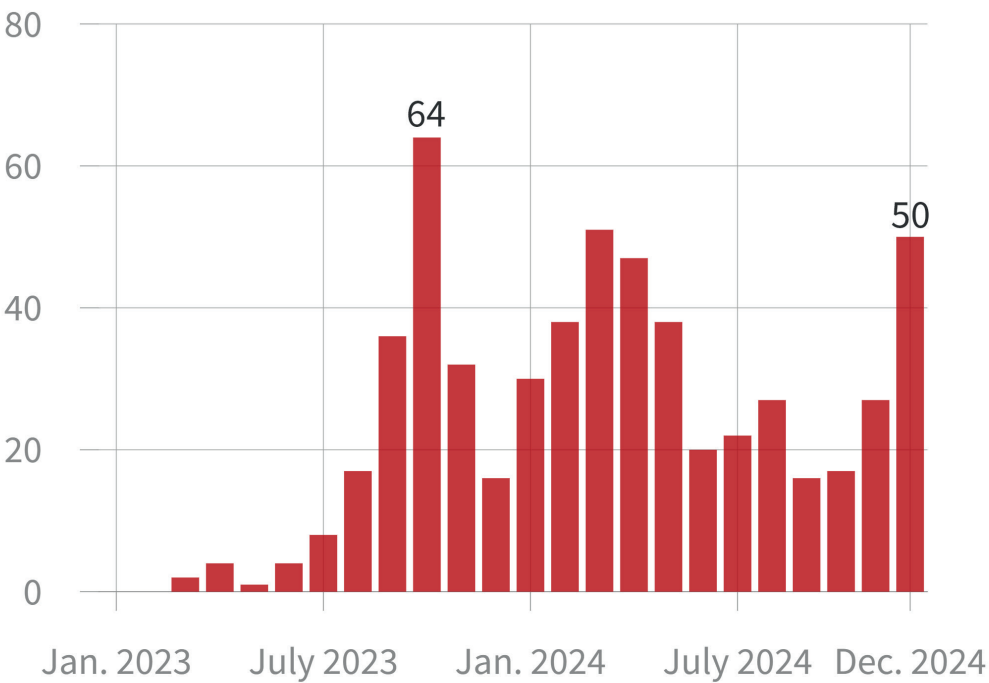
Our statistics does not include isolated cases of neo-Nazi graffiti and drawings on
buildings and fences, but it does include serial graffiti.

As with violent crimes, we do not include in our counts attacks on material objects for
political or ideological reasons (which have become particularly numerous since 2022),
unless these ideological reasons are themselves linked to xenophobia. Neither do we include
episodes qualified as attacks on a material object, such as the “Eternal Flame,” in which
material damage was not inflicted.²⁰

These statistics also do not include insignificant incidents, including those committed
by the ultra-right, such as damage to cars with license plates from the Caucasus regions
(tire punctures, broken windows, arson), attacks on retail outlets that employ people with
“non-Slavic appearance” (broken windows, damaged goods), broken windows in construc-
tion trailers, and so on. According to the Nazi Video Monitoring Project, the numbers of
such acts were as follows: 50 in December, 27 in November, 17 in October, and 16 in Sep-
tember.²¹

Hate Crimes Against Property: Methodology of the Nazi Video Monitoring Project

Including minor incidents



Source: Nazi Video Monitoring Project, 2025

20 . The Eternal Flame may have been put out with snowballs, or used as a bonfire for domestic needs, or
someone danced around it. Such incidents are often qualified under Article 354.1 of the Criminal Code
(rehabilitation of Nazism).

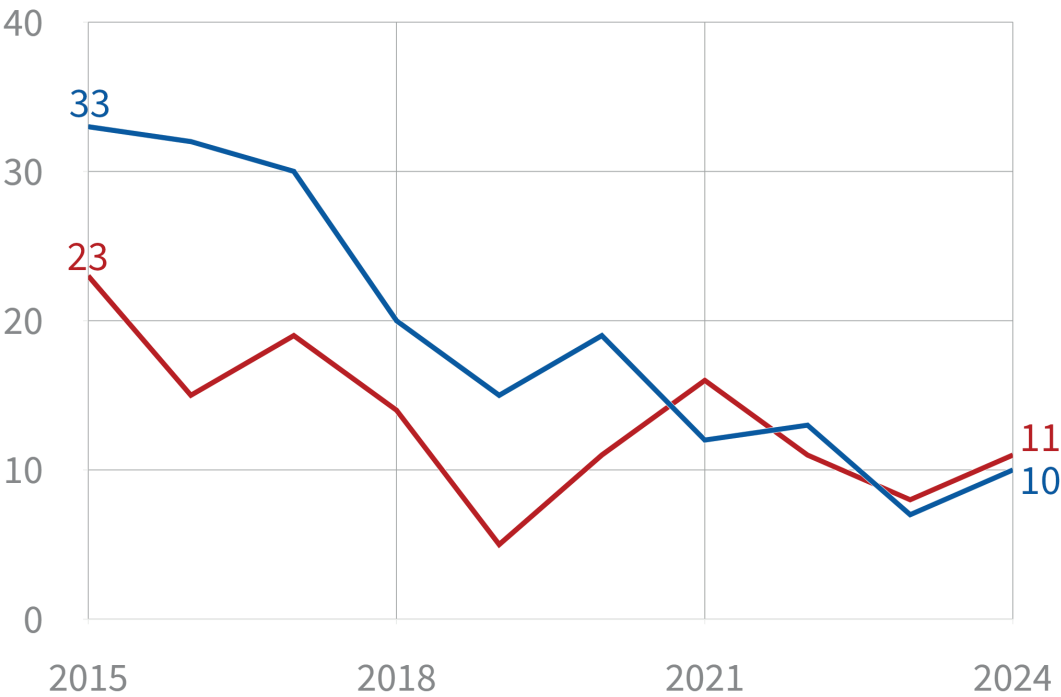
21 . Advanced attack statistics // Nazi Video Monitoring Project. 2024. 29 January (<https://nvmpproject.com/advanced-stats>).

According to SOVA Center, in 2024, 11 sites were targeted for ideological rather than religious reasons (including hostility to ethnic groups or LGBT+), which is more than a year earlier (eight in 2023). As usual, the Lenin monument and monuments to the heroes of the Great Patriotic War were among the targeted sites. In addition, the grave of Mikhail (Gorshok) Gorsheniov, lead singer of the punk band Korol i Shut, was desecrated in St. Petersburg, in Yekaterinburg the mass grave of tourists from the Dyatlov group was desecrated twice,²² and in Volgograd a makeshift memorial, erected on January 19 to commemorate the lawyer Stanislav Markelov and journalist Anastasia Baburova, murdered by the neo-Nazis, was broken down.

In February in Volgograd, ultra-right-wing members of the Orthodox Wolves of Votan group set fire to a private house allegedly inhabited by Roma; and in June, another group set fire to a house where migrants were living. In July, a video emerged of a teenager burning a Russian passport stolen from a native of Tajikistan.

Vandalized Objects and Sites: Religious and Ideological*

SOVA Center Data for 2015–2024



Source: SOVA Research Center, 2025
* Acts of vandalism for ideological reasons that have nothing to do with xenophobia are not taken into account.

22. The photo of Semyon Zolotaryov, who, according to one version, is believed to be a member of special services, embedded in a group of tourists, was desecrated.

Religious sites were targeted in nearly half of the attacks. In 2024, their number (10) was higher than in the previous year (7). Five Orthodox and five Muslim sites were desecrated (in 2023, four and two, respectively).

The share of the most dangerous acts – arson and explosions – also increased: four arsons and one explosion (in 2023, two arsons and one explosion). Thus, the share of such acts increased slightly and reached 25% (in 2023, 20%).

The regional distribution changed again in the last year. In 2024, such crimes occurred in five new regions (12 in 2023). At the same time, eight regions from 2023 did not make it into our statistics in 2024 (vs. 11 regions in 2023).

For the second consecutive year, the geography of the acts of violence (19 regions) was noticeably wider than that of the vandals’ crimes (9 regions); for four years in a row prior to 2023 the opposite was true. Both types of crimes were recorded in five regions (seven in 2023): Moscow and St. Petersburg, the Volgograd, the Moscow, and the Tyumen regions. But given the significant incompleteness of violent crime location data, the geography of violence is probably substantially broader than that.

Criminal Prosecution for Violence

In 2024, the number of those convicted of violent hate crimes known to us was twice as high as a year earlier. Not less than 22 guilty verdicts where the hate motive was officially recognized by courts were issued in 12 regions. 70 suspects were found guilty in these trials²³ (35 in 2023). Official statistics on sentences with hate motive are not available, as this qualifying characteristic does not constitute part of an article of the Criminal Code, but only a paragraph, and the sentencing statistics are published by the Supreme Court by parts of articles.

Racist violence was categorized under the following articles containing hate motive as a categorizing attribute: Murder (Paragraph K of Part 2, Art. 105), Intentional Infliction of Injury to Health of Average Gravity (Paragraph F of Part 2, Art. 112), Intentional Infliction of Light Injury to Health (Paragraph B of Part 2, 115), Battery (Part 2, Art. 116), Hooliganism (Part 2, Art. 213), Death Threat (Part 2, Art. 119). This set is repeated practically every year.

We are also aware of one verdict in which Article 282 of the Criminal Code (incitement to hatred; a year earlier we were not aware of such verdicts) was applied to a violent crime in 2024, although it did not concern public statements. In May, a court in Stavropol Krai sentenced two brothers under Paragraph A of Part 2 of Article 282 of the Criminal Code for a verbal dispute during a roadside conflict, where the defendants hit a young man several times while shouting xenophobic insults.

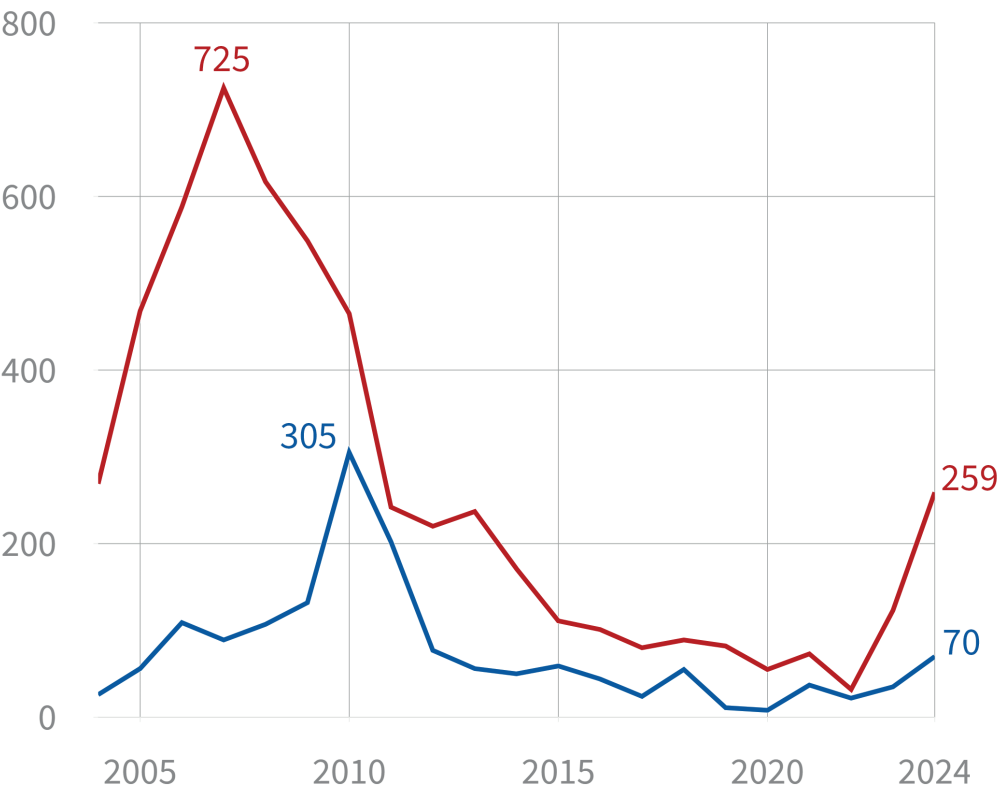
The application of Art. 282 in this type of cases is allowed: as the Resolution of the Plenum of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation No. 11 “On judicial practice in criminal cases of extremist crimes” of June 28, 2011²⁴ states, Art. 282 of the CC the article may

23. Only the verdicts where a hate motive was officially recognized are included in this count.
24. Resolution of the Plenum of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation No. 11 “On judicial practice in criminal cases of extremist crimes” of June 28, 2011 // Website of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation. 2011. 29 June (http://www.supcourt.ru/Show_pdf.php?Id=7315).

be applied to violent crimes if they are aimed at inciting hatred in third parties, for example, in the case of a public and demonstrative ideologically motivated attack.

Violent Hate Crimes: Victims and Convicts

SOVA Center Data for 2004–2024



Source: SOVA Research Center 2025

Almost half of the convicts we know of, 34 people, are participants in the anti-Semitic pogrom at the Makhachkala airport in October 2023.²⁵ They were convicted in late 2024 in Krasnodar Krai and Stavropol Krai under Part 2 of Article 212 of the Criminal Code (participation in mass riots accompanied by violence, pogroms, destruction of property, use of objects that pose a danger to others, as well as armed resistance to a representative of the authorities).²⁶ The group trials of the riot participants have continued since the beginning of 2025.

In addition to the above, we can mention the sentence issued in St. Petersburg for the beating of a 17-year-old man: the victim was approached by the attackers, who claimed

25 . For more details see Anti-Semitic Acts in the North Caucasus // SOVA Center. 2023. 31 October (<https://www.sova-center.ru/racism-xenophobia/news/racism-nationalism/2023/10/d48837/>).

26 . And under Part 3 of Art. 263.1 of the CC (Failure to comply with the requirements for compliance with transport security at transport infrastructure facilities and vehicles, if this act has caused major damage by negligence, committed by a group of persons by prior conspiracy).

to be “skinheads” and “keeping everyone in fear” and asked him whether he “supported the Russian World.” Before the victim was able to respond, they beat him with a stun gun, sprayed gas in his face, and shot him with a rocket launcher. Notably, no hate motive was included in the charges (under Art. 115 and 213).

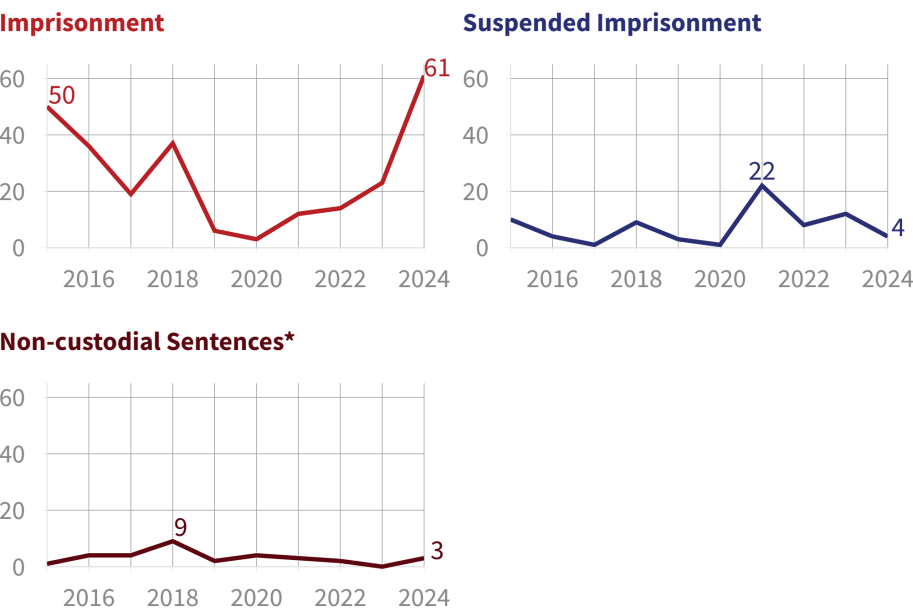
In addition, we do not know whether the hate motive was taken into account in the sentence of imprisonment under Articles 111 and 213 of the Criminal Code given in January in Orenburg to two teenagers from the ultra-right Cheerful Boots Squad for beating people with “non-Slavic appearance” while shouting racist slogans.

Penalties for violent acts were distributed as follows

- 1 person sentenced to 17 years in prison;
- 3 persons sentenced to terms of up to 15 years in prison;
- 40 persons sentenced to terms of up to 10 years in prison;
- 7 persons sentenced to terms of up to 5 years in prison;
- 9 persons sentenced to terms of up to 3 years in prison;
- 1 person – up to 1 year in prison;
- 2 persons sentenced to forced labor;
- 1 person sentenced to compulsory labor;
- 4 persons received suspended sentences;
- 2 persons – sentences unknown.

Sentences for Ideologically Motivated Violence

SOVA Center Data for 2015–2024



Source: SOVA Research Center, 2025

* This category also includes compulsory psychiatric treatment and expiry of statute of limitations.

Thus, only 6% were sentenced to suspended sentences. The share of suspended sentences for violent hate crimes fell sharply compared to the previous year, when we reported 32%. And this is a positive trend: over the years of monitoring, we have repeatedly seen that suspended sentences for violence are not perceived by the convicted as punishment and fail to stop them from committing similar acts in the future.

In some cases we find the motivation of the court understandable and such decisions acceptable. It is likely that in the two sentences in St. Petersburg, one for pepper-spraying a passerby while shouting xenophobic insults and another for a pepper-spray assault with homophobic slurs, such mild sentences can be explained by the fact that the attackers were minors and the victim was only slightly injured. It is also likely that the above-mentioned young participant in the roadside conflict in Stavropol Krai, who was hit and insulted several times “on the basis of ethnicity,” was not seriously hurt.

Punishments for compulsory and forced labor are rare in sentences for violent crimes. But last year there were three such sentences. One of them is Alexei (Monakhov) Malevanyi, a well-known far-right activist from Volgograd, who was sentenced to 300 hours of compulsory labor under Paragraph B of Part 2 of Article 115 of the Criminal Code for attacking a teenager who reprimanded neo-Nazis for shouting Nazi slogans and doing a Nazi salute.

The two forced labor sentences were given for Russophobic attacks to an underage participant of a group assault against Russians in Khabarovsk and a pit bull owner in Naberezhnye Chelny. The latter set his dog on a passerby, hit the victim with the leash, and shouted insults against the Russians. The mild punishment is probably explained by the fact that during the trial, the accused admitted his guilt, apologized to the victim, offered to pay for medical treatment, and said that the dog was handed over to an acquaintance to be shot. We can only hope that he did not follow through on his promise and the dog was not harmed.

Most of the other offenders were sentenced to prison terms of various lengths.

In particular, brothers Maxim Matyash and Mikhail Velhovoy were convicted in the Yaroslavl region for a 2006 murder: they were sentenced to long prison terms for the murder of a person of “non-Slavic appearance” on the grounds of ethnic hatred, committed in Uglich. After the murder, the brothers fled to Ukraine and were imprisoned there for another premeditated murder. The two wanted men (or at least Matyash) were found behind bars in the town of Volnovakha when it was occupied by Russian troops and were taken to the Yaroslavl region for trial.

A court in St. Petersburg sentenced three former members of the banned neo-Nazi Combat Terrorist Organization Andrei (Marduk) Romanov, Denis (Parry) Burakov (Kharchev), and Roman Orlov (Kostrachenkov) to prison terms for old murders and attempted murders committed back in 2003.

Among those sentenced to various prison terms were also members of other, newer, far-right gangs, including those carrying old names.

In Novocherkassk, the Rostov region, members of a community calling themselves members of the neo-Nazi terrorist organization National Socialism/White Power (NS/WP) were given prison terms between two and six and a half years for committing two hate-motivated attacks in Novocherkassk and Rostov-on-Don, disfiguring the face of one of the victims.

In Krasnoyarsk, far-right activists responsible for several attacks, including on anti-fascists and a 17-year-old Kyrgyz citizen, were sentenced to imprisonment.

Unfortunately, we do not know what punishment was given to Denis Gubin and his minor accomplice from the above-mentioned band of Combat Bumblebees in Belgorod region.

According to our incomplete data, a total of 67 people were prosecuted for ideologically motivated violence in the past year (33 in 2023).

In particular, among the initiated cases, the neo-Nazi gang Made With Hate (MWH) from Kostroma and its 17-year-old leader, nicknamed Buchenwald, are being investigated under Paragraph F of Part 2 of Article 111, Part 2 of Article 213 and Part 1 of Article 282¹ of the Criminal Code (creation of an extremist community) for the aforementioned attack on two young men returning from a film screening about the murdered antifascist Khutorskoy, and several other attacks on non-conformists, homeless people, and migrants.

Criminal Prosecution for Crimes Against Property

In 2024, we learned of seven convictions for crimes against property where we believe a hate motive was imputed lawfully or we have doubts about the lawfulness. A total of seven people were convicted (10 in 2023).

In total, for 2024, we know of 33 convictions against 41 people for property crimes classified as ideologically motivated (44 convicted in 2023). That is, wrongful convictions, in our opinion, clearly dominate in this category.

As in the case of violent hate crimes, we cannot rely on official data, as the statistics of sentences published by the Supreme Court do not allow us to isolate the data we need: in Article 244 of the Criminal Code on cemetery vandalism, the hate motive is a paragraph, not a part of the article, and in Article 214 of the Criminal Code (vandalism) it is a part of the article, but together with an act committed by a group.

Beginning in 2023, we changed the way we account for the sentences for statements made directly on material objects²⁷. Such acts may have signs of both vandalism and statements, and law enforcement in this sense is not always consistent: the same acts (for example, drawing swastikas or writing slogans on the walls of residential buildings) may be qualified both under Art. 214 of the Criminal Code and under the articles on statements. Previously, we followed the judicial qualification, and therefore some of the substantially similar sentences were included in the hate crime report and some in the report on prosecution for statements. But starting from 2023, we classify all sentences for crimes against property (damage to monuments, various cultural objects, and property) as sentences for crimes against property, not for public statements, even if the sentence uses one of the articles of the Criminal Code for statements (for example, Article 280 of the Criminal Code (public calls for extremist activity) or Article 148 of the Criminal Code (insulting the religious feelings of believers)).

Thus, in 2024, we learned about two convictions under Article 148. Both were related to attacks on Orthodox churches. In the Tula region, a local resident was sentenced to a

27. See a detailed explanation in: Natalia Yudina. Along the Beaten Track. Anti-extremism law enforcement in Russia in 2023 with regard to countering public statements and organized activity, including radical nationalism // SOVA Center. 2024. 1 April (<https://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2024/04/d47074/>).

Sanctions for Administrative Offenses Related to Extremism in 2023–2024

In recent years, SOVA Center has been monitoring the application of articles of the Russian Code of Administrative Offenses (CAO) that regulate public statements. Some of these articles are based on the provisions of the 2002 law “On Countering Extremist Activities,” while others were added in recent years due to the intensification of protest sentiments and political debate, including in connection with the military actions in Ukraine, and the state’s desire to control public discussion. This report summarizes our observations on how these legal norms were applied in 2023 and 2024. The report’s sources include statistical data from the Judicial Department of the Supreme Court of Russia,¹ information about the work of Russian courts published by the State Automated System “Pravosudie,”² news reports posted on our website over the past two years, and the [database](#) of court decisions analyzed by SOVA. The database is publicly available on our website. We also express our gratitude to the human rights media project OVD-Info³ for the opportunity to receive and process updates from Russian court websites.

Articles of the Code of Administrative Offenses Related to Public Statements

Under Russian law, administrative offenses are minor ones that differ from crimes in that they do not cause significant harm to society or pose a serious threat to public safety. This explains the absence of a criminal record and generally less severe sanctions for offenders. At the same time, the system of counteracting extremism is based on the framework law that, in its definition of extremist activity, combines acts that vary in the degree of threat they pose to the public, from terrorism to demonstrating prohibited symbols. Unsurprisingly, the articles of the CAO based on the law on counteracting extremism gradually became closely linked with the relevant norms of the Criminal Code (CC), as did some

1. Judicial Statistics Data, Judicial Department of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation. 2025. March (<https://cdep.ru/?id=79>).
2. Information on the activities of federal courts of general jurisdiction, published by the State Automated System “Pravosudie” (<https://sudrf.ru/index.php?id=300>).
3. Data by OVD-Info, OVD-Info. Independent human rights media project. 2025. March (<https://data.ovd.info/>).

fine of 300,000 roubles for unruly conduct at the Dormition Monastery,²⁸ and in the Moscow region a local resident received 240 hours of compulsory labor for trashing a Zeleznograd church. In other cases, Article 214 was applied and all of the convicted were sentenced to imprisonment, but this article was not the only one in their sentences. The above-mentioned ultra-right from Novocherkassk had Article 214 in their sentence for throwing bottles with a flammable mixture at the signboard of a cafe in the town of Shakhty. Other sentences were related to the events in Ukraine. For example, in Moscow, a storekeeper from Saratov was sentenced to imprisonment under a number of articles of the Criminal Code.²⁹ A slogan glorifying the Russian Volunteer Corps (RDK), recognized as terrorist, and calling for the murder of police officers, written in marker on the wall of a grocery store, was interpreted as vandalism under Article 214. In St. Petersburg, a local resident was convicted under Part 2 of Art. 214³⁰ for writing and painting a stylized heart on the walls of houses “as a sign of love and respect for the Armed Forces of Ukraine and Chief of the Intelligence Committee of Ukraine, Kyrylo Budanov.” In both cases, the actual damage to property was so insignificant that we have serious doubts as to whether the criminal offence of vandalism should be applied. In addition, we are aware of nine new criminal cases for defacing material objects and property, brought against 11 people (up from five in 2023).

28. He broke some icon frames, overturned the lectern, and insulted the believers. Art. 213 of the Criminal Code was also applied in the verdict.
29. Including Part 1 of Art. 205² of the Criminal Code (public calls for terrorist activities), Part 2 of Art. 282 of the Criminal Code (incitement to ethnic hatred).
30. The sentence also included Part 1 of Art. 222 of the Criminal Code (illegal storage of ammunition).

other administrative articles on public statements. On the one hand, introducing a prior administrative punishment mechanism⁴ blurred the line between administrative and criminal prosecution.⁵ On the other hand, penalties under these administrative articles have increased in severity.

This report will discuss the application of the following articles of the CAO: 20.3 (propaganda or public display of prohibited symbols), 20.29 (mass distribution of extremist materials), 20.3.1 (incitement to hatred), 20.3.2 (calls for violation of Russia’s territorial integrity), 20.3.3 (discrediting the actions of the army and officials abroad), 20.3.4 (calls for sanctions against Russia), as well as parts 3–5 of Article 20.1 on disorderly conduct (dissemination on the Internet of information expressing obvious disrespect for society, the state, state symbols, the Constitution or the authorities in an indecent form).⁶ Articles 20.3.1 and 20.3.2 were added to the CAO as part of the “partial decriminalization” of the corresponding Criminal Code provisions ([Articles 282](#) and [280¹CC](#)), introducing a preliminary administrative mechanism aimed at making the legislation more humane. Articles 20.3.3 and 20.3.4 were [created](#) in 2022, simultaneously with the introduction of the corresponding criminal articles 280³ and 284 into the CC, thus providing the preliminary administrative punishment mechanism from the outset. In the case of Article 20.3, the legislation has become more severe – in 2022, Article [282⁴](#) was introduced into the Criminal Code to address repeated displays of prohibited symbols. Thus, among the administrative norms listed above, only Article 20.29 and Parts 3–5 of Article 20.1 do not trigger criminal prosecution for a repeat offense within one year.

The CAO provides for the following sanctions: administrative fines, administrative arrest, community service, warnings, confiscation of the instrument or object used in the offense, administrative suspension of an organization’s activities, and administrative deportation of foreign nationals and stateless persons from Russia, among others. It should be noted that, in some cases, courts order the confiscation of equipment – such as computers, laptops, smartphones, modems, and data storage devices – from individuals punished for public statements made on the Internet, treating these items as instruments of the offense, even when their value significantly exceeds the amount of the administrative fine. Furthermore, individuals punished under Articles 20.3 and 20.29 CAO lose their passive electoral rights for a year. Since 2024, they also cannot serve as electoral commissioners with full voting rights.

4 . The prior administrative punishment mechanism stipulates criminal responsibility for a repeated offence within a year from the imposition of the corresponding administrative punishment.
5 . See, for example, an overview of the discussion on the preliminary administrative punishment mechanism and its features here: Novikova E.V. Administrativnaya preyditsiya: diskussiya prodolzhayetsya // Vestnik universiteta im. O.Ye Kutafina (MGYUA), 2018, No. 12 (<https://vestnik.msa.ru/jour/article/view/656>).
6 . We try to track the application of several more articles of the CAO, but the scale of their application is negligible. For example, Article 13.48 CAO (publicly equating the goals, decisions, and actions of the USSR and Nazi Germany during World War II), according to statistics from the Judicial Department of the Supreme Court’s was applied twice in 2023 and three times in 2024.

Data Analysis Methods

The Judicial Department at the Supreme Court publishes its general statistical data on the application of the articles of the CAO relevant to our study twice a year. We will provide the Judicial Department’s data on the total number of offenders punished in 2023 and 2024 and the types of punishments imposed for each article: first for the articles that specifically address speech, then display of prohibited symbols, followed by distribution of extremist materials, and finally the totals.

We will also use the information about court sentencing decisions in 2023–2024 that we obtained from court websites and entered into our database. The percentage of court decisions that we were able to review in 2024 has increased significantly compared to 2023.

When analyzing the data, including year-to-year comparisons, we use several parameters to group the court decisions that we have examined and entered into our database. We then extrapolate the resulting percentages to the total number of sentencing decisions under each article in 2023 and 2024, as reported by the Judicial Department. Summing up the results across all articles provides a general picture of how administrative law is enforced in our area of interest, according to our selected parameters—for example, allowing us to compare the number of people punished for public statements made online versus offline.

Similarly, we analyze law enforcement during the last two years, sorting the court cases into the following tentative categories, depending on the nature of the public statements that served as the basis for the charges (some cases may belong to several categories at the same time):

- cases based on statements characterized by ethnic xenophobia;
- cases based on statements related to religion;
- cases based on criticism of the authorities and their supporters;
- cases based on statements related to events in Ukraine;
- cases based on propaganda of criminal subculture (AUE);
- other cases, including undetermined.

It is also worth noting that once we have reviewed information about a particular case and entered it into our database, we assign it a rating based on whether we consider the restriction of freedom of expression in that case to be justified. Our ratings include: “Yes” – if we view the act as related to xenophobia and the restriction as generally justified; “No” – if we believe the restriction violated the right to freedom of expression and was therefore inappropriate; “Other” – if the restriction was justified but unrelated to countering xenophobia; “Not sure” – if we cannot clearly assess the case for any reason; and “Don’t know” – in cases where there is a significant lack of data for evaluation. This report presents such assessments for the full set of 2023 and 2024 cases related to the articles of interest.

The overall results of the analysis will be summarized in the report’s conclusion.

Data on Articles of the Code of Administrative Offenses Related to Public Statements

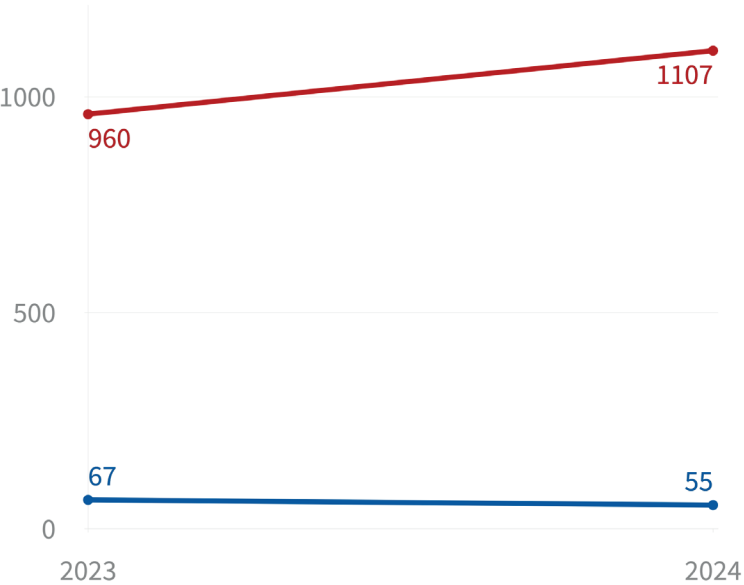
Incitement to Hatred (Article 20.3.1 CAO)

According to our calculations, based on the aggregated data from the Judicial Department of the Supreme Court for Article 20.3 and Article 20.3.1 CAO as well as the data from court websites, the total number of individuals punished under Article 20.3.1 (incitement to hatred or enmity, as well as humiliation of human dignity) in 2024 was close to 1,107.⁷ In the preceding year, about 960 such sentences were issued, so we see an increase of 15%.

The graph below compares the number of sanctions imposed under Article 20.3.1 CAO to the number of convictions under Article 282 CC for incitement to hatred. The latter applies in cases where such offenses are committed repeatedly or under aggravating circumstances.

Article 20.3.1 CAO and Article 282 CC

Number of sanctions under CAO. Number of individuals convicted under CC (on principal or additional charges)



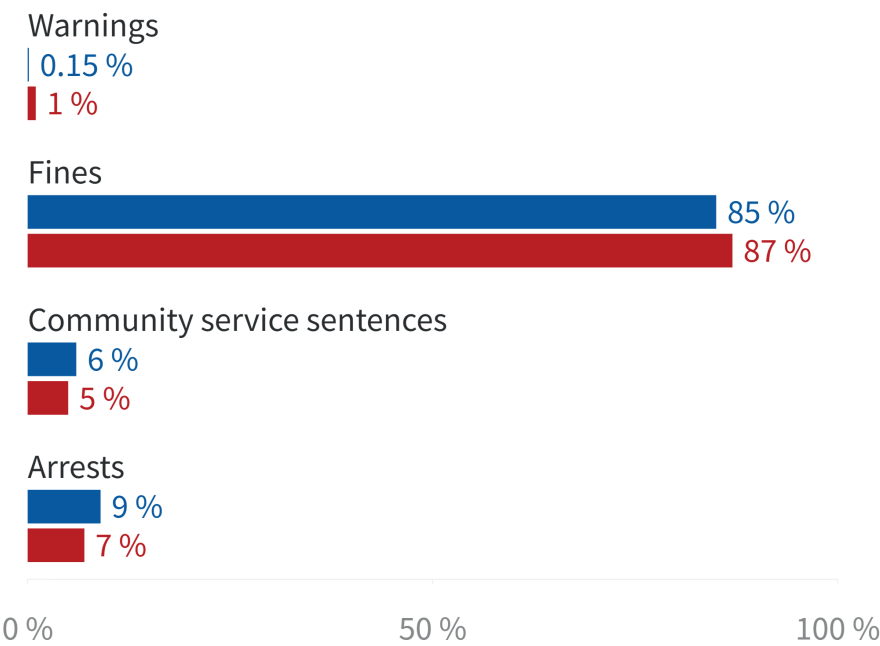
Source: Judicial Department of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation; SOVA Research Center, 2025

7. For some reason, since 2022, the Judicial Department of the Supreme Court has been publishing the aggregated number of offenders punished under Articles 20.3 and 20.3.1 CAO. However, we provide separate statistics for each norm. To estimate them, we took the number of sentencing decisions issued by Russian courts under the two articles, as provided by OVD-Info. We then added these numbers together and calculated the percentage contribution of each article to the total. For both 2023 and 2024, Article 20.3 accounted for 81% of the total, while Article 20.3.1 comprised 19%.

Based on our own data in combination with the data provided by the Judicial Department, we assume that in 2024 courts imposed fines on offenders under Article 20.3.1 CAO in 87% of cases, administrative arrest in 7% of the cases, community service in 5%, and only issued warnings in 1%. In 2023, according to our calculations, the distribution of punishments was 85%, 9%, and 6% respectively, with only one warning.

Sanctions under Article 20.3.1 CAO in 2023 and 2024

as % of the total number of sanctions



Source: Judicial Department of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation; SOVA Research Center, 2025

SOVA Center has reviewed 650 court sentencing decisions under this article, that is, 59% of such decisions made in 2024, and 390 decisions (i.e. 41% of all sentences issued during the year) in 2023.

In 2024, 94% of known sentences were issued for online statements (social network posts and comments, videos, images, etc.) and only 6% for offline statements (mostly for xenophobic utterances and statements made during ordinary conflicts). In 2023, the ratio remained approximately the same: 93% and 7%.

Now, let us examine the distribution of decisions under Article 20.3.1 CAO that were entered into our database across the categories outlined above, based on the target of hostile statements or criticism. In 2024, in approximately 450 out of 650 cases, i.e., in 70% of cases, the statements that incurred punishment expressed ethnic xenophobia. A year earlier, we counted 210 such cases out of 390, i.e., 54%. With respect to targets of hostility, the cases within this category were distributed as follows (please note that a single case could involve statements against representatives of different communities).

Target of Hatred / Year	2023	2024
non-Slavs and migrants in general	6	41
natives of Central Asia	54	131
natives of the Caucasus	52	117
Jews	39	69
Russians and citizens of Russia ⁸	43	58
other ⁹ and unnamed communities	91	95

In 2024, followers of specific religions were the targets of hostility in 42 cases (6%). In 2023, 24 such cases were entered into the database – that is, the same 6%. In most cases, these cases also included statements expressing ethnic xenophobia, so this category mostly overlaps with the previous one.

Target of Hatred / Year	2023	2024
Muslims	3	12
Christians	5	12
Jews	2	5
“infidels,” i.e., non-Muslims	17	5
other believers	5	8

In four cases, in both 2023 and 2024, we found the charges to be inappropriate, as they were based not on incitement to hatred against believers, but on criticism of Christianity from an atheistic perspective, criticism of the Russian Orthodox Church as an organization, and its policies regarding the “special military operation,” etc.

In 2024, we categorized 140 cases out of 650, i.e., 22% of all cases, as sanctions for criticizing the authorities and their supporters (vs. 93 out of 390, i.e., approximately 24% in 2023). The cases were distributed as follows.

Target of Hatred /Year	2023	2024
law enforcement staff (in general, as well as police, Russian National Guard, FSB, etc.)	46	74
the authorities (in general, officials, representatives of the United Russia party, etc.)	23	39
the president (personally)	15	4
Russian military	10	21
government supporters, “Russians” and “citizens of Russia” as political opponents	17	26

Further clarification is warranted here. First, the table above includes some cases related to negative assessments of Russians or Russian citizens coming from their compatriots – people who consider themselves to

8 . Except in cases of political criticism, see below.

9 . Including dark-skinned people, Roma, and Ukrainians. It should be noted that in 2023 we recorded five sentencing decisions for inciting hatred towards Ukrainians; there were only two in 2024.

be members of the same community. In our opinion, such assessments should often be interpreted not as incitement to hatred or the humiliation of dignity based on ethnicity, but rather as, albeit harsh, criticism of the shortcomings of Russian society or the presumed political stance of the majority of fellow citizens in support of the government’s course. These statements express antipathy towards one’s opponents within the framework of a political discussion.

Next, we believe that the presence of the vague category of “belonging to a social group” in the laws concerning incitement to hatred allows for selective enforcement, protecting groups favored by the authorities rather than genuinely vulnerable populations, such as the homeless or people with disabilities. In fact, this is exactly what happens: charges can involve incitement of hatred towards social groups such as law enforcement staff, government officials, the military, supporters of the authorities and the special military operation, patriots, and citizens of Russia.

We consider charges related to statements about members of these groups to be legitimate only when they involve clear calls for violence. We have recorded only 26 such cases in this category in 2024 (19%) and the same number (26 or 28%) in 2023. If a statement only criticizes representatives of such groups, albeit harshly, we classify the corresponding case as inappropriate, since the targets are people in power or people clearly not at risk of discrimination. We counted 91 such cases in [2024](#) (65% of this year’s cases based on statements critical of the authorities) and 40 (43%) in [2023](#).

It should be noted that some cases under Article 20.3.1 CAO are related to statements about the events in Ukraine. These cases involve charges of incitement to hatred against the military or supporters of the authorities, and occasionally against Russians and citizens of Russia. In 2024, we counted about 70 such cases, i.e., 11% of the total number of known court decisions under this article. In 2023, there were 38 such cases, i.e., 10%. This category clearly occupies the intersection of the two categories mentioned earlier: “ethnic xenophobia” and “criticism of the authorities.”

In 2024, we counted 24 cases of statements directed against representatives of other social groups, vs. 51 in 2023. They involved such targets of hostility as women, children, LGBT+ people, youth groups, homeless people, and representatives of a wide variety of other groups (native speakers of the Karelian language, doctors, motorcyclists, etc.).

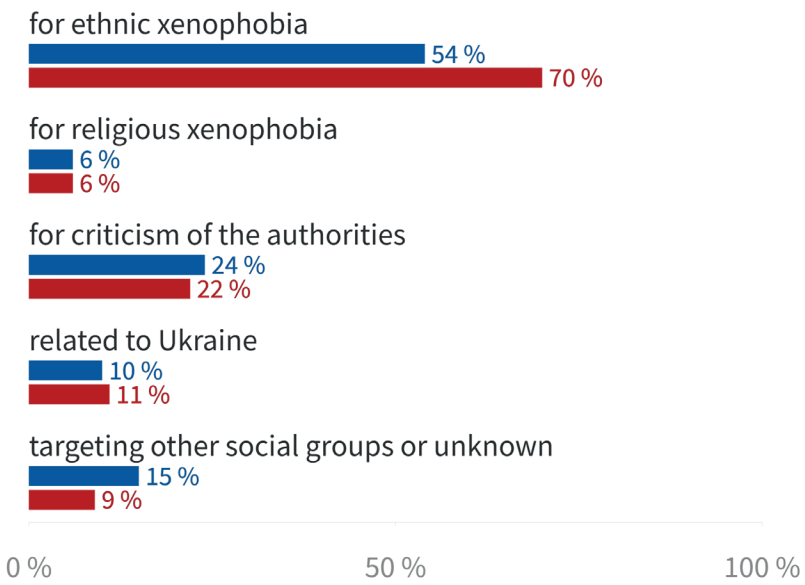
The information we have on 54 other cases in 2024 and 48 in 2023, including the texts of the court decisions, does not allow us to form even a vague idea of the incriminating statements or identify the targets of hatred. Unfortunately, when publishing their decisions, courts often remove any substantive information about the underlying incidents, leaving only references to legal provisions.

In total, 60 cases in our database for both years involved statements against representatives of “other social groups” or simply groups not named in the texts of decisions, which could not be classified as “ethnic xenophobia,” “political criticism,” or “religion.” This group represents 9% of the total number of sentences under this article in 2024 and 15% in 2023.

So, presumably, decisions on imposing punishments under Article 20.3.1 CAO are distributed between categories as follows (a case may fall into more than one category).

Article 20.3.1 CAO in 2023 and 2024: Targets by category

as % of the total number of sanctions

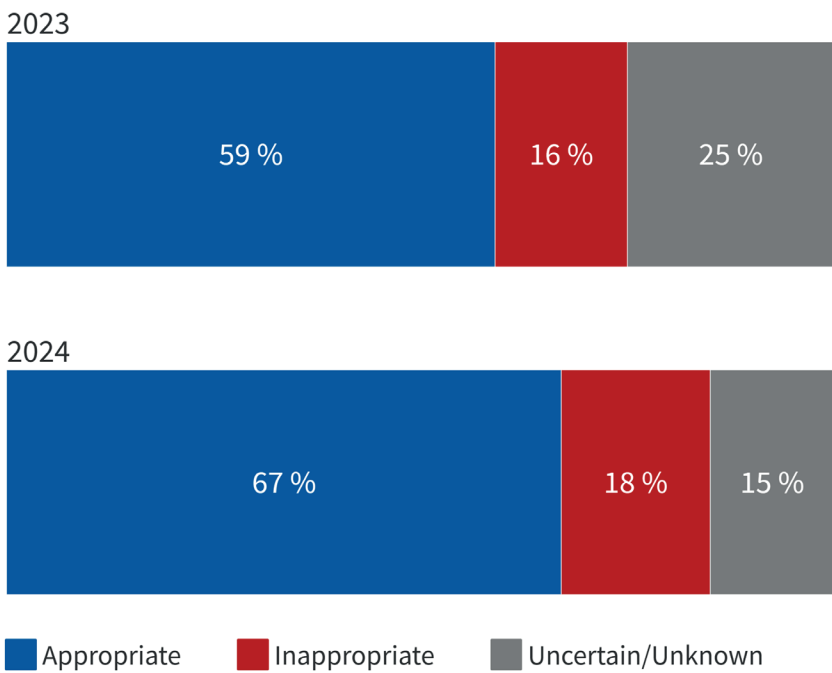


Source: SOVA Research Center, 2025

Next, we examine the appropriateness of sanctions under Article 20.3.1 CAO.

Article 20.3.1 CAO: Appropriateness of sanctions

as % of sanctions known to SOVA Center



Source: SOVA Research Center, 2025

Although our access to information increased in 2024 (we examined 650 decisions, compared to 390 the year before), the picture has not changed significantly. In both 2023 and 2024, we classified approximately two-thirds of sentencing decisions under the administrative article on incitement to hatred as appropriate, and no more than one-fifth of such sentences as inappropriate.

Insulting the State and Society on the Internet (Article 20.1 Parts 3–5 CAO)

Unfortunately, the Judicial Department of the Supreme Court does not publish separate data on parts of Article 20.1 CAO that cover dissemination of information expressing disrespect for the state and society in an indecent form on the Internet – only the gigantic totals for the entire Article 20.1 CAO on disorderly conduct.

Based on our analysis of court data, at least 182 individuals faced sanctions in 2024, primarily under Part 3. Only two individuals were found guilty under Part 4 for repeatedly committing the same offense within a year after sentencing. In 2023, similar to 2022, approximately 150 people were charged under Parts 3–5 of Article 20.1 CAO, while the corresponding number in 2020 and 2021 was about 90. Thus, we can say that the frequency of application of the norm on insulting the authorities on the Internet is increasing, although the article remains relatively “unpopular.”

Our database for 2024 includes 40 people punished under this article: 39 faced fines (ranging from 15 to 100 thousand rubles), and one person was placed under arrest. In 2023, we recorded around 27 individuals facing penalties, all of whom received fines.

Almost all of [the cases known to us](#) involved disrespect for the president, and several others involved disrespect for the authorities, the military, state symbols, and society as a whole (several individuals were punished merely for their use of obscene language online).

We believe that crude criticism of the authorities or the use of obscene language on the Internet poses no public danger and should not be restricted by the state. Such restrictions constitute unjustified interference with freedom of expression. Therefore, we generally consider the use of Article 20.1 Parts 3–5 CAO inappropriate.

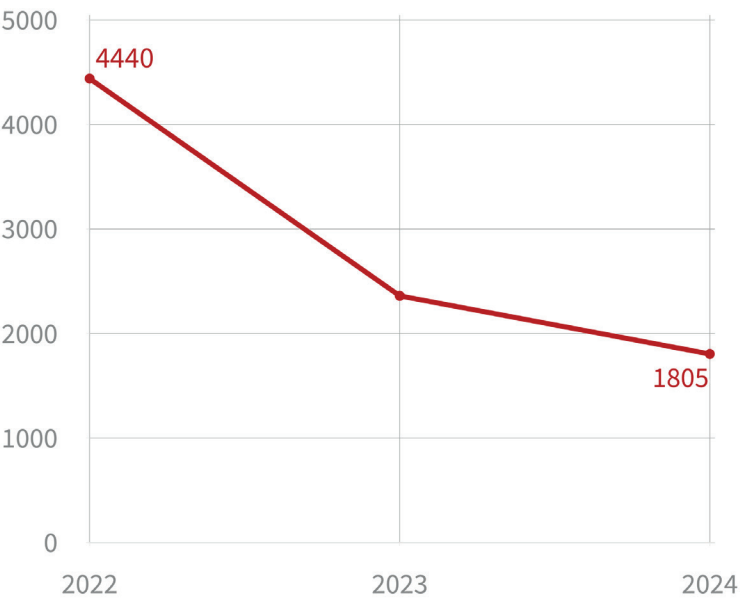
Discrediting the Use of the Armed Forces and Actions of Officials Abroad (Article 20.3.3 CAO)

According to data published by the Judicial Department of the Supreme Court, the number of people punished under Article 20.3.3 CAO for discrediting the use of Russian armed forces or actions of state agencies abroad decreased steadily in 2023 and 2024. While in 2022, when this article was introduced into the CAO, sanctions were imposed 4,440 times, there were only 2,361 such instances in 2023 (a 47% drop), and 1,805 in 2024 (a 24% decrease from 2023). According to court websites, all the sentences were based on Part 1 of the article.¹⁰

10 . Article 20.3.3 Part 2 CAO penalizes discrediting the actions of the army and government agencies abroad, accompanied by calls for public actions without a permit or by a threat of various harm.

Article 20.3.3 CAO rate

Based on number of sanctions

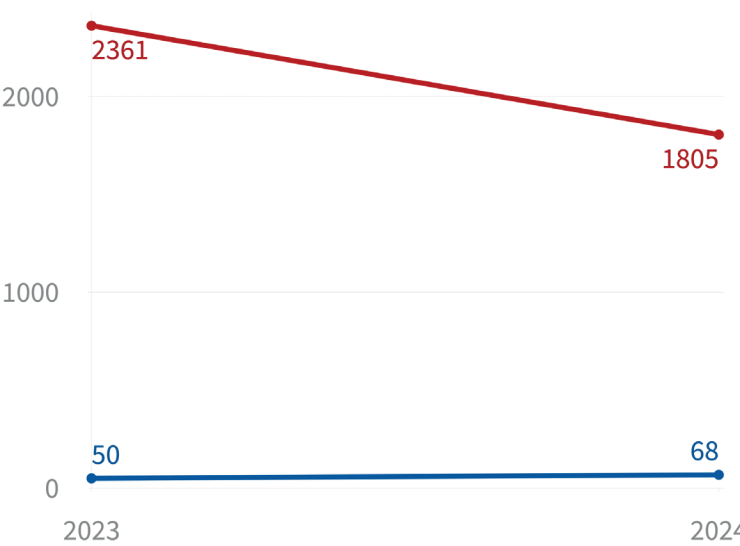


Source: Judicial Department at the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation, 2025

The graph below compares the number of sanctions issued under Article 20.3.3 CAO with the number of sentences under criminal Article 280³ CC for discrediting the actions of the army and government agencies, committed repeatedly or with aggravating circumstances.

Article 20.3.3 CAO and Article 280³ CC in 2023 and 2024

Number of sanctions under CAO. Number of individuals convicted under CC (on principal or additional charges)



Source: Judicial Department of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation; SOVA Research Center, 2025

Under the CAO article, the penalty takes the form of a fine. Most often, courts impose fines of 30 thousand rubles. 1,803 individuals punished in 2024 faced fines, one was placed under arrest¹¹, and one received a warning.

The analysis of about 44% of court decisions under this article conducted by OVD-Info indicates that in 2024, various anti-war statements and distribution of corresponding materials online formed the most common grounds for sanctions (88%), much less frequent were the anti-war pickets, displaying posters, distributing leaflets, written messages, including on ballots during elections, and so on (12%). No such data is available for the preceding year; however, there are reasons to believe that it had the same or a similar ratio of sanctions for online vs. offline statements.

SOVA Center views sanctions under Article 20.3.3 CAO as an unjustified restriction of freedom of expression and classifies all cases under this article as inappropriate.

Calls for Violating Russia’s Territorial Integrity or for Sanctions against Russia (Articles 20.3.2 and 20.3.4 CAO)

According to the Supreme Court’s Judicial Department, 38 decisions were made in 2023 and 40 in 2024 to impose sanctions under Article 20.3.2 CAO, which covers calls for violating the territorial integrity of Russia, or under Article 20.3.4, which punishes calls for sanctions against Russia, its organizations, and citizens.

In 2023, 37 individuals were fined, and one was given a warning. In 2024, fines were imposed in 39 cases, and one warning was issued.

In 2023, we were aware of only five court decisions under Article 20.3.2. In 2024, we were able to gather information on 17 decisions. If the statements did not call for violent separatist actions, we deemed the sanctions inappropriate. We recorded three such decisions in 2023 and 13 in 2024. The charges were based on statements regarding the status of Ingushetia, Crimea, Rostov Oblast, Smolensk, Tatarstan, Tuva, and the Urals, as well as the notion of granting independence to all Russian republics and, conversely, the revival of the USSR.

Under Article 20.3.4 CAO, which covers calls for sanctions against Russia, its organizations, and citizens, we know of only one decision made in 2024 (none in 2023): a court in Kazan fined the former leader of the banned All-Tatar Public Center (*Vsetatarsky Obschestvennyi Tsentr*, VTOTs) for his address, posted on YouTube, that called for demanding that the G7 countries exclude Russia from the UN, impose tough sanctions against Iran and China and other countries which carry out “parallel imports,” and completely stop the export of Russian oil and gas. We believe that the state should not restrict such expressions of opinion.

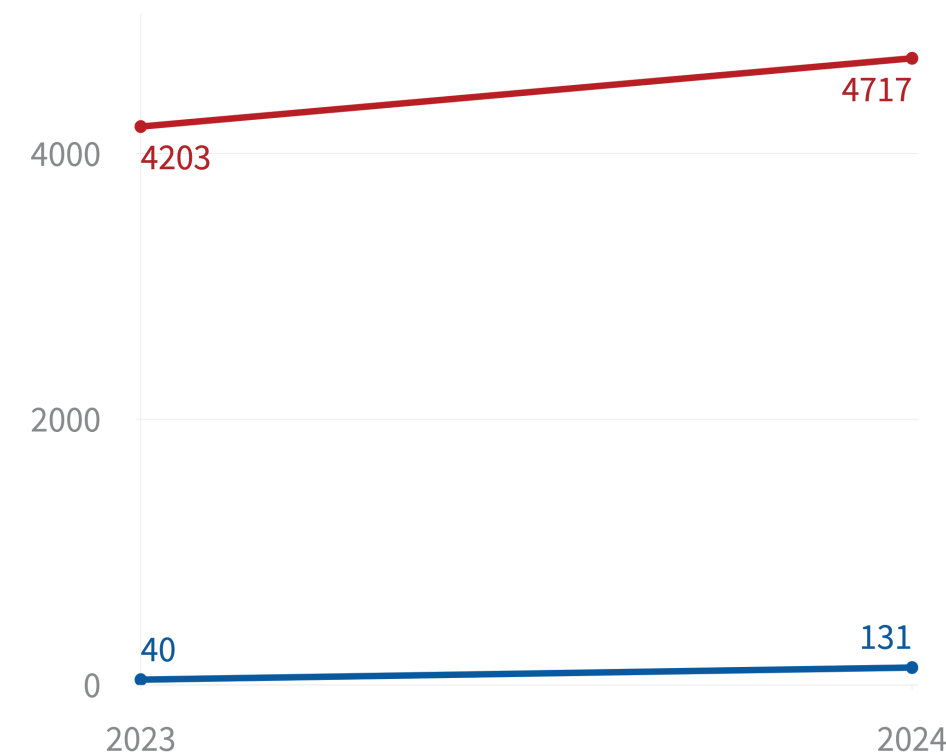
11. Article 20.25 CAO provides for administrative arrest or community service in the event of non-payment of a fine issued for an offence.

Display of Prohibited Symbols (Article 20.3 CAO)

According to our calculations, sanctions under Article 20.3 CAO for the use of prohibited symbols were imposed 4,203 times in 2023 and 4,717 times in 2024, thus increasing by 12%.

The graph below compares the number of sentences under Article 20.3 CAO with the corresponding number under Article 282⁴ CC (repeated display of prohibited symbols).

Article 20.3 CAO and Article 282⁴ CC
Number of sanctions under CAO. Number of individuals convicted under CC (on principal or additional charges)



Source: Judicial Department of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation; SOVA Research Center, 2025

According to the data from court websites, only 0.7% of sanctions in 2023 and 0.8% in 2024 were imposed under Article 20.3 Part 2 CAO for producing and/or selling prohibited symbols, while the overwhelming majority were imposed under Article 20.3 Part 1 CAO for their public display.

The analysis of our data and that from the Judicial Department of the Supreme Court indicates that in 2023, fines were imposed in approximately 91% of cases, while administrative arrests occurred in 9%. In 2024, fines were imposed in 87% of cases, and arrests increased to 13%. Courts issued warnings only once each year.

SOVA’s data, combined with the data from court websites, suggests that in 2024, approximately 75% of cases were related to the display of prohibited symbols online, pri-

marily on social networks. The incidents included individual symbols as well as images, photos, or videos containing such symbols. In 25% of cases, people displayed prohibited symbols offline, as tattoos, clothing items, stickers, or graffiti, shouted corresponding slogans, or even sang or listened to songs on high volume. In 2023, 64% of cases involved the display of symbols online, while offline symbols accounted for 36%.

Let us review the types of symbols that most often serve as the basis for sanctions, keeping in mind that a single case may involve multiple types of symbols. Next, we will categorize different cases following the principles discussed earlier in the report.

The court website data provided by the OVD-Info parser indicates that, as in the preceding year, 30% of sentencing decisions under Article 20.3 CAO issued in 2024 involved an eight-pointed star (“a compass rose”) as the symbol of involvement in the criminal underworld. Law enforcement agencies and courts consider it a symbol of the Prisoners’ Criminal Unity (*Arestantskoe Ugolovnoe Yedinstvo*, AUE), that is, a criminal subculture banned by the Supreme Court in 2020 as an extremist “international public movement.” The cases are usually based on demonstrating tattoos or publishing images of the eight-pointed star on the Internet. Incarcerated individuals often face sanctions, since jails and prisons provide no means of removing an illegal tattoo, and the lack of privacy makes hiding it from prying eyes almost impossible. Prison artists are punished for drawings that feature an eight-pointed star.

We believe that the ideology of AUE is oriented towards illegal activity and thus is, by its nature, incompatible with honoring the constitutional rights of citizens. Therefore, it can be banned and criminalized. However, in our opinion, this ideology is not political, so anti-extremist legal norms should not be applied against it. We neither monitor cases under Article 20.3 CAO for displaying AUE symbols nor enter them into our database; we doubt the appropriateness of such charges.

If we subtract 30% of decisions (1383) related to AUE symbols from the approximate total number (4717) of court decisions under Article 20.3 CAO, we get 3334 decisions. Of these, we analyzed about 1100 cases, which represent 33% of the total, and have entered them into our database.

For 2023, we similarly recorded 2920 sentencing decisions (after subtracting those related to AUE symbols) and entered about 820, or 28%, into our database.

In 2024, approximately 673 out of 1,100 cases in our database (or 61%) involved charges based on the display of Nazi symbols. In 2023, we recorded 621 such cases out of 820, or 76%.

Of the cases known to us:

- In 645 instances in 2024 (vs 574 in 2023), the display of Nazi symbols, mainly swastikas, was aimed at promoting Nazism, or we were unable to establish the context. Accordingly, we classify the sanctions for such displays as appropriate or uncertain (if the context is unclear).
- In 17 instances in 2024 (vs. 39 in 2023), Nazi symbols were used as a means of visual criticism of political opponents – to brand them as supporters of “fascism,” an inhuman ideology. Most often, the opponents were the Russian authorities and their supporters (for example, a swastika can be superimposed on images of the president or Russian state symbols, or symbols of the special military operation in Ukraine. We regard sanctions against such displays as inappropriate.

- In three instances in 2024 and nine in 2023, we were confident that the punishment was inappropriately imposed for posting historical photos that included Nazi symbols.
- Approximately ten cases in 2024 and five in 2023 involved the display of Nazi symbols in a humorous context, the use of the Eastern version of the swastika, and online advertisements for the sale of Third Reich-era antiques. We classified such cases as inappropriate or questionable.

Looking at percentages of the total number of sentences under Article 20.3 CAO (i.e., including the decisions on AUE), we can conclude that, as before, Nazi symbols were the most frequent basis for sanctions under this article. They account for 43% of cases in 2024, although the percentage is smaller than the year before (52%).

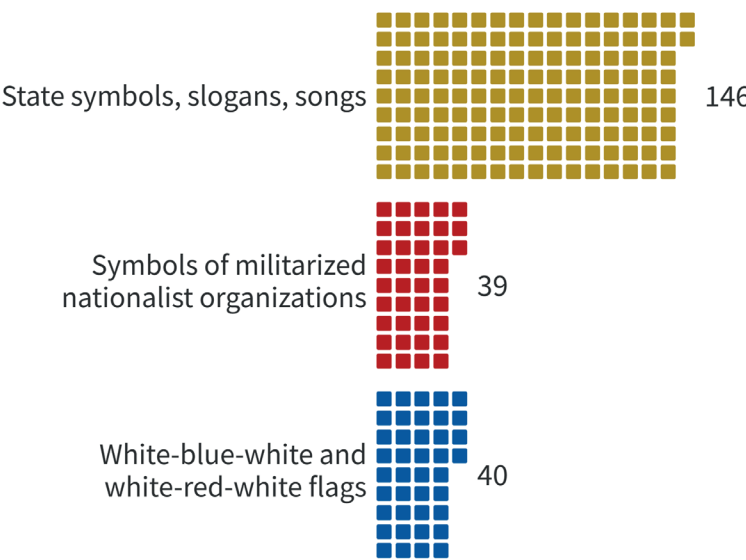
The cases related to the display of Ukrainian paraphernalia, including state symbols, as well as symbols of Ukrainian nationalist organizations and paramilitary Ukrainian and pro-Ukrainian associations, constitute the third most numerous group, after the Nazi symbols and the AUE symbols. We recorded 225 such cases in our database, or about 20% (vs. 91 or 11% in 2023). This allows us to assume that 14% of the total number of sanctions under Article 20.3 CAO were related to Ukrainian symbols (7% in 2023).

Of the cases known to us:

- In 2024, sanctions in 146 cases (vs. 42 cases in 2023) were imposed for displaying various Ukrainian attributes: the state emblem with the trident or only the trident, the flag, the slogan “Glory to Ukraine,” as well as the folk song “Chervona Kalyna.” Law enforcement agencies and courts interpret them as symbols of Ukrainian nationalist organizations that are banned in Russia as extremist, although, in fact, these attributes are widely used in Ukraine. We [consider](#) inappropriate (in the absence of a clearly xenophobic context).
- In 2024, 39 cases (vs. 25 in 2023) were related to the display of symbols of Ukrainian paramilitary nationalist organizations, most often, the Azov Regiment and the Right Sector, as well as units in which people from Russia participate in combat on the side of Ukraine – the Russian Volunteer Corps and the Freedom of Russia Legion. All of these entities are recognized as terrorist organizations in Russia. We often do not know the context in which such symbols were displayed; however, in cases where the intent to promote violence was clear, we considered the charges appropriate.
- In 2024, we [classified](#) as 40 cases (vs. 26 in 2023) of sanctions for public display of the white-blue-white flag, which law enforcement officers and then courts interpreted as the symbol of the Freedom of Russia Legion. Some of these cases were based on public displays of the white-blue-white flag as an opposition and anti-war symbol. Another similar case in 2024 concerned the display of the white-red-white flag of the Belarusian opposition, which was interpreted as a symbol of the Kastus Kalinouski Regiment fighting for Ukraine. Moreover, as in the previous year, not all citizens punished for displaying the white-blue-white flag had done so intentionally – for example, several motorists faced sanctions due to a faded red stripe on the Russian flag sticker on their license plates.

Sanctions under Article 20.3 CAO for (pro-) Ukrainian Symbols in 2024

Based on court decisions known to SOVA Center



Source: SOVA Research Center, 2025

In 2024, most cases involving symbols of Russian political associations recognized as extremist fell into one of the following two groups.

- 52 people punished in different regions of Russia were found guilty of demonstrating symbols of Alexei Navalny’s structures, which were banned – in our opinion, inappropriately. Portraits of the politician or his first and last name, which citizens actively displayed in response to Navalny’s sudden death in prison, were often interpreted as symbols of these structures. In 2023, we only recorded 16 decisions of this kind in our database.
- Our database contains six cases related to “I/WE Sergey Furgal” stickers on cars and similar captions on photographs posted on social networks. This slogan is viewed as an attribute of the movement supporting the convicted former governor of Khabarovsk. The movement was recognized as extremist, despite not promoting any radical ideology. The websites of Russian courts show 16 such decisions. All of them were issued in Khabarovsk Krai, except one, which was issued in Zabaikalsky Krai. There were no similar cases in 2023, since the movement of Furgal’s supporters was banned in 2024.

Since late January 2024, even before the inclusion of the “international LGBT public movement” on the list of extremist organizations on March 1, citizens have faced charges for displaying LGBT symbols, including the rainbow flag. We consider such charges inappropriate, since we view the ban on the “LGBT movement” as an unfounded and discriminatory measure. In 2024, we [recorded](#) 55 cases based on the display of the rainbow flag and entered them into our database; a search of court websites yields 58 similar decisions.

Only a small number of sentences in our database involved displaying symbols of banned Islamic organizations. We counted 43 such cases (4%) in 2024 and 41 (5%) in 2023. Mostly, they involved ISIS symbols, and in a few isolated instances, symbols of the Islamic religious party Hizb ut-Tahrir. Of the total number of decisions under Article 20.3 CAO, such cases accounted for under 3% in both years.

Sanctions for displaying neopagan symbols pose a distinct issue. Our database contains 23 cases for 2024 and 24 cases for 2023 based on charges for displaying neopagan solar symbols: the Kolovrat and the Svarog Square. A search of court websites suggests that about fifty people faced punishment for these symbols in both 2023 and 2024. Law enforcement agencies and courts interpret the Kolovrat as a variant of the Nazi swastika, similar to it to the point of confusion, and the Svarog Square as a symbol of the “Northern Brotherhood,” a now little-known neo-Nazi organization [recognized as extremist in 2012](#). Indeed, both symbols can be used as a visual means of nationalist propaganda. However, ordinary citizens are often unaware of the Northern Brotherhood and, unable to distinguish between Slavic and pseudo-Slavic symbols, commonly perceive the Kolovrat and the Svarog Square simply as traditional Slavic symbols. As a result, they may unwittingly display these symbols on social media or, for example, as pendants and keychains in their cars (widely available items). In practice, law enforcement makes no distinction between nationalist propagandists and uninformed admirers of Slavic aesthetics; both groups are subject to punishment.

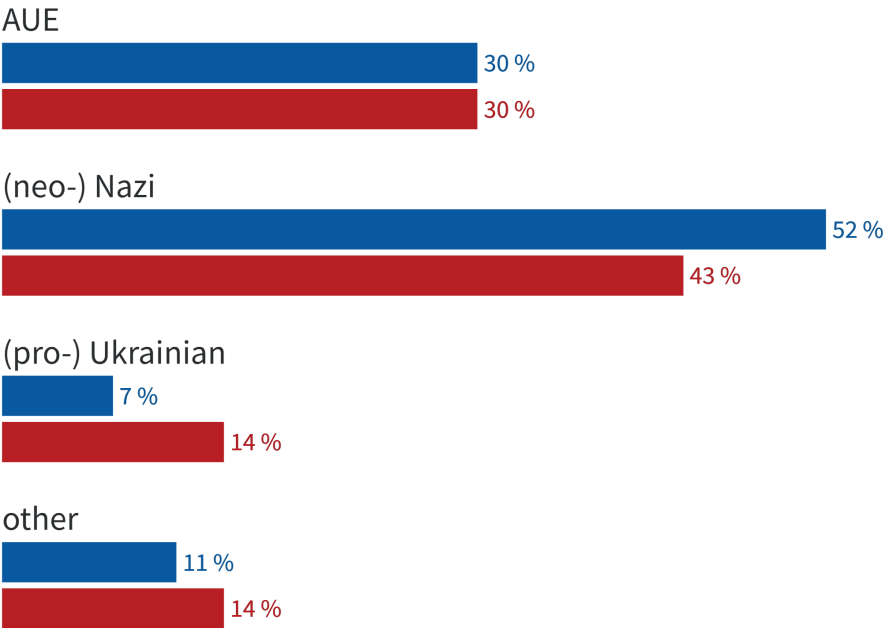
A similar situation, albeit on a regional scale, has emerged in Dagestan, where, according to district court websites, at least 31 people faced sanctions in 2024 for pit bull stickers (the logo of Pitbull Syndicate LTD, a racing game company) on their cars. Our database contains about two dozen such decisions. Local law enforcement officials view the stickers as symbols of the neo-Nazi group Pit Bull,¹² banned in 2010. Our database includes 19 such decisions for 2024 and seven for 2023.

We assess sanctions for displaying neo-pagan symbols based on context. As to the charges related to pit bull stickers, they are, in our view, entirely unjustified.

Finally, we know of nine sentences in 2024 for displaying Facebook and Instagram logos on websites or in advertisements. Offenders never intended to participate in activities ([recognized as extremist](#)) of the Meta corporation aimed at distributing the two products; they merely disseminated information about their own activities. Eight cases took place in Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous Okrug-Yugra, where the heads of five daycare centers, an employee of the local administration, a hotel manager, and an art studio director were punished. The owner of a beauty salon faced charges in the ninth case, in the Oryol Region. In 2023, we recorded three similar cases with sanctions against two entrepreneurs and one human rights activist.

12. “Pit Bull” Nazi skinhead organization recognized as extremist, SOVA Center. 2010. September 14 (<https://www.sova-center.ru/racism-xenophobia/news/counteraction/2010/09/d19739/>). For more information on charges for pit bull stickers, see: More fines for pit bull stickers in Dagestan, SOVA Center. 2024. April 9 (<https://www.sova-center.ru/misuse/news/persecution/2024/05/d49621/>).

Sanctions under Article 20.3 CAO
in 2023 and 2024, by type of symbols
as % of the total number of sanctions



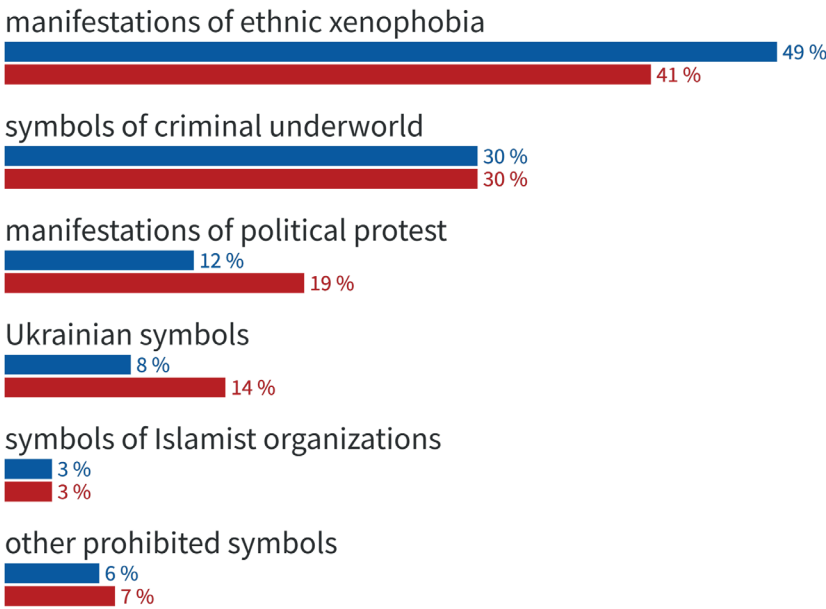
Source: SOVA Research Center, 2025

We can now categorize the instances of prohibited symbol displays that led to administrative charges and calculate the percentage each category represents within the total set of court decisions on punishments under Article 20.3. Once again, please note that the categories may overlap. For example, both Nazi symbols and AUE symbols often appear together in the same case. We also included all cases of displaying Ukrainian symbols in the “oppositional protest” category. Thus, 4,717 court decisions issued in 2024 and 4,203 decisions handed down in 2023 in cases related to the display of prohibited symbols, distributed as follows:

- manifestations of ethnic xenophobia (display of Nazi or neo-pagan symbols, except where not clearly intended as far-right propaganda) – 41% (vs. 49% in 2023);
- display of symbols of the criminal underworld – 30% (both years);
- manifestations of political protest (displaying symbols of banned political associations, using Nazi symbols to criticize opponents), including the demonstration of Ukrainian symbols – 19% (vs. 12% in 2023);
- display of Ukrainian symbols (national symbols and symbols of paramilitary organizations fighting on the side of Ukraine) – 14% (8% in 2023);
- display of symbols of banned Islamic organizations – 3% (both years);
- display of other prohibited symbols (specifically: LGBT symbols, pagan symbols in a neutral context, pit bull stickers, logos of prohibited social networks, etc., as well as symbols not specified in court decisions) – 7% (vs. 6% in 2023).

Article 20.3 in 2023 and 2024: Targets by category

as % of the total number of sanctions

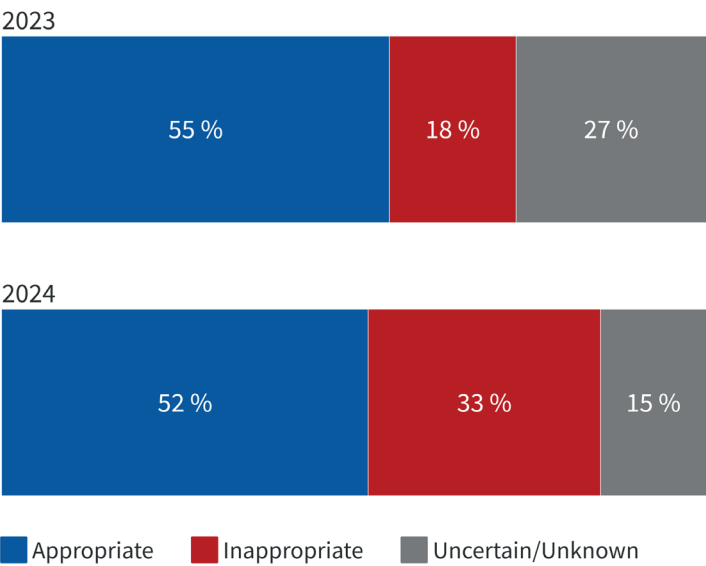


Source: SOVA Research Center, 2025

Our overall assessment of the appropriateness of court decisions in our database, expressed as percentages, is as follows:

Article 20.3 CAO: Appropriateness of sanctions

as % of sanctions known to SOVA Center



■ Appropriate ■ Inappropriate ■ Uncertain/Unknown

Source: SOVA Research Center, 2025

Clearly, compared to 2023, the percentage of sentencing decisions lacking specific information about the incriminating symbols and their context has decreased, whereas the percentage of inappropriate decisions has nearly doubled.

If we extrapolate these percentages to the total number of decisions under Article 20.3—including cases involving AUE symbols, which we do not assess – the situation is as follows.

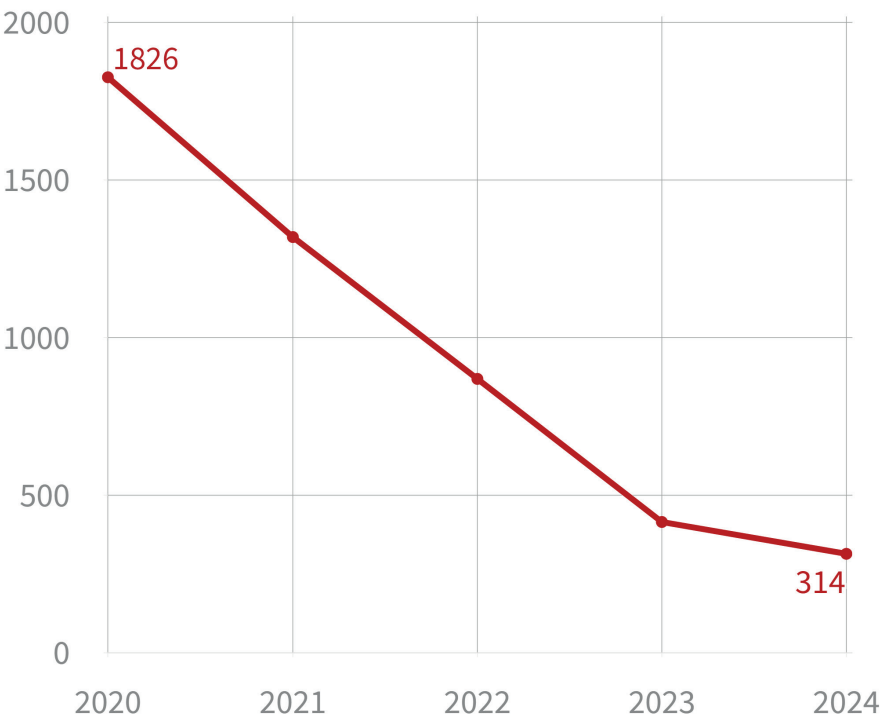
Year and number of court decisions	Appropriateness, percentage of court decisions		
	Yes	No	Other
2023 (4203)	38	13	49
2024 (4717)	36	23	41

Distribution of Extremist Materials (Article 20.29 CAO)

In 2023 and 2024, the number of sanctions under Article 20.29 CAO for mass distribution of extremist materials continued to decline, although the decline has become more gradual.

Article 20.29 CAO rate

Based on number of sanctions



Source: Judicial Department of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation, 2025

In 2023, courts imposed fines in 394 cases and administrative arrests in 20 cases. Additionally, one case resulted in a decision to suspend activities. In 2024, 297 people were fined, 16 were placed under arrest, and one received only a warning.

In 2024, we entered 185 out of 314 court decisions into our database, which represents 59% of all sentencing decisions under Article 20.29 CAO. In 2023, the corresponding figures were 180 out of 415, equating to 43%.

Of the 2024 decisions in our database, 85% pertained to the distribution of materials online (usually on social networks), and 15% to the distribution that took place offline, such as one or more copies of banned books in a public place, for example, on the premises of a religious organization or an educational institution. Bookstores faced administrative responsibility in rare cases, and occasionally individuals who, according to law enforcement agencies, kept banned literature at home “for the purpose of mass distribution.” In the preceding year, 93% of known penalties were imposed for online offenses and only 7% for offline ones.

Depending on the type of materials that served as the basis for sanctions, 185 known court decisions of 2024 and 180 of 2023 were distributed among the categories outlined above, as follows.

Dissemination of materials characterized by ethnicity-based xenophobia accounted for 87 (47%) of the cases in 2024 and 79 (44%) in 2023.

Materials / Year	2023	2024
videos with scenes of racist violence and other neo-Nazi materials, except music and books	8	48
songs of ultra-right music groups	40	24
materials of the German Nazism ideologists and neo-Nazis	4	3
materials of Russian nationalists	27	12

Dissemination of materials related to religion formed the basis of 44 cases (24%) in 2024, and 24 cases (13%) in 2023.

Materials / Year	2023	2024
materials of militant Islamists (propaganda videos, ISIS songs, songs of Chechen bard Timur Mutsuraev)	15	22
peaceful Islamic materials	7	20
Jehovah’s Witnesses Materials	2	2

Cases related to the distribution of various materials that can be classified as political polemics accounted for only 6% in 2024. In 2023, the percentage of such cases was significantly higher (17%), due to a greater number of charges for the distribution of a video by Alexei Navalny’s supporters about the election promises of United Russia, which was banned in 2013. Apparently, the number of users whose social media pages hold this old video has been gradually shrinking.

Materials / Year	2023	2024
“Let’s Remind Crooks and Thieves about their Manifesto-2002” video by Navalny’s supporters	21	3
various materials related to events in Ukraine and the banned symbol of the Azov Battalion	8	4
other political materials	3	5

We know of about seven sentencing decisions for prohibited songs related to AUE in 2024 and four such decisions in 2023. They account for 4% and 2% of the total number of decisions, respectively.

In 2024, we entered into our database 35 cases (19%) related to the dissemination of materials that do not fall into the categories provided above or where court decisions failed to specify the materials. There were 44 cases (24%) in 2023.

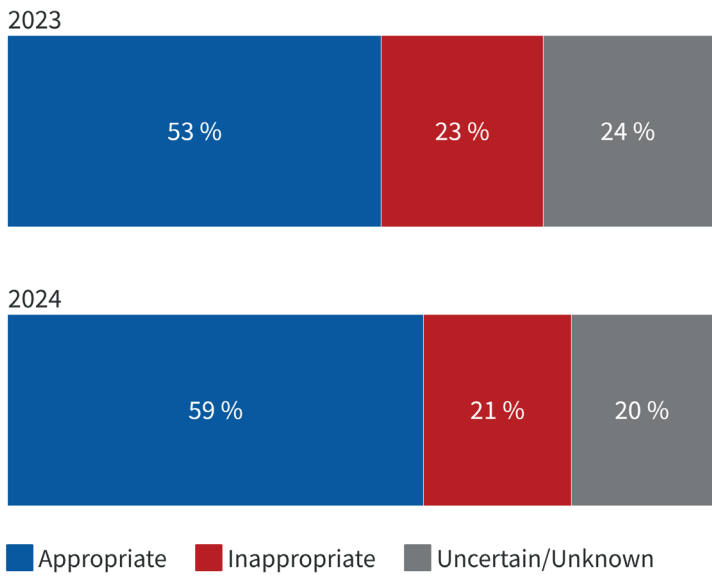
Thus, in percentage terms, the materials that formed the basis for charges under Article 20.29 CAO are distributed across the categories as follows.

Category of materials	Materials,%	
	2023	2024
ethnic xenophobia	44	47
religious	13	24
political	17	6
related to Ukraine	4	2
AUE materials	2	4
other	24	19

It is worth noting that enforcement practices regarding this article evolved in 2024. The percentage of charges related to the dissemination of political materials decreased, while the number of sanctions for ethnic xenophobia and religious-related content increased.

We categorized sanctions for the distribution of ethnic xenophobic materials and materials of militant Islamic groups as appropriate, sanctions for the distribution of peaceful religious and political materials as inappropriate, and in other cases, our assessment depended on the context and nature of the materials, if known. As a result, our assessments of the court decisions recorded in our database are distributed as follows.

Article 20.29 CAO: Appropriateness of sanctions
as % of sanctions known to SOVA Center

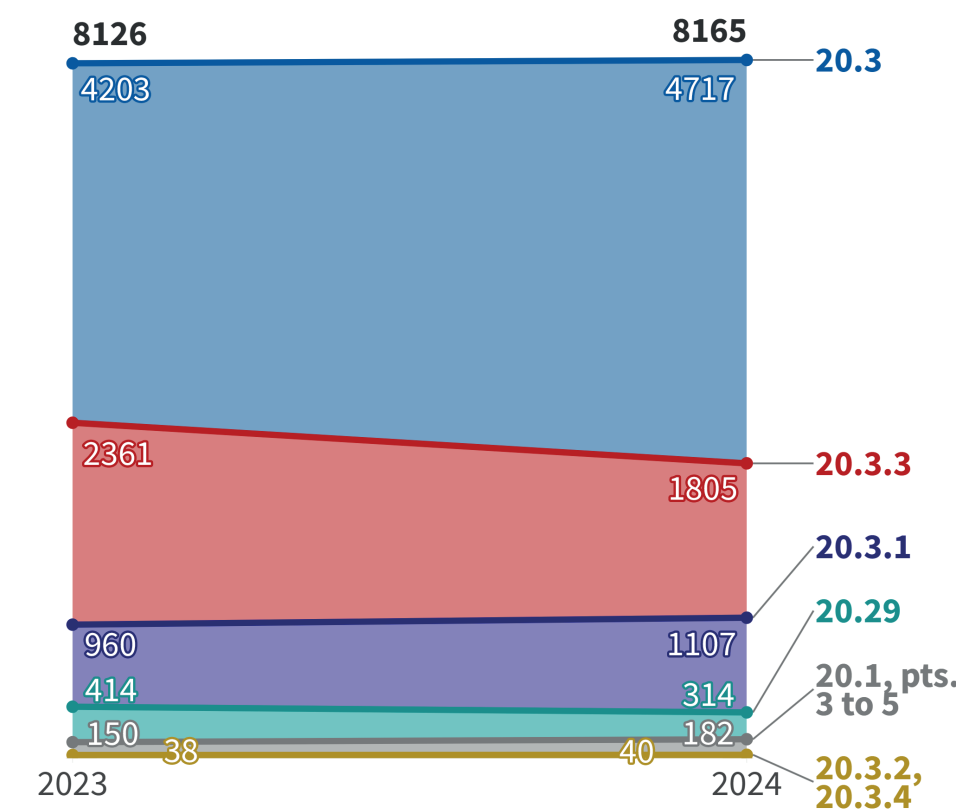


Conclusion

Let us now address some general results of our calculations. In 2023, a total of about 8,130 sentencing decisions were issued under the CAO articles of interest to us. In 2024, there were about 8,165 such decisions, so, in general, the situation remained virtually unchanged (2022 was the “record” year, when the total number of sanctions under these articles reached about 10,630, while in 2021 the corresponding number was under five and a half thousand).

Meanwhile, if we compare 2024 to 2023 focusing on specific articles, we see a significant increase of sanctions under Article 20.3 CAO for displaying prohibited symbols (by 12%) and under Article 20.3.1 for inciting hatred (by 15%), with a continuing decrease in sanctions under Article 20.3.3 for discrediting the military and officials and Article 20.29 for distributing extremist materials (24% drop in both categories).

CAO articles on extremism in 2023 and 2024

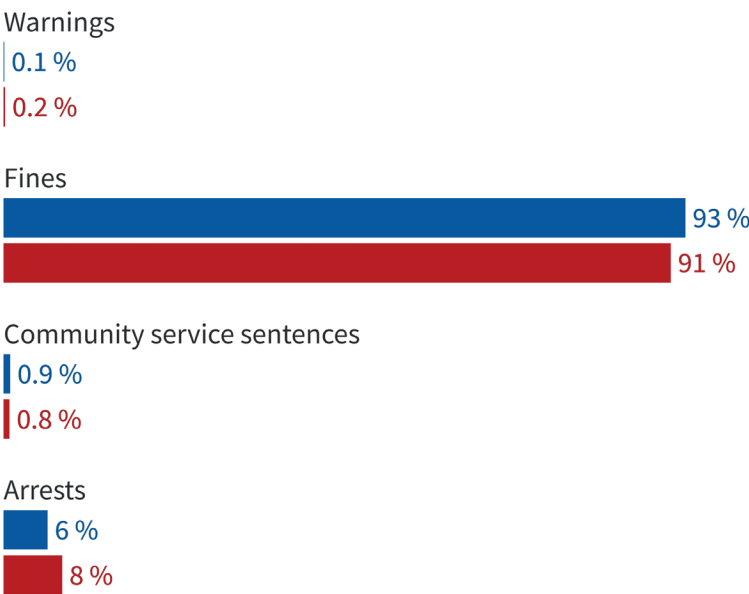


Source: Judicial Department of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation, 2025; SOVA Research Center, 2025

In 2023, 93% of those punished under the articles of interest to us were sentenced to a fine, 6% were placed under administrative arrest, and the remaining 1% mostly faced community service. The warnings accounted for about 0.1%. In 2024, the percentages changed slightly: 91% of sanctions were fines, 8% arrests, community service accounted for 1%, and warnings comprised 0.2%.

Sanctions in 2023 and 2024

Under CAO Articles 20.3, 20.3.1, 20.3.2, 20.3.3, 20.3.4, 20.29 and Article 20.1 Parts 3-5



Source: Judicial Department of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation, 2025.

In both 2023 and 2024, about two dozen officials, about a dozen individual entrepreneurs, and the same number of legal entities faced sanctions. All other punished offenders, that is, the overwhelming majority, were individuals.

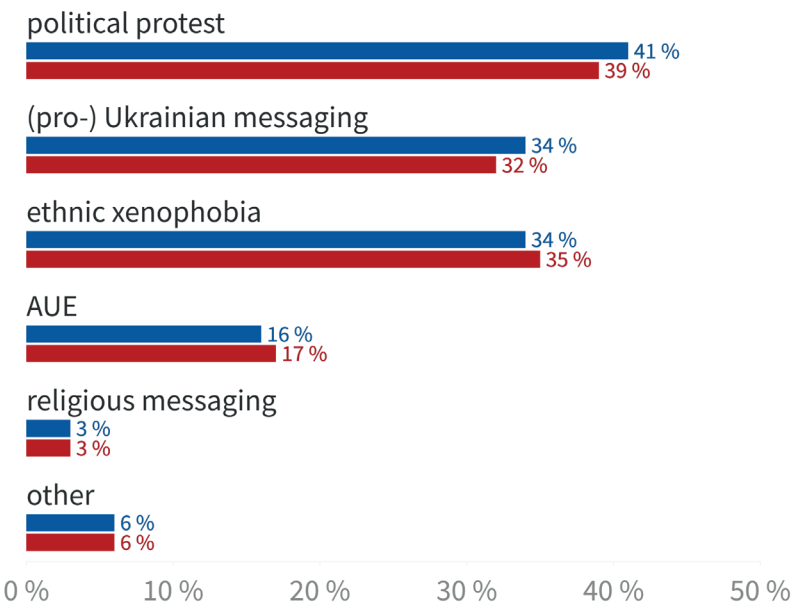
We believe that sanctions related to the articles of interest to us were imposed for online activities in approximately 77 % of cases (6,260) in 2023 and around 82 % of cases (6,695) in 2024, indicating an increase in their usage. Our observations over the past few years show that most cases were based on posts made on VKontakte, with fewer instances on Odnoklassniki, public channels and groups on Telegram or WhatsApp, and occasionally on YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook. Accordingly, sanctions for offline activity were imposed in 23% of cases (1,870) in 2023 and 18% of cases (1,470) in 2024. Our calculations are imprecise, but we can assume that no significant changes in law enforcement have occurred in this respect.

If we group the cases by categories of incriminating statements, the overall situation is as follows (remember that the categories overlap):

- cases based on protest political statements, distribution of prohibited opposition materials, and display of symbols in the context of a political protest: 41% in 2023, 39% in 2024;
- cases involving statements related to events in Ukraine or the display of Ukrainian symbols: 34% in 2023, and 32% in 2024;
- cases related to statements expressing ethnic xenophobia, display of Nazi symbols, and distribution of ultra-right materials: 34% in 2023, 35% in 2024;
- cases involving AUE symbols and materials: 16% in 2023, 17% in 2024;
- cases related to inciting religious hatred, displaying symbols of religious organizations, or distributing religious materials: 3% in both years;
- other cases, including unspecified charges: about 6% in both years.

Sanctions under CAO articles in 2023 and 2024:
Targets by category

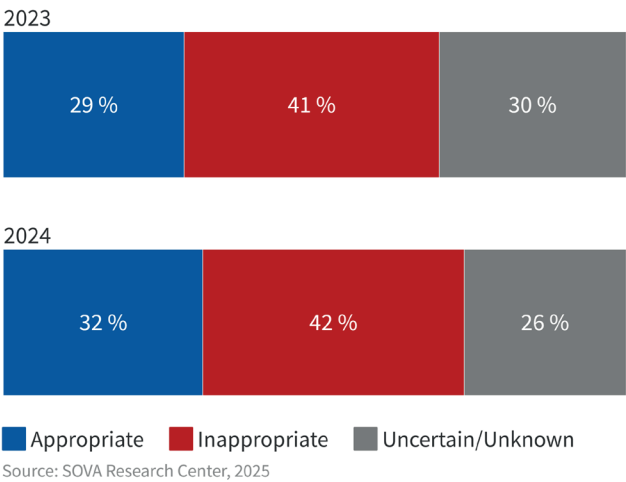
as % of the total number of sanctions



The graph below illustrates the relationship between the number of court-imposed sanctions that SOVA Center deemed generally appropriate, those we consider inappropriate restrictions on the right to freedom of expression that have no place in a democratic society, and those we were unable to evaluate unambiguously.

CAO articles on extremism:
Appropriateness of sanctions

as % of sanctions known to SOVA Center



As the data indicates, there have been no significant changes in the appropriateness of sanctions, in our opinion, during 2023–2024.

Counter-Extremism in 2024: Regulation of Public Speech and Organized Activity

This report is an analytical review of anti-extremist legislation and its use in 2024 to regulate public speech and organized activities. SOVA Center has been publishing such reports annually, summarizing the results of monitoring carried out continuously since the mid-2000s. We define anti-extremist policy as the criminalization of actions driven by political or ideological beliefs in a broad sense. Our analysis extends beyond the formal framework, since we also monitor restrictions related to acts not classified as “[extremist crimes](#)” in the law “On Countering Extremist Activity.”

Unlike in previous years, we have decided to merge the review into one, addressing law enforcement in general and related abuses together.¹

Drawing on our monitoring data and official statistics, we present an analysis of law enforcement across several parameters, including its ideological and political focus, types of penalty, and the appropriateness of prosecutions.

Lawmaking

In 2024, Russian legislation on countering extremism saw no significant changes – only a few procedural amendments were introduced. However, a new Strategy for Countering Extremism approved late in the year, laid the groundwork for further developments. Notable innovations occurred in a related area: Internet regulation, particularly concerning provisions on “foreign agents” and “undesirable organizations.”

Countering Extremism and Terrorism

A law signed in March identified the articles of the Criminal Code (CC) for which a sentence could not be replaced by participation in the special military operation. In October, a similar eligibility exception was introduced for individuals under investigation under the same articles. As expected, the list included members of extremist and terrorist organizations

1. The information presented in the report is based on the materials from “Russian Nationalism and Xenophobia” (<https://www.sova-center.ru/racism-xenophobia/>) and “Misuse of Anti-Extremism” (<https://www.sova-center.ru/misuse/>) sections of the SOVA Center website. The operating principles of the sections are available at: “About the “Russian Nationalism and Xenophobia” Section. SOVA Center. 2022 (<https://www.sova-center.ru/en/static-pages/racism-about-eng/>) and “About the “Misuse of Anti-Extremism” Section. SOVA Center. 2022 (<https://www.sova-center.ru/en/static-pages/anti-about-eng/>).

and groups. On the other hand, individuals convicted of (or charged with) vandalism, hooliganism and hate-motivated violent crimes or under Article 205⁶ (failure to report a terrorist crime), Article 282 (incitement to hatred), Article 280³ (repeated discrediting of the activities of the army and officials abroad), Article 207³ (dissemination of false information about the activities of the Russian military and officials abroad) and Article 354¹ (“rehabilitation of Nazism”) CC are allowed to join the special military operation.

In late December, the list of criminal offenses that result in individuals being added to the Rosfinmonitoring register – whether convicted, charged, or merely suspected – was expanded. The newly included articles relate to terrorism and extremism but had not been part of the list previously for various reasons: Article 357 (genocide) CC, Article 280² (violating the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation), and Articles 280³ and 282⁴ (repeated display of prohibited symbols) CC. Also included are individual paragraphs of the articles on calls for activities against state security (paragraph “e” of Article 280⁴ Parts 2 and 3), “military fakes” (paragraph “e” of Article 207³ Parts 2 and 3), hooliganism (paragraph “b” of Article 213 Parts 1, 2 and 3), vandalizing burial grounds (paragraph “b” of Article 244 Part 2) and certain articles on violent crimes² specifying the hate motive. Other articles of the CC also qualify if the crimes falling under them involve a hate motive (paragraph “f” of Article 63 Part 1 CC). Crimes falling under two of the articles mentioned above, specifically Articles 280³ and 357 CC, are not currently categorized as extremist or terrorist.³ However, this discrepancy is likely to be resolved in the future, and these articles will be included in the relevant lists of norms.

We would like to point out two additional changes that could be characterized as procedural and generally positive.

The law signed in February required that cases related to recognizing materials as extremist be reviewed in courts of federal subjects, rather than in district courts as before. Such a measure, intended to improve the quality of legal proceedings, was proposed to the State Duma back in 2015. At the same time, authors, translators, or publishers of materials, if known, should be involved in the trials – not as defendants, but as interested parties, so that the process of banning the material does not automatically lead to charges against them; they pay no legal costs. If the material in question is religious, the process must involve an expert “with specific knowledge of the relevant religion.” While this expansion of trial participants is not a cure-all for unreasonable or inappropriate bans, it can help reduce formalism in the consideration of such cases.

In late December, the president approved a law that stipulated the process of removing an entity from the list of terrorist organizations, at least temporarily. This is to be done by a court at the request of the Prosecutor General’s Office, if the latter believes that the orga-

2. Murder, grave and moderate injury, torture and threat of murder: paragraph “k” of Article 105 Part 2; paragraph “f” of Part 2, Parts 3 and 4 of Article 111; paragraph “f” of Article 112 Part 2; paragraph “h” of Article 117 Part 2, paragraph “a” of Article 119 Part 2 CC.

3. Established following the instructions of the Prosecutor General’s Office and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. See Lists No. 20 and No. 22 in: Instruction of the Prosecutor General’s Office of Russia No. 462/11 and the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia No. 2 of June 25, 2024 “On introducing lists of articles of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation used for statistical reporting,” Consultant (https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_483902/).

nization has ceased terrorist activity. The bill was adopted to normalize relations with the Taliban government of Afghanistan (and on April 17, 2025, the Supreme Court suspended the ban against the Taliban). Regardless of our views on the Taliban, such a legal procedure is indeed necessary – not only for terrorist organizations, but also for extremist ones.

In 2024, legislators failed to address a clear shortcoming in the Code of Administrative Offenses (CAO) regarding the calculation of the administrative liability period. Under Article 4.5, for most offenses, this period is calculated not from the moment the offense was committed, but from when it was detected, resulting in numerous punishments under the CAO for online statements made many years earlier.

In March, the Constitutional Court refused to consider Yelena Selkova’s complaint against her punishment under Article 20.3 CAO for symbols viewed as attributes of a banned organization (the Navalny Headquarters), even though she had published them before the organization was recognized as extremist. The Constitutional Court directly stated that Selkova’s actions became an offense at the moment the organization was banned.

In April, the State Duma rejected a bill by Vladislav Davankov from the New People (*Novye Lyudi*) faction, which proposed calculating the liability period under the CAO for Internet offenses (with some exceptions) from the moment the offense was committed.

In October, a bill was introduced in the State Duma proposing to extend the territorial scope of the Code of Administrative Offenses of the Russian Federation to cover the entire world – similar to the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, which already applies to offenses committed abroad that are deemed to be “against the interests of the Russian Federation.” This is the second such bill submitted by the State Council of Tatarstan. However, there is still no consensus on which specific CAO articles would be involved. In May 2025, the Duma passed the bill in its first reading, but without clarifying the relevant articles, leaving the issue unresolved. Of course, emigrants already face liability under several CAO provisions, as reports of acts committed outside Russia are often filed at the location where the offense was detected. Nevertheless, the new bill appears aimed at increasing pressure on them.

In late December, the President signed a decree on the new Strategy for Countering Extremism,⁴ the provisions of which suggested potential future expansions of the legislation.

The definition of “manifestations of extremism” was expanded to include “the motive of hatred or hostility towards representatives of public authorities”; previously, it was treated as hatred or hostility based on membership in a social group. The list of key concepts was expanded to include “xenophobia” and “Russophobia.” The first term was given a generally accepted definition, the second was described as hostility towards Russian citizens, the Russian language, culture, traditions, and history of Russia, expressed “also through aggressive sentiments and actions of political forces and their individual representatives, as well as discriminatory actions of the authorities of unfriendly states against Russia.”

In general, the Strategy, as expected, devotes a lot of attention to describing hostile activities of “unfriendly” states. In particular, it states that “unfriendly states use the

4. A detailed review of the Strategy is presented on our website: The President approved a new Strategy for countering extremism // SOVA Center. 2024. December 28 (<https://www.sova-center.ru/misuse/news/lawmaking/2024/12/d50858/>).

Ukrainian crisis to unleash hybrid wars” against Russia and “incite aggressive Russophobic sentiments in the world.” To counter these phenomena, the Strategy provides for “improving the mechanisms for countering the illegal and anti-Russian activities of foreign or international non-governmental organizations, including those recognized as undesirable on the territory of the Russian Federation,” measures aimed at “preventing and countering the spread of extremism, neo-Nazism and Ukrainian nationalism,” “creating a database of individuals who have left the Russian Federation to participate in extremist organizations or to undergo training in foreign centers of unfriendly states,” identifying and suppressing the instigation of “color revolutions,” and monitoring interethnic and territorial conflicts that can “lead to manifestations of separatism in the relevant territories.”

The document elaborates more extensively than the previous strategies on the adverse effects of the “unfavorable situation in certain subjects of the Federation and settlements,” attributed to the “illegal activities of migrants,” on interethnic and interreligious relations. Accordingly, it expands the list of state migration policy measures to introduce stricter rules for foreigners’ stay in Russia as well as social and cultural adaptation programs for them.

The Strategy also outlines specific cultural initiatives, including efforts to “counter the propaganda of fascist and neo-Nazi ideas,” support creative projects that promote “the strengthening of an all-Russian civic identity,” and assist in the creation of works of art aimed at preventing citizens from being drawn into the activities of “destructive organizations.” The directives related to working with young people follow a similar focus.

Increasing the Severity of Related Legislation

In February, two new qualifying features – committing a crime motivated by hatred (clause “e”) and for mercenary motives (clause “d”) – were added to Article 280⁴ Part 2 CC, which is not yet frequently used.

These amendments also expanded the list of offenses that allow for the confiscation of property. In particular, they introduced the possibility of confiscating property *obtained as a result of committing crimes* under Articles 207³ and 280⁴ CC when committed for mercenary reasons. In April 2025, Articles 280³, 284² (calls for sanctions), and 284³ (assistance to foreign criminal prosecution of Russian officials and military personnel) were also added to this list.

Meanwhile, the possibility of confiscating property *used to commit a crime* was stipulated for cases related to financing extremist and terrorist activities, or activities against the security of the Russian Federation. The latter was clarified in the amendments with a long list of specific crimes, including treason, sabotage, Article 284¹ (participation in the activities of an “undesirable organization”), and 284³ CC, as well as ordinary criminal offenses, such as participation in organized crime.

The confiscation rules introduced by the amendments are either primarily declarative (intended to intimidate citizens) or aimed at seizing certain business assets. After all, computers could already be confiscated as instruments of crime under existing laws, and a person’s only residence is not subject to confiscation.

At the same time, the law introduced the possibility of stripping individuals of ranks, titles, and awards as a penalty under eleven articles of the CC, but this change can hardly be considered significant.

In late December, a law was signed to amend several articles of the CC pertaining to rebellion and various forms of treason.

Article 279 CC on armed rebellion was divided into three parts. The previous penalty – from 12 to 20 years of imprisonment – was included in Part 2 and remained in force for ordinary participants. Part 1 was introduced for the organizers of the rebellion, with the associated prison terms ranging from 15 to 20 years. If the rebellion results in someone’s death or other serious consequences, Part 3 provides for prison terms ranging from 15 years to life for its organizers and participants.

The scope of Article 275¹ CC (cooperation on a confidential basis with a foreign state, international or foreign organization) has been expanded to include foreigners and stateless persons; previously, only Russian citizens could be held liable under this article.

In addition, a new article 276¹ (aiding an armed enemy in activities directed against the security of the Russian Federation) was added to the CC. Penalties under this article include imprisonment for a term of 10 to 15 years and a possible fine of up to 500 thousand rubles or wages or other income for a period of up to three years.

A footnote to Article 275 of the Criminal Code defines the term “enemy” to clarify the meaning of “adhering to the enemy,” as penalized under the article.

In 2024, we witnessed yet another attempt to expand the scope of the part of Article 354¹ CC that deals with the denial or glorification of Nazi crimes by adding denial or glorification of the “genocide of the Soviet people.” Defendants had previously faced sanctions under Article 354¹ CC for such statements, specifically about crimes against Soviet citizen, although the term “genocide” has not been used with respect to the Soviet people as a whole – either by the Nuremberg or subsequent tribunals, or in any other legally authoritative documents. Nevertheless, activists from the Russian Military Historical Society have promoted the concept of the “genocide of the Soviet people” for several years, and it has appeared in several decisions of regional courts.

In February 2024, a group of deputies from “A Just Russia – Patriots – For Truth” (*Spravedlivaya Rossiya – Patrioty – Za pravdu*, SRZP) submitted a package of bills to the State Duma on the “genocide of the multiethnic Russian people,” which included a special commemorative law and the corresponding amendment to Article 354¹ Part 1 CC. The package was quickly returned to its authors to address its shortcomings, but already in June, a new bill was submitted to parliament – this time from representatives of all factions. Its preamble stated that the genocide of the Soviet people had already been established at Nuremberg, thereby justifying “the recognition of the public justification of Nazi ideology and the genocide of the Soviet people as illegal, and the implementation of measures to counter such propaganda.” The law was not adopted immediately, but it quickly passed all readings in the State Duma in April 2025 and was signed by the president later that month. The adoption of such a law implies further amendments to Article 354¹ of the Criminal Code, and possibly to other provisions as well, but this has not yet occurred. However, the new law is expected to come into force only at the beginning of 2026.

Regulating the Internet

In August, the president signed a package of laws banning trash streams and imposing liability for them.

The first law introduced a new aggravating circumstance into the CC (paragraph “s” of Article 63 Part 1 CC) – “commission of an intentional crime with its public demonstration, including in the media or information and telecommunications networks (including the Internet).” A similar provision was introduced as a qualifying element for ten types of intentional violent crimes, ranging from murder to the use of slave labor. At the same time, those among the ten articles that previously did not provide for additional sanctions in the form of deprivation of the right to hold certain positions or engage in certain activities now prescribe such penalty for a period of up to three years. This law implemented a principle we view as appropriate: that a public demonstration of violence should be considered an aggravating circumstance in court proceedings related to that violence.

The second law introduced a new Part 12 to Article 13.15 CAO, which resists easy interpretation. It is formulated as follows: “Dissemination via information and telecommunications networks, including the Internet, of information that offends human dignity and public morality, expresses obvious disrespect for society, contains images of presumably illegal actions, including violence, and is motivated by hooliganism, monetary gain, or other base motives, if these actions do not constitute a criminal offense.”

A note has been added to this provision stating that the norm does not apply to “works of science, literature, or art; works of historical, artistic, or cultural value; materials from registered mass media; as well as photo and video materials intended for scientific or medical use, or for study as provided by federal state educational standards and federal educational programs.”

Penalties range from 50 to 100 thousand rubles for individuals, from 100 to 200 thousand for officials, and from 800 thousand to a million rubles for legal entities.

Apparently, the legislator intended to distinguish trash streams and other “amateur activities” involving the display of violence from legitimate displays in media reports, works of art, and similar contexts. However, it remains unclear how this legislation will be implemented in practice. After all, the concept of “other base motives” has seen little use so far, and it is difficult to imagine how the police will evaluate the “historical, artistic, or cultural value” of certain materials. We currently have no data on the application of this new provision.

The third law in the package addresses the blocking of materials if their content falls under Part 12 Article 13.15 CAO; however, the above-mentioned exception is omitted. Responsibility for implementing the blocking has been assigned to online platforms, which must act either on their own initiative or at the request of the Prosecutor General’s Office. This creates the potential for significant abuse – or simply errors – in the application of the law.

As part of the same package of laws, Internet censorship mechanisms became even more severe.

First, the Prosecutor General’s Office acquired the legal authority not only to issue blocking orders but also to direct Internet service providers to throttle traffic on speci-

fied platforms. Such measures may be applied selectively, for example, within a specific region. Consequently, providers became subject to stricter obligations to install the requisite technical equipment.

Next, while previously decisions on extrajudicial blocking had been based on the illegality of some material, as determined by the Prosecutor General’s Office, the same law permitted such blocking in accordance with the “acts of the president”.

Finally, another law from the same package revived the idea of a blogger registry that existed from 2014 to 2017. Social media users with an audience of over ten thousand were required to register. Those who failed to do so were prohibited from soliciting advertisements and collecting donations, and other users were barred from sharing their content – although liability for this violation has not yet been established.

“Foreign Agents” and “Undesirable Organizations”

In August, the mechanism for recognizing organizations as “undesirable” was expanded: the amendments allowed to impose this status not only on organizations with private founders but also on those with foreign state founders or participants. However, as far as we know, no organizations added to the relevant register since this mechanism came into force had such founders or participants.

Amendments to the electoral legislation signed in May introduced new restrictions for “foreign agents.” Foreign agents, as well as individuals featured on the Rosfinmonitoring List of persons involved in extremist or terrorist activities, were banned from running for office at all levels. Individuals on both registers were also banned from participating in elections as observers, authorized representatives, or trusted representatives of candidates.

Individuals punished under the CAO articles on prohibited symbols (Article 20.3) and prohibited materials (Article 20.29) were barred not only from running for election for one year, as had previously been the case, but also from serving as voting members of election commissions.

In addition, current deputies and senators were required to resign if designated as “foreign agents.” The amendments gave such deputies 180 days to relinquish either their “foreign agent” status or their mandate. Several deputies actually resigned. Thus, it became possible to cancel the already expressed will of the voters by a simple order of the Ministry of Justice.

Foreign agents, whether legal entities or individuals, were significantly restricted in access to their income. The law signed in late December effectively treats “foreign agents” similarly to citizens of “unfriendly countries.” Income from the sale or lease of housing or vehicles, any fees, and even interest and dividends on deposits and accounts received after March 1, 2025, must be transferred to a special account, which can only be used to pay fines. There is no other access to the account until the “foreign agent” status is lifted.

Although this measure discriminated against all “foreign agents,” the authors of the law made it clear that the primary target was political emigrants.

Another bill, which passed its first reading in June 2024 but has not yet been adopted, also largely targets emigrants, although not exclusively. The draft law proposes authorizing the Russian Ministry of Culture to issue an order establishing a specific procedure for libraries –

a procedure not defined in the law itself. This procedure would set rules for “providing and posting documents” created by people and organizations designated as “foreign agents” or included in the Rosfinmonitoring registry. Thus, this provision does not focus on the distribution of individual materials due to their content but rather on creating a “blacklist of authors.”

The same bill provides for the introduction of a special procedure for access to libraries in the DPR, LPR, Zaporizhzhya Region, and Kherson Region, since the library collections there have not been sufficiently cleared of “anti-Russian” literature and other works that the authorities find objectionable.

In next two sections, we present 2024 statistics on the use of criminal articles related to public statements and the activities of prohibited organizations. Please note that our monitoring does not cover law enforcement practices in the territories annexed by Russia between 2022 and 2024.

Regulation of Public Speech

This section, devoted to Criminal Code articles on public statements, analyzes statistical data for each relevant article – starting with the most frequently used and followed by others in descending order based on the number of sentences issued in 2024 – along with similar provisions applied in rare cases.

Thus, we will review the use of the following articles of the CC:

- Article 205² on calls for terrorist activity or its justification;
- Article 280 on calls for extremist activity⁵;
- and the closely related Article 280⁴ on public calls for activities against state security;
- Article 282⁴ on repeated display of prohibited symbols;
- Paragraph “e” of Article 207³ Part 2 on disseminating “fake news” about the use of armed forces and the actions of government agencies abroad, motivated by hatred;
- Article 280³ on repeated discrediting of the use of armed forces and actions of government agencies abroad;
- Article 282 on incitement to hatred or enmity;
- Article 354¹ on the “rehabilitation of Nazism”;
- Article 148 Parts 1 and 2 on publicly insulting the religious feelings of believers.

You can find additional information on the articles that fall within the scope of the SOVA Center’s monitoring and the principles guiding their selection [on our website](#).

First, we will present statistical data from the Judicial Department of the Supreme Court of Russia on individuals convicted under these articles in 2024, whose sentences came

5. The Criminal Code also includes Article 280¹ on calls to violate the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation. In 2024, only one sentence was issued under this article, about which no information is available. Accordingly, this report does not address prosecution under Article 280¹ separately.

into force in the same year.⁶ For each part of each article of the Criminal Code, the Department reports the number of individuals convicted either under it as the principal offence or as an additional charge, with the principal offence defined as the most serious article among the charges. The Department also publishes data on the penalties imposed under all parts of all articles; such information is linked to the main offense, ensuring that the penalty for each convicted individual is counted only once.

SOVA Center collects information on sanctions under articles related to public statements on a daily basis by monitoring Russian court websites, mass media, social networks, and other sources. However, due to the lack of transparency in this area of law enforcement, we can obtain information for only a portion of the sentences issued by Russian courts during the year. In 2024, we had such information for approximately 50% of the cases.

We include this information in a publicly accessible database on our website. Please note that it contains all sentences we are aware of, not just those that came into force in the same year they were issued.

This report presents the results of our analysis of 2024 sentences available to us, grouped according to various parameters provided in the database.

We will sort the sentences under each article among the following tentative categories, depending on the nature of the public statements that served as the basis for the charges:

- statements characterized by ethnic xenophobia;
- statements related to religion;
- statements critical of the authorities and their supporters;
- statements related to events in Ukraine;
- statements involving “violation of traditional values”;
- other cases, including unattributed ones.

It should be noted that a single sentence may often fall into more than one category. We will highlight instances of significant overlap between categories for each article.

We will show the ratio between the number of people punished for public statements online and offline, as well as the distribution of penalty types within each category and for each article as a whole.

Once we have reviewed information about a particular case and entered it into our database, we assign it a rating based on whether we consider the restriction of freedom of expression in that case to be justified. Our ratings include: “Yes” – if we view the act as related to xenophobia and the restriction as generally justified; “No” – if we believe the restriction violated the right to freedom of expression and was therefore inappropriate; “Other” – if the restriction was justified but unrelated to countering xenophobia; “Not sure” – if we cannot choose between the above values for any reason; and “Don’t know” – if we lack adequate data for making our assessment. This report presents the assessments for the 2024 cases related to the articles of interest.

We shall provide similar information about cases initiated in 2024.

6. Summary statistical information on the state of criminal convictions in Russia for 2024, Judicial Department of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation. 2025. April 17 (<https://cdep.ru/index.php?id=79&item=8946>).

At the end of the chapter on sanctions for public speech, we will provide summary data on the 2024 application of all relevant criminal articles.

SOVA Center has written repeatedly about the problems associated with definitions and norms of Russian legislation related to the concepts of “extremism” and “terrorism.” However, there are definitely some instances, in which the state, in accordance with the norms of international law and the Russian Constitution, can legitimately prosecute public statements under criminal procedure as socially dangerous incitement.

It is not always possible to determine in which cases sanctions for “propaganda of terrorism or extremism” are justified and when they clearly violate rights and freedoms. Court decisions on such cases predominantly remain unpublished due to a ban on publishing the texts of judicial acts issued in cases “affecting the security of the state.” The information available from other sources is often insufficient to assess the legitimacy of these decisions.

Law enforcement related to criminal [articles on incitement of hatred, propaganda of extremism, and propaganda of terrorism](#) is non-transparent and, at the same time, has become increasingly repressive. First, the proceedings exhibit an accusatory bias, as courts rarely acknowledge the low probability that the incriminating statement will result in serious consequences. Next, a substantial proportion of convictions under these articles result in imprisonment, despite the availability of alternative penalties. SOVA Center believes that imprisonment, even in cases involving public calls for violence, is appropriate only for deliberate propaganda of violence (more or less systematic and having at least some chance of implementation) rather than isolated emotional outbursts.

Article 205² CC on Propaganda of Terrorism

According to the Judicial Department of the Supreme Court, 453 people were convicted in 2024 under Article 205² (public calls for terrorist acts, public justification of terrorism, or propaganda of terrorism): for 410 of them it was the principal offense, that is, the most serious allegation against them, and in 43 cases it was an additional charge.

Law enforcement numbers for this article grew steadily from 2012, increasing from a few to four and a half hundred cases per year, but the percentage of prison terms among all those sentenced under this article as the principal offense remained at 37–40%.

Of the 410 individuals convicted in 2024 under Article 205² CC as their principal offense, 152 were sentenced to imprisonment, while the majority (254) received fines; one was sentenced to compulsory labor, and four were released from punishment. In addition, 27 individuals were exempted from criminal liability on mental health grounds and referred for compulsory treatment.

Of the 453 individuals convicted under Article 205² CC in 2024, 54 were found guilty under Part 1, for offline statements, and 399 under Part 2, for statements made on the Internet.

At the time of writing, the SOVA database contained 139 court decisions against 144 people charged under Article 205² CC. Among these, one individual was released from punishment, two were referred for compulsory treatment, and 141 people faced criminal sanctions.

22 sentences against 23 people were issued for cases initiated in 2024. In total, we have information on 190 cases against 204 people initiated in 2024 under this article.

Let us now examine the distribution of decisions under Article 205² across the categories outlined above.

Our database for 2024 includes six sentences against six people convicted for their statements expressing **ethnic xenophobia**. For three of them, this was the only article cited in the judgement. In two cases, it was combined with Article 280 CC on calls for extremist activity, and in one case, with articles on violent crimes.

The sentences were issued for public anti-Semitic incitement, justification of violence against Russians during the Chechen wars, and approval of the actions committed by Andreas Breivik. Convicted offenders included one member of [the network](#) “Maniacs. Murder Cult” (Manyaki. Kult Ubiystv, MKU). However, his imprisonment sentence was imposed primarily for participating in two xenophobic attacks in April 2023.

We know of seven cases under this article for speech expressing ethnic xenophobia, initiated in 2024 against eight people. In two of these cases, courts issued their sentences by the end of 2024.

We have recorded 16 sentences under Article 205² for statements **promoting or justifying violence on religious grounds**, resulting in the conviction of 18 individuals, 12 of whom were charged solely under this article. In the remaining cases, it was combined with Article 205¹ on involvement of others in terrorist activity, Article 205⁵ on involvement in a terrorist organization, and Article 280 CC.

The majority of convicted offenders faced sanctions for approving the actions of militant Islamists: the Crocus City Hall terrorist attack, attacks against a synagogue, churches, traffic police in Derbent and Makhachkala, and the actions of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham and Katibat al-Tawhid wal-Jihad (recognized as terrorist organizations).

In addition, three followers of the radical Islamic party Hizb ut-Tahrir faced punishment for promoting party ideology.

We learned of 19 criminal cases opened against 20 people under this article in 2024 for statements related to religion. One of these cases resulted in a conviction in 2024. All the defendants were charged with supporting Islamists, mainly for justifying the Crocus City Hall attack.

Statements directed **against the authorities** form the basis of 46 sentences under Article 205² CC against 47 people recorded in our database. Of these, 29 people were convicted under this article alone. In ten cases, the charge combined it with Article 280 CC, in five cases – with paragraph “e” of Article 207³ Part 2 CC on the dissemination of “fakes” about the army motivated by hatred. In some cases, it was also used in combination with other criminal articles.⁷

7. CC Article 208 on participation in an illegal armed formation, Article 280³ on repeated discrediting of the army, paragraph “c” of Article 280⁴ Part 2 on public calls for activities against state security made on the Internet, Article 282 on inciting hatred, Article 148 Part 1 on insulting the feelings of believers, Article 354¹ on the “rehabilitation of Nazism,” Article 214 Part 2 on vandalism motivated by hatred, Article 329 on desecration of the state flag, Article 222 Part 1 on the illegal acquisition and storage of ammunition, etc.

Most of these sentences concerned calls for the violent overthrow of the Russian government, including reprisals against its prominent representatives (Vladimir Putin, Dmitry Peskov, Vyacheslav Volodin, Ramzan Kadyrov). The charges could also involve calls for the murder of governors, members of the United Russia party, employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the FSB, etc. One of the convicted individuals had published an “execution list” naming 38 people.

In 2024, we recorded 50 criminal cases initiated under Article 205² CC for statements against the authorities, involving 50 individuals. In five of these cases, the courts issued sentences within the same year.

Statements supporting violent or other illegal actions in favor of Ukraine formed the basis for 79 sentences against 81 individuals we recorded under Article 205² CC. For 50 of them, this was the only article in their convictions, ten had it combined with paragraph “e” of Article 207³, six faced it in combination with Article 280, and five – with Article 205⁵. In some cases, sentences also included other criminal articles.⁸

Specifically, three Ukrainian public figures and politicians were convicted in absentia. They were also found guilty under other articles, including, in one instance, the extremely rarely used Article 354 Part 2 CC (calls for the initiation of a war of aggression).

The sentences were issued for publicly supporting the actions of organizations recognized as terrorist in Russia: the Azov Regiment, the Noman Çelebicihan Battalion, the Freedom of Russia Legion, and [the Russian Volunteer Corps](#) (in most sentences, the last two units are mentioned together), as well as for approving attacks by Ukrainian drones on Russian cities, raids in the Bryansk Region by the Freedom of Russia Legion, and the Russian Volunteer Corps, explosion on the Crimean Bridge, destruction of the Kakhovka Dam, the terrorist attack by Daria Trepova against war correspondent Vladlen Tatarsky, arson attacks on military commissariats, acts of sabotage, etc.

We recorded 92 criminal cases against 104 individuals opened in 2024 for statements related to Ukraine under this article. 13 of them resulted in convictions against 14 people in the same year.

It should be noted that 16 people convicted in 2024 under Article 205² CC were found guilty for their anti-government and pro-Ukrainian statements simultaneously. Nine people faced prosecution for such statements in 2024, and the court managed to sentence one of them before the year ended. We took these cases into account in both categories.

We have classified one 2024 sentence as “other” – [the sentence](#) of Ufa resident Karina Garipova, who was also convicted under Article 205⁵ Part 2 CC (participating in a terrorist organization) for disseminating the “Columbine” ideology. Garipova was sentenced to five and a half years of imprisonment for sending materials about school murders to someone in a private message when she was 17 years old. It is not entirely clear why she was found guilty of publicly promoting terrorism. We know of four additional cases under Article 205² opened in 2024 for promoting school murders. One of them was based on entries in the personal diary of a 14-year-old Izhevsk resident and may have been closed.

8 . In addition to the articles listed in the preceding note (with the exception of Article 329), the charges also included Article 205 Part 1 with Article 30 Part 1 CC on preparation for a terrorist act, Article 275 on high treason, Article 275¹ on cooperation with a foreign state, etc.

We **have no information** on the acts underlying eight of the sentences issued in 2024 under Article 205² CC. The same is true for 24 criminal cases initiated in 2024 under this article, two of which were tried in court in the same year.

The majority of sentences under Article 205² of the Criminal Code concerned online statements, including texts, videos, images, comments, and other materials posted on social media platforms and messaging services. Most often, they were posted on VKontakte, much less frequently – on Telegram and YouTube; in isolated cases, statements were posted on Odnoklassniki, LiveJournal, and Facebook. Offline acts led to prosecution far less frequently, with charges arising from conversations in detention (half of which involved religious statements), the distribution of leaflets or graffiti, statements made while intoxicated, altercations, and, in one case, a statement by a teacher during a class. Occasionally, a single case could involve charges for both offline and online statements.

The individual sentences for online and offline statements were distributed among the categories as follows:

Statement Category	Online	Offline	Online and Offline	Total
ethnic xenophobia	5	1	0	6
religion	7	9	2	18
against the authorities	40	4	3	47
pro-Ukrainian	66	14	2	82
other	1	0	0	1
unknown	8	0	0	8
total	111	24	7	142

Let us now examine the distribution of individual sentences under Article 205² CC across types of penalty and categories of incriminating statements (in three cases, we have no information about the sanctions).

Statement Category	Imprisonment	Suspended Sentence	Labor	Fine	Total Punished
Ethnic Xenophobia	4	0	0	2	6
Religion	16	0	0	2	18
Against the Authorities	32	1	1	13	47
Pro-Ukrainian	58	0	2	21	81
Other	1	0	0	0	1
Unknown	2	0	0	4	6
Total	97	1	2	39	139

It is worth reiterating that the appropriateness of cases under Article 205² CC is difficult to assess, since the statements that served as the basis for the charges are available only in a small number of cases. Therefore, the majority of sentences under this article in our database were classified as “we don’t know.” This is particularly true for [sentences issued for conversations in detention](#): their exact content and scope are unknown or in doubt. The “other” category ranked second, as a significant percentage of cases were

initiated over aggressive anti-government and pro-Ukrainian statements – political rather than xenophobic in nature. Please note that while such cases are included in our database, they are not published as news on the website. Sentences for propaganda of ethnic and religious xenophobia, coupled with approval of terrorist acts against the corresponding groups or against the authorities, were rated “yes,” but constituted a clear minority under this article. We classified even fewer sentences under this article as clearly inappropriate – if the incriminating statement contained calls for violence, we did not classify the corresponding sentence as inappropriate unless we were completely sure that it posed no public danger.

In the category of religious statements, we classified as inappropriate the high-profile [conviction](#) of Moscow theater figures Yevgenia Berkovich and Svetlana Petriychuk, who were charged with justifying the activities of militant Islamists for their play about women who left to join militants in Syria. We classified three sentences for anti-government statements as inappropriate because, in our opinion, they contained no calls for real terrorist acts – for example, when they mentioned “impalement” of officials. In the category of statements related to events in Ukraine, we classified the following as inappropriate: the conviction of former Moscow municipal deputy [Alexei Gorinov](#) for a statement he made in a penal colony regarding the predictability of violence during armed hostilities, the conviction of activist [Yaroslav Shirshikov](#) for comments about the deaths of Vladlen Tatarsky and Darya Dugina that contained no aggressive calls; and the conviction in absentia against [Andy Stone](#), the press secretary of the Meta corporation, for his tweet about a change in content filtering policy in connection with the armed conflict in Ukraine.

Statement Category	Yes	No	Not Sure	We Don't Know	Other	Total
Ethnic Xenophobia	3	0	0	3	0	6
Religion	6	2	1	9	0	18
Against the Authorities	4	3	1	16	23	47
Pro-Ukrainian	4	3	4	30	41	82
Other	0	0	1	0	0	1
Unknown	0	0	0	8	0	8
Total	16	8	6	60	52	142

Cases recorded by us and initiated in 2024 are distributed across the categories as follows:

Statement Category	Number of Cases	Number of Persons Involved
Ethnic Xenophobia	7	8
Religion	19	20
Against the Authorities	50	50
Pro-Ukrainian	93	105
Other	6	6
Unknown	24	24
Total	190	204

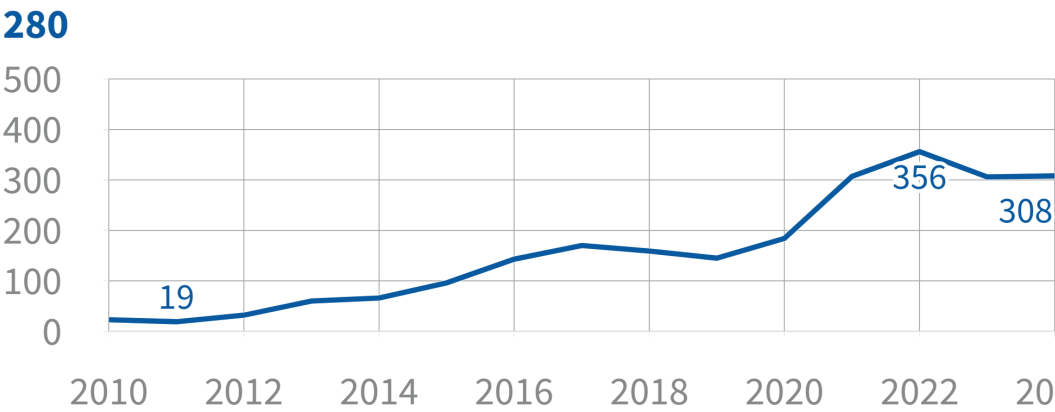
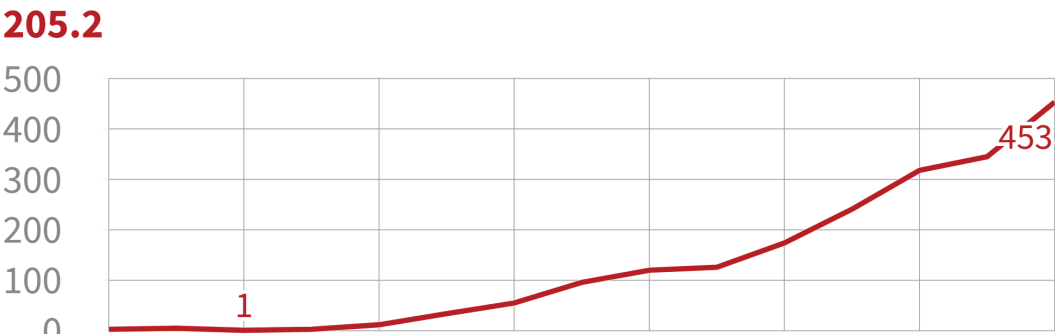
Of the 190 cases opened in 2024 under Article 205² CC that are known to us, we consider seven to be clearly inappropriate. These include the case of pianist [Pavel Kushnir](#), who called for an “anti-fascist revolution” and died in pretrial detention, as well as the case of [Sergei Davidis](#), head of the political prisoners support program at the Memorial Human Rights Centre, who was charged with supporting the actions of the Azov Regiment by granting political prisoner status to the regiment’s captured fighters.

Article 280 CC on Calls for Extremist Activity

According to the Supreme Court’s Judicial Department, 308 people were convicted in 2024 under Article 280 CC (public incitement to extremist activity). 215 of them had this article as a principal offense in their sentence, and 93 as an additional charge. It should be noted that this number is only two more than the previous year, when 306 people were convicted under this article.

Individuals convicted under Articles 205.2 and 280 CC

As principal or additional offenses



Source: Judicial Department of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation, 2025

Of the total of 308 convicted offenders, 19 people were found guilty under Article 280 Part 1, that is, for offline statements, and 289 people – under Part 2 for statements on the Internet.

Of the 215 individuals convicted in 2024 under Article 280 CC as their principal offense, 34 people were sentenced to imprisonment, 140 people – that is the largest group – to suspended sentences, one to restriction of liberty, 26 to compulsory labor, one to corrective labor, and two to community service, 10 people received fines, one was released from punishment, nine cases were dismissed by the courts, and eight people were exempted from criminal liability for mental health reasons and referred for compulsory treatment.

The SOVA Center database contains 91 court decisions from 2024 under Article 280 CC against 93 people. One case was closed due to the defendant’s death, and one individual was released from punishment due to illness; thus, sanctions were imposed on 91 people. 87 individuals were convicted under Part 2, and four under Part 1. Nine of these sentences were issued in cases initiated in the same year. In total, we know of 52 cases opened in 2024 under Article 280 CC against 54 people.

30 sentences against 30 individuals were related to expressions of **ethnic xenophobia**. For 24 offenders, this was the only charge, for three people it was combined with Article 205² CC, for one person – with Article 282, and in one more case – with paragraph “e” of Article 207³ Part 2 CC.

These people faced sanctions for posting comments on social media and public messenger chats with aggressive statements against people from the Caucasus (3), Central Asia (2), Ukrainians (1), Russians (9, including justification of the terrorist attack in Crocus City Hall), non-Russians (1), Jews (3) and unspecified ethnic groups (16). It should be noted that the same case could involve statements against several ethnic groups.

We learned that 20 new criminal cases under this article for expressions of ethnic xenophobia were opened in 2024 against 22 people; five of them were sentenced in the same year.

Seven sentences against seven people were issued under Article 280 CC for statements calling for violent and other illegal actions **based on religious xenophobia**. For three people, this was the only article in the conviction; for three others, it was combined with Article 205² CC, and in the remaining cases, it was combined with other articles.⁹

All but one of the convicted offenders were found guilty of online calls for violent actions, such as violence against people who follow Judaism or do not follow Islam. The case of blogger Sofia Angel-Barokko, a follower of the “ancient gods,” stands out – she faced sanctions for a YouTube video in which she claimed to be using magic to combat the dominance of Abrahamic religions associated with the cult of “Yahweh the Occupier.” Specifically, she claimed to have facilitated the shelling of Israel and the fires in Christian churches in Russia and Europe.

We have information on four new criminal cases opened in 2024 under Article 280 CC for religious xenophobia, none of which resulted in a conviction during the same year.

9. Specifically, with Article 148 Part 1, Article 205⁵ Part 2, Article 205¹ Part 1.1, and Article 354¹ Part 4 CC.

32 sentences involving 34 individuals were issued for statements **against the authorities** under Article 280 CC. Of these, 20 people were convicted only under this article, ten were also convicted under Article 205² and three – also under Article 214 Part 2 CC on vandalism motivated by hatred. Their sentences could also include other articles.¹⁰

Materials posted on social media that called for violence against government officials (law enforcement officers and civil servants) were the most frequent law enforcement targets.

We also recorded 14 new criminal cases opened under Article 280 CC for statements against the authorities. In three of them, the courts issued sentences in the same year.

21 sentences against 21 individuals were issued for statements **concerning the armed conflict with Ukraine** under Article 280; for 13 people, this was the only article in their sentence. Five people had it combined with Article 205² and three others – with Article 207³ CC; other charges could be present as well.¹¹

The charges were predominantly based on materials calling for violent actions against Russian military personnel, as well as “Russians” or “citizens of Russia” (not as representatives of an ethnic community, but as political opponents), or supporters of the special military operation and the government’s foreign policy. Most of the defendants were convicted for publications not on VKontakte (as is usually the case), but on Telegram.

We know of 10 criminal cases initiated under Article 280 CC in 2024 for statements related to the events in Ukraine, one of which resulted in a conviction that same year.

For the eight sentences issued in 2024 under Article 280 CC, we **have no information** about the basis of the cases. The same is true for the four new criminal cases opened in 2024 under this article.

The distribution of the offenders convicted for online and offline statements across our categories was as follows:

Statement Category	Online	Offline	Online and Offline	Total
Ethnic Xenophobia	30	0	0	30
Religion	6	1	0	7
Against the Authorities	31	3	0	34
Pro-Ukrainian	21	0	0	21
Other	1	0	0	1
Unknown	8	0	0	8
Total	1	87	3	91

Let us now examine the distribution of offenders convicted under Article 280 by type of penalty across all categories of incriminating statements (we have no information about the penalty in three cases).

10. Article 282² on involvement in an extremist organization, Articles 207³ and 280³ CC.

11. In particular, under Articles 280³, 282, and 354¹ CC.

Statement Category	Imprisonment	Suspended Sentence	Labor	Fine	Total Punished
Ethnic Xenophobia	9	17	2	2	30
Religion	3	3	0	1	7
Against the Authorities	12	15	3	4	34
Pro-Ukrainian	12	2	5	1	20
Other	0	1	0	0	1
Unknown	1	4	0	1	6
Total	33	41	7	7	88

We determined that most sentences known to us under Article 280 CC were issued appropriately. Indeed, charges under this article are most often associated with aggressive propaganda of ethnic or religious xenophobia. However, as in the case of Article 205², the assessment of many sentences under Article 280 CC is problematic due to the lack of relevant information. Therefore, here too, we rated a significant portion of the sentences as “we don’t know.” The rating “other,” which we assigned to aggressive anti-government and pro-Ukrainian statements of a political nature, took third place.

We classified several sentences under this article as inappropriate. These include, for example, the widely discussed sentence of [Igor Strelkov](#) for his post about the failure to pay salaries to soldiers of two DPR Armed Forces regiments. In the post, he wrote that “execution by firing squad would not be enough” to punish those responsible for such situations – though he was unlikely to have meant this literally as a call for reprisals against the military leadership. Also notable is the [sentence](#) against three anarchists from Chita for their “Death to the Regime” graffiti on a garage. They were charged not only with vandalism motivated by hatred but also with incitement to extremism. In our view, this slogan is a typical example of an abstract anti-government statement that does not contain explicit calls for violence and therefore poses no significant public danger.

Statement Category	Yes	No	Not Sure	We Don't Know	Other	Total
Ethnic Xenophobia	26	0	1	3	0	30
Religion	4	0	0	3	0	7
Against the Authorities	3	5	1	16	9	34
Pro-Ukrainian	3	4	1	9	9	21
Other	0	0	1	0	0	1
Unknown	0	0	0	9	0	9
Total	30	5	2	37	17	91

The cases known to us under Article 280 CC, initiated in 2024, are distributed across our categories as follows:

Statement Category	Number of Cases	Number of Persons Involved
Ethnic Xenophobia	20	22
Religion	4	4
Against the Authorities	14	14

Pro-Ukrainian	8	8
Other	0	0
Unknown	10	10
Total	52	54

Notably, we did not rate the charges as clearly inappropriate in any of these cases.

Article 280⁴ CC on Calls for Actions That Threaten State Security

Article 280⁴, introduced into the Criminal Code in 2022, establishes liability for public calls for various actions that are considered a threat to state security. These actions are so diverse that the grounds for combining calls for them within a single provision remains unclear. Some indeed relate to state security – such as treason or sabotage – while others concern war crimes, ranging from failure to follow an order to mercenaryism, or fall under provisions addressing public statements and activities not formally included in the lists of extremist or terrorist offenses (dissemination of false information about the armed forces or their repeated discrediting, participation in the activities of an “undesirable organization,” and so on). At the same time, Article 280⁴ also penalizes incitement to ordinary criminal offenses of varying gravity, such as illegal possession of weapons, organized criminal activity, violation of export controls, etc., up to and including calls for receiving and giving bribes.

While in 2023, the Judicial Department of the Supreme Court reported four people convicted under Article 280⁴ CC, there were already 18 of them in 2024. 16 offenders were found guilty under Part 2 of this article (that is, with aggravating circumstances), and two – under Part 3 (that is, for a crime committed by an organized group).

Of the 14 individuals convicted under this article as their principal offense, six were sentenced to imprisonment, three received suspended sentences, and five were fined.

The SOVA Center database contains 12 relevant sentences from 2024 against 12 people. In six cases, Article 280⁴ CC was the only charge; in four cases, it was combined with Article 205² CC. The offenders could have also faced charges under other articles.¹² Four of these sentences were issued in cases initiated in 2024. In total, we know of 11 cases opened in 2024 under this article.

In all 12 cases, paragraph “c” of Article 280 Part 4 CC was also applied, that is, the offenders faced punishment for disseminating their incitement on the Internet.

In the cases when we had at least partial information on the content of the incriminating statements, they pertained to the “special military operation” in one way or another, including calls for the destruction of military registration and enlistment offices, sabotage, informing Ukraine about the location of Russian troops, donations to the Armed Forces of Ukraine or the Freedom of Russia Legion, providing material support to Ukraine, violence against the Russian authorities (including employees of state security and law en-

12 . Article 207³, 280³, 282⁴, 214, and Article 208 Part 3 (participation in an illegal armed formation abroad) CC.

forcement agencies), and refusal to be drafted or participate in military operations against Ukraine. Thus, the scope of this article’s application largely overlaps with the elements and coverage of Articles 205² and 280 CC, despite the text of the provision indicating otherwise.¹³

Eight of the 12 people were sentenced to imprisonment for a term of three years or more (the upper limit depended on other articles in the sentence), one received a suspended sentence, two were fined by the courts, and in one case, we have no information about the sanctions.

The six sentences for which we had sufficient information were not based on incitement to ethnic or religious xenophobia, but all involved calls for illegal activity. We therefore categorized them as “other” in terms of appropriateness. Insufficient information was available to evaluate the remaining six convictions.

Among the cases brought under Article 280⁴ CC in 2024, one seems clearly inappropriate – the case of the anti-war sermon of [Nikolai Romanyuk](#), the pastor of the Holy Trinity Pentecostal church in Balashikha. In our opinion, Romanyuk did not call for any illegal actions. The 62-year-old pastor, arrested in the fall of 2024, remained in pre-trial detention at the time of writing this report.

Article 282⁴ CC on Displaying Prohibited Symbols

Article 282⁴ CC on repeated display of prohibited symbols was included in the Criminal Code in 2022. It establishes criminal liability for individuals previously sanctioned under Article 20.3 CAO¹⁴ who commit a similar offense. According to Article 4.6 CAO, an offender is considered to have been punished within one year from the date the decision to impose the sanction enters into force or is executed.

In 2023, the Judicial Department of the Supreme Court reported 40 convictions under this article. In 2024, the number rose to 131. For comparison, in the same year courts of first instance sanctioned approximately 4,717 individuals under Article 20.3 of the CAO – an all-time high.

All offenders convicted under Article 282⁴ CC were sentenced under Part 1 in connection with the propaganda or display of prohibited symbols and not for their production or sale punishable under Part 2.

Of the 127 individuals convicted under Article 282⁴ as their principal offense, 66 people were imprisoned, 20 received suspended prison sentences, one person received a suspended sentence other than imprisonment, seven were sentenced to compulsory labor, 13 to corrective labor, 18 to community service, one was fined, and one individual was released from punishment by the court. One case was dismissed, and one person was referred for compulsory treatment.

13. The body of the article, that is, Article 280⁴ Part 1 CC, reads as follows: “public calls to carry out activities directed against the security of the Russian Federation, or to obstruct the exercise by government bodies and their officials of their mandate to ensure the security of the Russian Federation (in the absence of elements of offenses provided for in Articles 205², 280, 280¹, 280³, 284² and 354 CC).”

14. On the application of Article 20.3 CAO, see in this volume: Maria Kravchenko, Natalia Yudina. Sanctions for Administrative Offenses Related to Extremism in 2023–2024.

The SOVA database for 2024 included 57 sentences under Article 282⁴ Part 1 CC against 56 people (one of them was sentenced twice under this article within a year). We know that the person referred for compulsory treatment was prosecuted for an anti-Semitic publication. The majority of the convicted offenders were sentenced under this article only; for three individuals it was combined with other articles.¹⁵ 19 of the 57 sentences known to us were issued in cases initiated in 2024. In total, we have information on approximately 67 criminal cases opened in 2024 under Article 282⁴ CC.

Just over half of the sentences we recorded under this article concerned the display of **symbols associated with the propaganda of ethnic xenophobia**, for which 30 individuals were convicted. One person, an inmate of a penal colony in Kostroma, was convicted twice. Eighteen offenders were punished for displaying prohibited symbols offline – mostly tattoos with Nazi imagery – six of them while serving sentences in places of imprisonment. Twelve individuals displayed Nazi symbols on social media.

Among those convicted were well-known figures in the far-right community, including Yevgeny Breslavsky, former leader of the Novosibirsk Skinhead Unity association, and Andrei Razin (aka Chibis, Chinarik), leader of the neo-Nazi gang White Scouts from St. Petersburg – both were convicted of displaying their tattoos. The leader of a soccer fan group from Tula faced sanctions for the symbols displayed on his T-shirt, and far-right trash blogger Daniil Matsankov (Svarogov) – for a video with Nazi symbols posted on Telegram.

We know of 30 cases opened in 2024 for displaying far-right symbols.

22 people were convicted for demonstrating **the symbols of Prisoners’ Criminal Unity** (*Arestantskoe Ugolovnoe Yedinstvo*, AUE), most often an eight-pointed star (“a compass rose”). One of them was sentenced twice, as we already mentioned above. AUE is a criminal subculture recognized as an extremist organization on unclear grounds in 2020. Thus, both inmates and those already released can face prosecution for promoting the ideology of the criminal world and demonstrating the corresponding symbols. In 2024, inmates were punished mostly for repeatedly demonstrating their tattoos with the corresponding symbols in places of imprisonment to other inmates. It is quite difficult to hide tattoos in prison conditions, even if a person would like to do so; furthermore, jails and prisons provide no means of removing a tattoo. Only four people were convicted for demonstrating AUE symbols on social networks.

We have information about at least thirty criminal cases initiated in 2024 for displaying AUE symbols.

We know of only one criminal sentence for **repeated display of the Ukrainian slogan** “Glory to Ukraine,” which often incurred administrative sanctions in 2024 under Article 20.3 CAO. We recorded only one such case newly opened in 2024. We also know of one case initiated for repeated display of the anti-war white-blue-white flag (unrelated to promoting the Freedom of Russia Legion). Additionally, some displays of Nazi symbols were intended as criticism against the Russian authorities, in particular, for their military actions in Ukraine.

15. Including Articles 280, 205², 280³, 280⁴ CC.

For example, Nazi symbols could be shown next to the symbols of the “special military operation.” We know of at least two such convictions, and two new cases were opened in 2024.

Two people were convicted for displaying **unspecified symbols**, and two similar cases were reportedly opened in 2024.

The distribution of sentences for displaying symbols online and offline across our categories was as follows:

Symbol Category	Online	Offline	Online and Offline	Total
Ethnic Xenophobia	12	20	0	32
Pro-Ukrainian	3	0	0	3
Other (AUE)	4	18	1	23
Unknown	2	0	0	2
Total	22	34	1	57

Now let us review the distribution of sentences under Article 282⁴ CC by type of penalty and categories of incriminating statements (one person was convicted twice; the penalty is unknown in three cases). Notably, over half of those convicted were sentenced to imprisonment, most often because the offenses were committed while they were already serving a sentence and had prior criminal records.

Symbol Category	Imprisonment	Suspended Sentence	Labor	Fine	Total Punished
Ethnic Xenophobia	17	5	6	0	31
Pro-Ukrainian	1	1	1	0	3
Other (AUE)	15	1	6	0	23
Unknown	0	0	0	1	2
Total	31	7	13	1	53

We classify sanctions for displaying Nazi and other far-right symbols for the purpose of Nazi propaganda as appropriate, while sanctions for displaying a swastika to criticize the authorities, as in [the case](#) of “citizen of the USSR” Vladimir Nesonov from Stavropol, are rated as inappropriate. We view sentences for AUE symbols as “other,” since the ideology of the criminal world is not xenophobic per se; however, in several cases, both Nazi symbols and AUE symbols were displayed simultaneously, and we rated the sentences in such cases as appropriate. A special case is [the sentence](#) issued to artist Vasily Slonov from Krasnoyarsk for creating and displaying tumbler dolls with prison tattoos. He received a year of corrective labor. In our opinion, this is an example of inappropriate sanctions for artistic expression.

Overall, according to suitability within categories, the 2024 sentences were distributed as follows:

Symbol Category	Yes	No	Not Sure	We Don't Know	Other	Total
Ethnic Xenophobia	28	0	2	2	0	32
Pro-Ukrainian	0	1	0	1	1	3

Other (AUE)	4	1	0	0	18	23
Unknown	0	0	0	2	0	2
Total	29	2	2	5	19	57

Of the 67 cases known to us that were opened in 2024, we classified at least six as inappropriate, including, for example, the case against Alexei Sokolov from Yekaterinburg, [prosecuted](#) for links with Facebook icons displayed on the “Human Rights Defenders of the Urals” website and Telegram channel.

The cases we recorded as initiated in 2024 under Article 282⁴ CC fall into the following categories:

Symbol Category	Number of Cases	Number of Persons Involved
Ethnic Xenophobia	30	30
Pro-Ukrainian	4	4
Other (Including AUE)	31	30
Unknown	2	2
Total	67	66

Article 207³ CC on the Dissemination of Fakes about the Activities of Armed Forces and Government Agencies

According to the Judicial Department of the Supreme Court, 90 individuals were convicted in 2024 under Article 207³ CC, which penalizes disseminating false information about the use of the Russian armed forces and the activities of its government agencies abroad. This marks an increase from 2023, when 65 people were convicted.

In 2024, according to the Judicial Department, 17 people were punished under Part 1 of Article 207³ CC, and 73 people under Part 2, which applies in cases involving aggravating circumstances.

Of the 15 individuals convicted under Part 1 of this article as the principal offense, one person received a suspended sentence, eight were sentenced to corrective labor, five to a fine, and one person was released from punishment. The criminal prosecution of another defendant was terminated, while two were exempted from liability and referred for compulsory treatment.

As for Part 2, 67 people were convicted under it as the principal offense. Among those, 62 offenders were sentenced to imprisonment, one received a suspended sentence, one was sentenced to compulsory labor, and three were fined. Three defendants were referred by the courts for forced treatment.

SOVA Center tracks for its database the use of paragraph “e” only of Article 207³ Part 2 CC – the dissemination of fakes about the activities of the army and government agencies motivated by hatred. We recorded 79 such sentences against the same number of people in 2024. Our number exceeds the one provided by the Judicial Department, since the latter only reports decisions that have entered into force. Two defendants were referred for compulsory treatment.

This norm constituted the only charge for 57 individuals. The sentences for 22 other defendants also included other articles, most often Article 205² CC (ten people), other paragraphs of Article 207³ Part 2 CC (seven people), as well as Articles 280, 282, 280³, and 280⁴ CC.

17 out of 79 sentences issued in 2024 pertained to court cases initiated in 2024. In total, we recorded 61 new cases under this article opened against 67 defendants in 2024.

The charges under Article 207³ CC are based on disseminating information about armed actions in Ukraine that contradicts the official account provided by the Ministry of Defense, most often about the actions of Russian military personnel. Dissemination of such information, when combined with criticism of the special military operation – including allegations of war crimes by Russian military personnel or expressions of a negative attitude toward the Russian authorities, the state, or its citizens – falls under paragraph “e” of Part 2, Article 207³ CC. Such statements are interpreted by law enforcement agencies and courts as manifestations of ideological, political, or national hatred, regardless of their form or tone.

Defendants faced charges for sharing videos, various media materials, social media posts, comments, etc. In one case, the prosecution was triggered by publication of a book (a collection of interviews with Russians who hold anti-war views), and in several cases – by personal conversations, particularly, conversations with cellmates in places of imprisonment.

Of the sentences known to us, 73 were for online statements, three for offline statements, two for both, and one case lacked information.

73 individuals were sentenced to imprisonment, one received a suspended sentence, one was sentenced to compulsory labor, and one was fined (three million rubles); in three cases, we have no information on the penalty. Paragraph “e” of Article 207³ Part 2 CC provides for very severe sanctions – most often, convicted offenders faced eight to eight and a half years of imprisonment. Courts also [imposed long terms of imprisonment](#) on women, even elderly ones: for example, 59-year-old nurse Olga Menshikh was sentenced to eight years in a penal colony, and 68-year-old pediatrician Nadezhda Buyanova – to five and a half years.

On the other hand, it is worth noting that courts consider cases under Article 207³ Part 2 CC even if defendants are not present. Of the 79 sentences we know of, 38 – nearly half – were issued in absentia against individuals residing outside Russia, with the majority (33) handed down by Moscow courts. Four of the sentences concerned Ukrainian politicians and journalists. More frequently, however, they pertained to emigrants, including well-known public figures: politicians, public figures, journalists, and actors. Such decisions are likely intended to be demonstrative – to vilify Ukrainians and to send a message to those who have “left,” discouraging emigrants from publicly criticizing the Russian authorities.

Four people convicted in 2022–2024 under paragraph “e” of Article 207³ Part 2 CC were released in 2024. Politicians Ilya Yashin and Vladimir Kara-Murza (he was also found guilty under several other CC articles), journalist Alsu Kurmasheva and artist Alexandra Skochilenko were transferred to Western countries as part of [a prisoner exchange](#).

We believe that the motive of ideological and political hatred has been used with Article 207³ CC in a clearly inappropriate manner. Those who publish information about military actions in Ukraine that diverges from the official version are, unsurprisingly, most often expressing ideological and political disagreement with the course pursued by the authorities. In most such cases, these statements constitute political criticism. There-

fore, we consider sanctions under Article 207³ CC to be inappropriate in all cases where the charge is unrelated to violence or direct calls for it. We classified 75 sentences under paragraph “e” of Article 207³ Part 2 CC as inappropriate. We also found one case difficult to evaluate and classified three as “other,” since they dealt with calls for violence in the context of an armed conflict.

Article 280³ CC on Discrediting Armed Forces and Government Agencies

According to the Judicial Department of the Supreme Court, 68 people faced sanctions in 2024 under Article 280³ CC on repeated discrediting of the use of the Russian armed forces and the activities of its state agencies abroad, including five individuals who had this article as their additional charge. This total exceeds the numbers from 2023, when 50 people were convicted.

A person is held liable for a repeated offense under Article 280³ Part 1 CC, within a year after the imposition of a penalty under Article 20.3.3 CAO on discrediting the army or government agencies. The statistics on the application of this article in 2023–2024 can be [found](#) in our report on administrative law enforcement. We will only note that these numbers have been falling; courts of first instance imposed sanctions 1,805 times in 2024, compared to 4,440 in 2022 and 2,361 in 2023.

According to the Judicial Department, 66 people faced sanctions under Article 280³ Part 1 CC in 2024, and two individuals faced punishment under Part 2, that is, their actions caused harm to health or property. Of the 63 convicted under this article as their principal offense, 13 people were imprisoned, 12 individuals received suspended sentences, three were sentenced to compulsory labor, 32 were fined and three persons were released from punishment. The criminal prosecution of two defendants was terminated.

The SOVA Center database includes 81 court decisions against 84 people issued under Article 280³ CC in 2024. This number is higher than the one provided by the Judicial Department, since we include all sentences issued during the year, while the Department only includes the ones that have entered into force. 25 of the 2024 sentences known to us were issued in cases initiated in 2024. In total, we know of 63 cases opened in 2024 against the same number of people (the investigation dismissed one of them). 59 of these cases were initiated under Article 280³ Part 1 CC, and four under Part 2. Notably, the number of people known to have faced criminal charges under this article is significantly lower than a year earlier, when, according to the OVD-Info project, the total reached at least 107 individuals.

77 people faced punishment, the court dropped the charges against five individuals due to the expiry of the limitation period, one person only received a court fine (i.e., a fine without a criminal record), and one was referred for compulsory treatment. In addition to the convicted individuals reported by the Judicial Department, we know of twelve more who face prison terms and two who were sentenced to compulsory labor. The maximum penalty issued under Article 280³ Part 1 CC (in the absence of other charges and aggravating circumstances) was two years of imprisonment.

Article 280³ CC was the only charge in 57 cases, while in another 20 cases it was combined with other articles: in four cases with Article 207³, in six cases with articles on violence and/or destruction of property, and in three cases with Article 282⁴. In isolated cases,

sentences also included Articles 282² and 282³ on participation in an extremist organization and its financing, Article 354¹, Article 213 on hooliganism, Article 214 CC on vandalism, etc.

All cases we recorded under Article 280³ CC are related to statements about the events in Ukraine. Most often, charges are brought for online anti-war statements. However, some cases involve offline remarks to audiences of various sizes, the display of posters, the distribution of printed propaganda materials, etc.

In practice, anti-war graffiti often result in liability under Article 280³ Part 2 of the Criminal Code; at the same time, charges may also be brought under Article 214 on vandalism. Liability under Part 2 occurs in case of bodily harm, and we know of one such [sentence](#) in 2024. Four people beat up a veteran of the special military operation and, in addition to articles on the use of violence, were convicted under Article 280³ Part 2 CC.

Of the sentences known to us, 59 were handed down for online statements, twelve (against 15 people) for offline statements, and five for both types of speech. We lack information on five other convictions.

We are aware of only one case in which a court factored in the motive of political and ideological hatred in its sentence for repeated discreditation. This [decision](#) was made by the Golovinsky District Court of Moscow during the retrial of Oleg Orlov, the co-chairman of the Memorial Human Rights Centre. He was sentenced to two and a half years of imprisonment but was later released as a result of a prisoner exchange between Russia and Western countries.

In general, we view sanctions for discrediting the actions of the Russian army and government agencies abroad as an unjustified restriction of freedom of speech aimed at suppressing criticism of these institutions. Therefore, we deem prosecution under Article 280³ CC inappropriate in all cases not involving violence or direct calls for it. There was one sentence under this article in 2024, which we did not consider inappropriate – against the above-mentioned four citizens who beat up a special military operation participant. Reportedly, the conflict arose “due to their hostility toward military actions in Ukraine.”

Article 282 CC on Incitement to Hatred

Article 282 CC was partially decriminalized in 2018,¹⁶ and Article 20.3.1 appeared in the CAO to punish people for inciting hatred if the offense is committed for the first time in a year and without aggravating circumstances. Subsequently, the number of court cases under Article 282 CC fell from half a thousand a year to several dozen and has stayed at this level. According to the Judicial Department of the Supreme Court, 55 people were convicted under this article in 2024 vs. 67 the year before. At the same time, the number of administrative cases imposing sanctions under the new article approached a thousand by 2021 and fluctuated around this mark in the following years, reaching 1,100 in 2024.¹⁷

16. Putin signed laws on partial decriminalization of Article 282 CC, SOVA Center. 2018. December 28 (<https://www.sova-center.ru/misuse/news/lawmaking/2018/12/d40472/>).

17. For more information on the application of Article 20.3.1 CAO, see: Sanctions for Administrative Offenses Related to Extremism in 2023–2024, SOVA Center. 2025. July 25 (<https://www.sova-center.ru/en/misuse/reports-analyses/2025/07/d47113/>).

Of the 55 individuals convicted in 2024, 17 were found guilty under Article 282 Part 1 CC, i.e., for a repeated act committed within a year after punishment under Article 20.3.1 CAO; 38 were convicted under Part 2 for inciting hatred with aggravating circumstances.

Of the 42 people convicted under Article 282 CC as the principal offense, 18 offenders were sentenced to imprisonment, 16 received suspended sentences, three faced compulsory labor, four were fined, and one was released from punishment. The courts mandated compulsory treatment for five defendants.

The SOVA Center database reports 37 sentences issued in 2024 against 50 people, 11 of whom were found guilty under Part 1, and the remaining 39 – under Part 2 of Article 282 CC. One more case was dismissed due to the defendant’s death. The court referred two individuals for compulsory treatment. We know of 18 sentences against 18 people issued in 2024 for the cases initiated in 2024. In total, we know of 66 criminal cases initiated in 2024 under Article 282 CC against 75 people.

Of the convicted offenders known to us, twelve were found guilty for **statements expressing ethnic xenophobia**. For seven of these individuals, this was the sole offense.

Except for one instance of anti-Semitic propaganda on social media, the offenders were found guilty of inciting hatred towards Russians in all cases that provided information on the target of hostility. This observation is all the more remarkable, since administrative liability under Article 20.3.1 CAO, both in 2023 and 2024, was incurred most often for inciting hatred towards natives of the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Three individuals were convicted under Article 282 Part 1 CC for social media posts, after receiving administrative punishment under Article 20.3.1 CAO and committing a similar offense within a year.

Nine people were convicted under paragraph “a” of Article 282 Part 2 CC, i.e., for inciting hatred against Russians accompanied by violence or a threat of violence. In one of these cases, a member of a group that attacked pedestrians and published online videos of the attacks was also convicted under articles on hooliganism and attempted murder. Four cases can be described not so much as propaganda but rather as altercations accompanying ordinary conflicts. Thus, in Moscow, a native of Dagestan was [punished](#) under both paragraph “a” of Article 282 Part 2 and Article 119 CC (threats) for making xenophobic insults and threatening a bus driver who refused to open the door before reaching the designated stop.

In other cases, law enforcement and the courts have responded to online statements. For example, [a teenage student](#) in Kazan was sentenced to two and a half years in a penal colony for numerous comments in a closed Telegram group with over a hundred members, where he wrote, among other things, that Russians deserved to die “worse than pigs” and called for their castration, deportation, or murder.

We have information about 25 new criminal cases against 34 people opened in 2024 for expressions of ethnic xenophobia under Article 282 CC, but one of them was dismissed before the trial. We would like to specifically mention [the case](#) opened under a combination of Articles 282, 280, and 205² CC against two administrators of the Telegram channel “Project Razgrom.” One of the most popular far-right channels, it published videos depicting hate-motivated attacks. The alleged offenders, now in custody, operated under the nicknames “Yan Rakin” and “Razgrom Pavlovich.”

SOVA Center is aware of only one 2024 sentence under Article 282 CC for **a statement inciting religious hatred**. According to law enforcement agencies and the court, a publication by Mari activist Yuri Blagodarov contained signs of inciting such hatred “between the social groups ‘pagan Mari’ and ‘dual-believing Mari.’”

We have information about four new such criminal cases, opened in 2024 under Article 282 CC. In one case, the charges were related to inciting hatred towards the Orthodox Christians, in another one – towards the Orthodox Christians and Jews, in the third, apparently, towards Muslims; in the fourth case, the object of hatred is unknown.

We know of ten sentences against 19 people issued for **speaking out against the authorities**, with four of them convicted under Article 282 Part 1 CC, and the rest under Part 2.

Three individuals had this article as the only one in their sentences. One convicted offender faced it in combination with Article 205², two with 207³, and two with 282² CC. Eleven people involved in the *Chto-Delat!* community case were convicted under paragraph “c” of Article 282 Part 2 CC (incitement of hatred by a group of persons), in combination with Article 212 Part 1.1 (incitement to mass riots); the charges stemmed from a protest campaign conducted via Telegram and TikTok channels and chats ahead of the 2021 State Duma elections. Eight others were convicted for statements ranging in harshness against representatives of the authorities and law enforcement, even when they did not contain calls for violence.

We know of eight new criminal cases initiated under Article 282 CC for statements against the authorities.

It is worth pointing out that we have classified [the sentence](#) against three authors of the YouTube channel “Don’t Be Inert,” the correspondents of the online publication *Rosderzhava*, into **the “other” category**. The YouTubers identified and covered various offenses committed by residents of Kemerovo and tried to combat the inaction and abuses perpetuated by local officials and law enforcement staff. In addition to posting the discrediting videos on their channel, they also engaged in provocative behavior, staging brawls and scandals in government agencies. All three were convicted under paragraph “c” of Article 282 Part 2 CC. Two were also convicted under paragraph “a” for the use of violence, as well as for group hooliganism with the use of objects as weapons. One person was also convicted for the use of violence against a government official. Although the bloggers were found guilty of inciting hatred towards law enforcement officials, they did not pursue a broad anti-government agenda.

Fourteen people whose sentences were included in the SOVA database were convicted for **statements about the armed conflict with Ukraine**. Only two cases involved Part 1 of Article 282 CC; the rest involved charges under Part 2, most often paragraph “a” – incitement of hatred with the threat of violence. Six people were convicted only under Article 282, four people – additionally under Article 205², five – under Article 207³ CC. Some sentences also included other articles.¹⁸

18. Including Articles 354, 354¹, 280, 214, 148 CC.

Defendants faced charges such as inciting hatred towards Russian military personnel and government officials in connection with the military actions in Ukraine, towards Russian residents who support the special military operation, and towards Russians in general.

Nine in absentia convictions handed down to Ukrainian politicians, activists and journalists should be noted separately – among other charges, they were found guilty of inciting hatred due to their aggressive rhetoric in the context of an armed conflict.

In most cases, the charges were based on online statements. Only two cases deal with offline behavior: the sentences were issued for a slogan on a store wall and for a defendant’s last word in court.

We have information about 15 criminal cases initiated in 2024 under Article 282 for statements pertaining to the events in Ukraine.

For 19 criminal cases initiated under Article 282 CC in 2024 against 19 people, we have **no information** about specific statements that led to the criminal charges.

Overall, convicted offenders under Article 282 CC for online and offline statements were distributed across the categories as follows (we had no information in three cases):

Statement Category	Online	Offline	Online and Offline	Total
Ethnic Xenophobia	5	4	3	12
Religion	1	0	0	1
Against the Authorities	18	1	0	19
Pro-Ukrainian	12	2	0	14
Other	4	0	0	4
Total	38	6	3	47

Convicted offenders under Article 282 CC were distributed as follows across penalty types and categories of incriminating statements (we have no information about the sanctions in five cases):

Statement Category	Imprisonment	Suspended Sentence	Labor	Fine	Total Punished
Ethnic Xenophobia	6	4	0	0	12
Religion	0	0	0	1	1
Against the Authorities	16	2	1	0	19
Pro-Ukrainian	13	1	0	0	14
Other	3	1	0	0	4
Total	35	8	1	1	45

As usual, when evaluating the appropriateness of charges under Article 282 CC, we classified sentences as appropriate if they were based on speech that, in our opinion, expressed explicit ethnic xenophobia and posed a public danger. We classified one [sentence](#) for ethnic xenophobia as inappropriate, since it was based on harsh remarks made during a rap battle; in this context, they were part of the genre and were not aimed at actually inciting hostility.

The “other” category included sentences for statements directed against the authorities and related to the armed conflict in Ukraine, but only if they contained extremely aggressive hate speech and calls for violence; otherwise, we considered the charges inappropriate. It is worth reminding that, in our opinion, representatives of the authorities and law enforcement agencies do not belong to vulnerable social groups and are sufficiently protected by other legal provisions, so they must be tolerant of criticism even if it takes harsh or offensive forms. For example, we view the sentence against lawyer [Dmitry Talantov](#) from Udmurtia as inappropriate. He was sentenced to seven years in a minimum-security penal colony for inciting hatred and for disseminating false information about the actions of the armed forces, both offenses committed with the use of his official position and motivated by hatred. The court found the incitement of hatred against representatives of the authorities expressed in “negative assessments of their activities.” The high-profile sentence against the head of the Uzbek community in Moscow, [Usman Baratov](#), for a joke about rising egg prices – deemed insulting to participants of the special military operation – is another example of inappropriate prosecution. It is also worth noting that Baratov had no prior convictions under Article 20.3.1 CAO and was found guilty of group incitement of hatred under paragraph “c” of Article 282 Part 2 CC despite the absence of other defendants in the case.

Statement Category	Yes	No	Not Sure	We Don't Know	Other	Total
Ethnic Xenophobia	10	1	1	0	0	12
Religion	0	0	0	1	0	1
Against the Authorities	0	3	0	1	15	19
Pro-Ukrainian	1	2	1	1	9	14
Other	0	0	4	0	0	4
Unknown	0	0	0	3	0	3
Total	11	5	5	6	23	50

Another specific problem in assessing the appropriateness of sentences under Article 282 CC – as well as under other articles where administrative measures precede criminal prosecution – deserves our attention. Our evaluation of the acts that initially resulted in administrative liability may differ from our assessment of those that later led to criminal charges. For example, [Fail Alsynov](#), the former chairman of Bashkort, a Bashkir nationalist organization banned in 2020, initially faced sanctions under Article 20.3.1 CAO that we considered unfounded. His subsequent case under Article 282, however, was initiated over a genuinely xenophobic statement. In our view, the criminal prosecution and imprisonment, which sparked large-scale protests, clashes with police, and harsh reprisals, should not have occurred; an administrative penalty would have been appropriate.

Let us now examine the distribution of known cases under Article 282, initiated in 2024, across our categories:

Statement Category	Number of Cases	Number of Persons Involved
Ethnic Xenophobia	24	33
Religion	4	4
Against the Authorities	8	8

Pro-Ukrainian	15	15
Other	1	1
Unknown	19	19
Total	66	75

Of the 66 cases filed in 2024, we classified seven cases against seven people as inappropriate.

Article 354¹ CC on “Rehabilitation of Nazism”

According to the Judicial Department, 64 people were convicted under Article 354¹ CC in 2024, slightly fewer than the year before (73).

Of these 64 people, four faced sentences under Article 354¹ Part 1 CC for denying or approving the crimes of the Nazis established by the Nuremberg Tribunal, disseminating false information about the activities of the USSR during World War II, or about veterans of the Great Patriotic War. 18 individuals faced charges under Part 2, i.e., for the same acts, but under aggravating circumstances, including the use of the Internet. Twelve offenders were convicted under Part 3 for disseminating disrespectful information about days of military glory and memorable dates associated with the defense of the Fatherland, desecration of symbols of military glory of Russia, insulting the memory of defenders of the Fatherland, and humiliating the honor and dignity of a veteran of the Great Patriotic War. Finally, 30 people received sentences under Part 4, i.e., for the same acts as under Part 3, but with aggravating circumstances, specifically, for acts committed using the Internet or by a group of persons.

Of the 52 people convicted under Article 354¹ CC as their principal offense, 19 individuals (convicted mostly under Part 4) were sentenced to imprisoned, 11 received suspended sentences, nine people were sentenced to compulsory labor, two to corrective labor, ten people were fined, and one was released from punishment. In addition, two defendants were acquitted, and two others were released from criminal liability with a court fine. The courts ordered compulsory treatment for five defendants.

Our database contains 58 court decisions issued under Article 354¹ CC against 64 people in 2024. They include 51 sentences against 57 people; 23 of these sentences against 27 people pertain to cases initiated in 2024. We know of one acquittal, the court closed one case due to the defendant’s death, and, similarly to the Judicial Department, we know of five people referred for compulsory treatment.

We recorded 90 new cases under Article 354¹ CC, initiated against 106 individuals – nearly twice as many as those who were convicted during the same period. The investigation also closed one such case.

For 49 of the 57 convicted individuals, Article 354¹ CC was the only charge. Eight people were also found guilty under other articles, such as Articles 205², 207³, 280, 280³, 282, Article 148 Part 1 on insulting the feelings of believers, Article 329 CC on desecration of the flag, etc.

Most of the court decisions we know under Parts 1 and 2 of Article 354¹ – 17 sentences against 17 people – were issued for various statements that **expressed ethnic xenophobia**, “justifying the ideology of Nazism,” and “denying the facts established” by the

Nuremberg Tribunal. Five of the cases pertained to the Holocaust: four individuals denied the facts of the mass murder of Jews during the Second World War, and the fifth person approved of such murders. Some statements could also touch on other episodes of the Second World War, for example, approval of the activities of Cossack collaborators or the occupation of Poland by Nazi Germany provided the grounds for criminal charges.

It is worth noting that only four sentences against four people were issued under Part 1, i.e., for offline acts, all of them for conversations in places of detention. The remaining 13 offenders were punished under paragraph “c” of Part 2, i.e., for statements made on the Internet.

Disorderly conduct at war monuments or vandalism against them usually results in sanctions under Part 3. Part 4 covers the same acts committed by a group or online, that is, distributing videos of such actions or making various critical online statements about military symbols or dates, and much less often, about veterans.¹⁹ We included only three sentences under these two parts of Article 354¹CC in the category of sanctions for expressing ethnic xenophobia. In the first case, the offender scattered memorial wreaths at the Cranes monument in Vidnoye, near Moscow, and performed a Nazi salute. The second shouted Nazi slogans and obscenities from a window during a Victory Day parade involving schoolchildren in Krasnoyarsk. The third posted a photo online of himself standing on the barrel of a captured howitzer at the Mount Sapun defense of Sevastopol memorial complex, raising his hand in a Nazi salute.

The majority of sentences we know under Parts 3 and 4 of Article 354¹CC were issued for acts that the authorities regarded as **violations of “traditional Russian” values or desecration of corresponding symbols**. Most often, these acts involved the Eternal Flame, a central feature of memorial complexes in many Russian cities. The Eternal Flame frequently attracts homeless or unemployed individuals who use it to stay warm, drink alcohol nearby, cook food over it, or [burn](#) insulation off wire to sell as scrap metal. It also attracts intoxicated people and teenagers. We are aware of ten sentences issued against 15 individuals under Article 354¹ Parts 3 and 4 CC for non-ideological disorderly conduct near the Eternal Flame and other monuments and installations dedicated to the Great Patriotic War. The offenses included lighting a cigarette, using various liquids to extinguish the flame, throwing snow at it, using it [as a barbecue grill](#), burning wreaths, dancing near monuments, walking on pedestals, creating obscene [snow sculptures](#), etc.

We also placed a number of other sentences in the same category of sanctions for attacks against traditions. Five people were convicted under paragraph “c” of Part 2 for arguing that the Soviet Union and the Third Reich [jointly](#) unleashed the Second World War and other critical statements about the USSR during the war. In addition, 14 individuals were convicted under Part 4 for online attacks against symbols and dates, in particular, for criticizing the Victory Day celebrations and the use of the St. George ribbon as a

19. It is worth noting that 19 individuals convicted under Parts 3 and 4 of Article 354¹ CC were punished for acts that, in our opinion, can be regarded as vandalism, so we do not take their sentences into account when calculating the total number of people convicted for speech in 2024.

symbol of military glory, for a video depicting desecration of the St. George ribbon, and for [disrespectful](#) statements about Great Patriotic War veterans.

Six people faced sanctions under Article 354¹ Parts 3 and 4 CC for **acts and statements related to the events in Ukraine**: a Bakhchisarai resident who urinated on an installation with the letters Z and V; two Oryol residents who painted over patriotic graffiti; a Kazan activist who installed an anti-war poster near the Eternal Flame; a resident of Buryatia who (apparently following instructions from a Ukrainian curator) poured paint on a Great Patriotic War hero monument; and an animal rights activist from Ryazan who left a comment under a post about a Russian serviceman killed in Ukraine.

In general, the 2024 sentences under Article 354¹ we are aware of were distributed across the categories and grouped into online and offline acts as follows:

Categories	Online	Offline	Online and Offline	Total
Ethnic Xenophobia	13	6	1	20
In Support of Ukraine	1	5	0	6
Violation of Traditional Values	17	19	0	36
Total	30	26	1	57

Below is a distribution of offenders convicted under Article 354¹ by type of punishment and category of incriminating statements (we have no information about the punishment in one case):

Act Category	Imprisonment	Suspended Sentence	Labor	Fine	Total Punished
Ethnic Xenophobia	7	6	5	2	20
In Support of Ukraine	3	1	0	2	6
Violation of Traditional Values	18	6	7	4	35
Total	26	12	10	8	56

In assessing the appropriateness of sentences under Article 354¹CC, we are guided by the following considerations. First of all, we believe that there was no need to add this article to the Criminal Code. Justification or approval of Nazi crimes connected with incitement to hatred was already punishable under Article 282 CC in force at that time (although analogous provisions exist in the criminal codes of many democratic countries); vandalism was covered by Article 214 CC; desecration of burial sites by Article 244 CC; and disorderly conduct near war monuments by Article 20.1 CAO. We regard prosecution under Article 354¹CC for actions truly related to the propaganda of Nazi ideology or the justification of Nazi crimes as appropriate. However, we consider the use of this criminal article (which prescribes very severe sanctions) inappropriate for acts unconnected to Nazi ideology. In practice, it has been misapplied to expressions of historical views that diverge from the official narrative, to criticism of how certain dates are commemorated, to the rejection of particular symbols, and to actions that cause no material damage to

monuments or other objects. The legal framework contains alternative provisions, as noted above, for addressing disorderly conduct unconnected to ideological motives. In addition, civil remedies are available to protect the honor and dignity of veterans.

Based on this, we assess the appropriateness of the sentences as follows:

Act Category	Yes	No	Not Sure	We Don't Know	Other	Total
Ethnic Xenophobia	17	0	1	1	1	20
In Support of Ukraine	0	5	0	0	1	6
Violation of Traditional Values	3	30	0	2	1	36
Total	17	34	1	3	2	57

Thus, we consider the overwhelming majority of 2024 sentences under Article 354¹ inappropriate. Among them are such high-profile decisions as the sentence to singer [Eduard Sharlot](#) from Moscow for disrespecting the St. George Ribbon and Victory Day; the sentence to [Alyona Agafonova](#) from Samara for a video, on which she pretended to tickle the “Motherland Calls!” monument; the sentence to student [Tionga Zibe](#) from Zambia for dancing near the Eternal Flame in Khanty-Mansiysk, and others.

We would like to point out the only [acquittal](#) we recorded under this article in 2024. The case was related to an altercation in a garage cooperative chat. A participant in the chat appended a portrait of Alexander Kolchak, leader of the White Movement during the Russian Civil War, to his February 23 (Defender of the Fatherland Day) holiday greetings. In response, another participant posted an image of a soldier of the collaborationist [Vlasov Army](#) to express his disapproval, and subsequently became subject to criminal prosecution. The photo was not intended to promote Nazism and, in our view, the prosecution was unfounded – as in many similar cases. However, this time the defendant was the brother of a judge at the Primorsky Regional Court.

The distribution across categories of cases known to us under Article 354¹, initiated in 2024, across the categories is as follows:

Act Category	Number of Cases	Number of Persons Involved
Ethnic Xenophobia	25	26
In Support of Ukraine	6	7
Violation of Traditional Values	63	67
Unknown	1	1
Total	90	106

We believe that 56 of these cases against 70 people were inappropriate; one additional case was dismissed before trial.

Article 148 CC on Insulting the Religious Feelings of Believers

According to the Judicial Department, in 2024, 33 people were convicted under Article 148 Part 1 CC for publicly insulting of religious feelings of believers, and ten people were convicted under Part 2 on the same actions committed in places specially designated for worship, religious rites, and ceremonies. In total, 43 people were convicted of insulting religious feelings.

Of the 33 individuals convicted under these parts of Article 148 CC as the principal offense, eleven people were sentenced to community service, and 22 were fined. The courts dismissed one case due to reconciliation of the parties, two for other reasons, and referred six people for compulsory treatment.

Our database includes 35 court decisions from 2024 under Article 148 Parts 1 and 2 CC, including 28 sentences against 31 individuals, 18 of whom had the cases against them initiated in 2024. One case known to us was likely dismissed due to the expiry of the limitation period, two – due to reconciliation of the parties, and five people were referred for compulsory treatment. It is worth noting that in 2024, a significant proportion of cases on insulting the feelings of believers was considered by courts of Crimea – at least nine such cases are known to us.

We have classified the acts that served as grounds for prosecution under Article 148 CC in all known cases as **violation of “traditional Russian” values or desecration of corresponding symbols**.

As in previous years, according to our observations, charges under Article 148 Part 1 CC often stemmed from social media posts. Atheistic and anti-clerical texts, [memes](#), and [comments](#), as well as [artwork](#), attracted the attention of law enforcement agencies. In addition, [the destruction](#), damage, and other [blasphemous actions](#) toward religious literature, religious objects, or symbols, including their use for interior [design](#), became grounds for prosecution. Criminal cases were often initiated following complaints from patriotic vigilantes, for example, activists of the Russian Community (*Russkaia obschina*) or the Forty Forties (*Sorok sorokov*) movement.

Our data agrees with that of the Judicial Department, since we also know of 10 people convicted under Article 148 Part 2 for actions near or inside temples or cemeteries (including for nude [filming](#) and dancing). The latter, notably, do not have the status of places specially designated for the performance of religious rites, as Part 2 suggests.²⁰ At least five out of ten were convicted of pogroms in places of worship; these are people [with mental illnesses](#) or [hooligans](#) under the influence of alcohol. Some of them faced other charges as well – under Article 213 CC on hooliganism and Article 319 CC on insulting a government official. Two more individuals guilty of pogroms were referred for compulsory treatment.

20 . In three cases, we categorized the actions of offenders convicted under Parts 1 and 2 of Article 148 CC as vandalism, so they are not included below in the overall count of 2024 cases on speech.

If the actions of the convicted individuals exhibited clear signs of religious hostility, as, for example, in cases of pogroms in temples or particularly harsh statements, we also categorized the sentences as “sanctions for **religious xenophobia**.”

It must be noted that, except for several isolated cases where the feelings of Muslims or Jews were at issue, the overwhelming majority of sentences were issued for insulting the feelings of Orthodox Christians or Christians in general.

The highest-profile sentences of 2024 include the decisions in the cases [of Nikita Zhuravel](#) from Volgograd, who was tried in Chechnya for burning the Koran, singer [Eduard Sharlot](#), [Khavier Yarmagomedov](#) from Moscow, and [artist Kholtoev](#) from Ulyanovsk.

Depending on whether the convicted offenders acted offline or online, their sentences were distributed as follows (in four cases, we do not know what actions served as the basis for the charges):

Act Category	Online	Offline	Online and Offline	Total
Violation of Traditional Values	13	5	9	27
Religious Xenophobia	1	4	0	5
Total	13	5	9	27

According to our database, the distribution of convictions under Parts 1 and 2 of Article 148 by type of penalty and category of incriminating statements is as follows (sanctions are unknown in seven cases):

Act Category	Imprisonment	Suspended Sentence	Labor	Fine	Total Punished
Violation of Traditional Values	8	3	7	6	24
Religious Xenophobia	1	1	2	1	5
Total	8	3	7	6	24

All individuals, known to us, who were sentenced to imprisonment under Parts 1 and 2 of Article 148 CC were also found guilty under some other articles of the CC.

In assessing the appropriateness of prosecutions under this article, we classified charges as appropriate only in cases involving pogroms in places of worship or explicit calls for aggression against believers. In our opinion, the concept of “insulting the religious feelings of believers” in Parts 1 and 2 of Article 148 CC has no clear legal meaning and should be excluded from the legislation. We see no need to prosecute people for the distribution of “blasphemous” materials – in our opinion, such publications pose no danger to society and sanctions for their distribution can be viewed as unjustified interference with freedom of expression. As for literature and objects of religious veneration, the law protects them under Article 5.26 Part 2 CAO (intentional public desecration of religious or liturgical literature, objects of religious veneration, signs or emblems of world religious beliefs; their damage or destruction). Finally, it is important to know that decisions under Article 148 CC are issued by magistrates. The websites of their precincts work irregularly, and decisions are rarely published. Therefore, in some cases, we have no information about

specific actions that served as a basis for charges and cannot assess the appropriateness of the sentence.

Act Category	Yes	No	Not Sure	We Don't Know	Total
Violation of Traditional Values	4	19	2	6	31
Religious Xenophobia	4	0	1	0	5
Total	4	19	2	6	31

The distribution of known cases under Article 148 Parts 1 and 2 CC, initiated in 2024, looks as follows across the categories:

Act Category	Number of Cases	Number of Persons Involved
Violation of Traditional Values	39	48
Religious Xenophobia	4	4
Total	40	49

We believe that 29 of these cases against 38 people were opened inappropriately.

Vandalism

As we have seen above, Article 354¹ Parts 3 and 4 and Article 148 Parts 1 and 2 CC apply not only to statements, but also to acts that can be characterized as acts of ideologically-motivated vandalism. We do not include these and other similar actions when calculating the total number of people punished for public speech in the next chapter, but we believe that, in a certain sense, such actions are still a way of publicly declaring one’s ideological position, so we will examine them separately here.

We know of three people convicted in 2024 for vandalism under the article on insulting the feelings of believers – this involved pogroms in a church in Zelenograd and a monastery in the Tula Region, as well as the smashing of a cross, apparently broken off from [a roofed Orthodox cross](#) in an Old Believers’ cemetery in Tatarstan.

Under the article on the “rehabilitation of Nazism,” 19 people were convicted, primarily for various actions near Great Patriotic War monuments, which were qualified as **an attack on symbols** of military glory, and in several cases, for damage to installations or graffiti honoring participants of the special military operation in Ukraine.

However, damage to structures related to **the armed actions in Ukraine** – pouring paint, setting on fire, or otherwise damaging patriotic banners and installations – also resulted in charges under other articles: sometimes under Article 280³ Part 2 on discrediting the use of armed forces with property damage, but much more often under Article 214 Part 2 CC on vandalism motivated by political hatred. Various **anti-government graffiti** were also punished under this article. In addition, opponents of the special military operation and the government’s course faced sanctions for desecrating the Russian flag under Article 329 CC. In one case, for damaging flags installed at the fallen soldiers’ burial site, the penalty was imposed simultaneously under Article 329 and paragraph “b” of Article 244 Part 2

CC on desecration of burial sites motivated by political and ideological hatred. Ideological vandalism also faced sanctions under Article 167 Part 2 for the intentional destruction of property with risk of safety.

Information on instances of **xenophobic vandalism** and sanctions for it can be found in SOVA’s previously published [report](#) on hate crimes.²¹

Using statistics from the Judicial Department to estimate the total number of people convicted of ideological vandalism is practically impossible. Article 214 CC, under which 71 people were convicted in 2024, covers not only vandalism motivated by hatred, but also ordinary vandalism committed by a group. Estimating the number of individuals convicted of ideological vandalism under Article 167 Part 2 CC is even more difficult, given the large number of people sanctioned under this provision each year. For example, 1,636 individuals were convicted in 2024, while in the pre-war year 2021, the corresponding number reached 1,892.²² Acts of hazardous vandalism related to the events in Ukraine, for example, arson of military registration and enlistment offices, can also be classified under Article 205 CC (terrorist act), and the number of such sentences cannot be isolated from the general statistics for this article. The Mediazona independent media outlet, based on media and law enforcement reports and judicial databases, recorded 89 attacks on various material objects organized by fraudsters in 2023 and only 21 launched for anti-war reasons. In 2024, 92 attacks were initiated by fraudsters, and only one arson took place for political reasons (however, Mediazona does not know the motive in all such cases).²³ At the same time, it cannot be assumed that such acts are classified under a more or less serious provision solely based on motive; for example, even fraud victims may be charged under Article 205 CC. The OVD-Info project knows of only a few sentences in 2024 under Article 205 CC for attacks against material objects motivated specifically by anti-war beliefs and not organized by fraudsters.²⁴

The SOVA database contains 42 sentences issued in 2024 for ideological vandalism against 52 convicted offenders, including 16 sentences against 20 individuals in cases opened in 2024. One additional case was dismissed due to the death of the defendant; in another one, a minor was referred for educational intervention; in three cases, the courts referred the defendants for compulsory treatment.

The distribution of convicted offenders across categories and various criminal provisions was as follows (in some cases, individuals could be held liable under multiple articles and for acts falling into different categories):

21. See in this volume: Natalia Yudina. Neo-Nazis on the Rise: Hate Crimes and Countering Them in Russia in 2024.

22. Summary statistical information on the state of criminal convictions in Russia for 2021, Judicial Department of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation. 2022. April (<https://cdep.ru/index.php?id=79&item=6121>).

23. Mediazona reported 187 arson attacks organized by fraudsters since the beginning of the invasion, Mediazona, 2025. January 15 (<https://zona.media/news/2025/01/15/burn>).

24. Database of politically motivated criminal prosecutions, OVD-Info. 2025. June (<https://ovd.info/politpressing>).

Act Category	Article 214 Part 2	Article 354 ¹ Parts 3 and 4	Article 329	Article 167 Part 2	Article 280 ³ Part 2	Article 148 Parts 1 and 2	Total
Ethnic Xenophobia	1	0	0	1	0	0	2
Religion	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Against the Authorities	10	1	1	0	0	0	12
Pro-Ukrainian	12	3	3	3	3	0	22
Violation of Traditional Values	3	17	3	0	0	3	25
Total	22	19	4	4	3	3	52

The penalties for ideological vandalism were distributed across the categories as follows (note that many of the sentences included more serious charges; in one case, we have no information about the penalty):

Act Category	Imprisonment	Suspended Sentence	Restricted Freedom	Labor	Fine	Total Punished
Ethnic Xenophobia	2	0	0	0	0	2
Religion	0	0	0	1	1	2
Against the Authorities	6	1	4	1	0	12
Pro-Ukrainian	16	3	0	0	3	22
Violation of Traditional Values	16	3	0	3	2	24
Total	32	6	4	4	5	51

In assessing the appropriateness of each case, we proceed from several considerations. Firstly, ideologically motivated vandalism is punished more severely than ordinary vandalism, so if, in our opinion, the convicted person was [not guided by an ideological motive](#), we classified their charges as inappropriate. Secondly, an ideological motive should not always be treated as an aggravating circumstance. A manifestation of political hostility, in and of itself, is not criminalized, and if political vandalism, which is essentially a form of [political criticism](#), is not associated with the propaganda of violence and xenophobia, its level of social danger is low. Next, in some cases, prosecution for vandalism is altogether inappropriate, since no property damage was inflicted, and the infraction was, in fact, disorderly conduct that falls under Article 20.1 CAO. Finally, when damage was caused, but was not too serious, cases under Article 214 CC should be terminated due to its insignificance (for borderline cases, an article, similar to Article 7.17 CAO on the destruction of or damage to someone else’s property, could be introduced into the CAO, or Article 7.17 could be amended by including vandalism that did not cause major damage). We classified the sentences for xenophobic vandalism as appropriate. The cases without such motives, but where the objects suffered significant damage, were rated “other.”

Act Category	Yes	No	Not Sure	We Don't Know	Other	Total
Ethnic Xenophobia	2	0	0	0	0	2
Religion	2	0	0	0	0	2
Against the Authorities	0	11	0	1	0	12
Pro-Ukrainian	1	13	3	1	6	22
Violation of Traditional Values	2	17	2	2	3	25
Total	4	38	3	3	6	52

The table below shows the details of the cases filed in 2024 (nine of these cases against 10 people also included charges other than vandalism). We preliminarily rated about three-quarters of these cases as inappropriately initiated.

Act Category	Number of Cases	Number of Persons Involved
Ethnic Xenophobia	3	4
Religion	2	2
Against the Authorities	7	8
Pro-Ukrainian	11	12
Violation of Traditional Values	32	49
Total	47	66

Summary Data for Articles on Public Speech

To conclude our analysis of the enforcement of criminal articles on public speech, we will provide some aggregated statistics based on the full set of data processed by SOVA.²⁵

According to the Judicial Department of the Supreme Court, 1,039 individuals were punished under the above-listed speech-related articles in 2024, considering only those for whom these provisions constituted the primary charge. The total figure is somewhat higher if one includes defendants for whom speech-related articles were applied in addition to primary charges such as violent crimes, participation in terrorist organizations, treason, and other serious offenses.

Below we provide a table that allows us to track the trends of recent years for individual articles, including both the principal offense and additional charges (we have divided the data into different parts of Articles 207³ and 354¹ CC for the reasons explained below).

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Calls for or justification of terrorism						
205 ²	126	174	241	318	345	4 53
Calls for extremist activity						
280	145	184	307	356	306	308

25 . Vandalism charges are not included in this chapter.

Repeated display of prohibited symbols						
282 ⁴					40	1 31
Military “fakes”						
207 ³ Part 1				8	31	17
207 ³ Part 2				6	34	73
“Rehabilitation of Nazism”						
354 ¹ Parts 1-2	1	7	27	18	30	22
354 ¹ Parts 3-4	1	3	8	24	43	42
Discrediting the army and officials abroad						
280 ³				3	50	6 8
Incitement to hatred						
282	36	18	50	51	67	55
Insulting the religious feelings of believers						
148 Parts 1-2	3	2	16	14	13	4 3
Calls for action against state security						
280 ⁴					4	18
Calls for separatism						
280 ¹	4	4	2	0	0	1
Total for articles on speech, the principal offense only						
	244	318	541	646	723	1039

As the table shows, the number of sentences rose sharply in 2021 – by 70% compared to the previous year – after which the growth rate slowed. In 2022, the increase was 19%, followed by 12% in 2023. However, in 2024, there was another sharp rise, with the number of sentences increasing by 44% compared to the previous year.

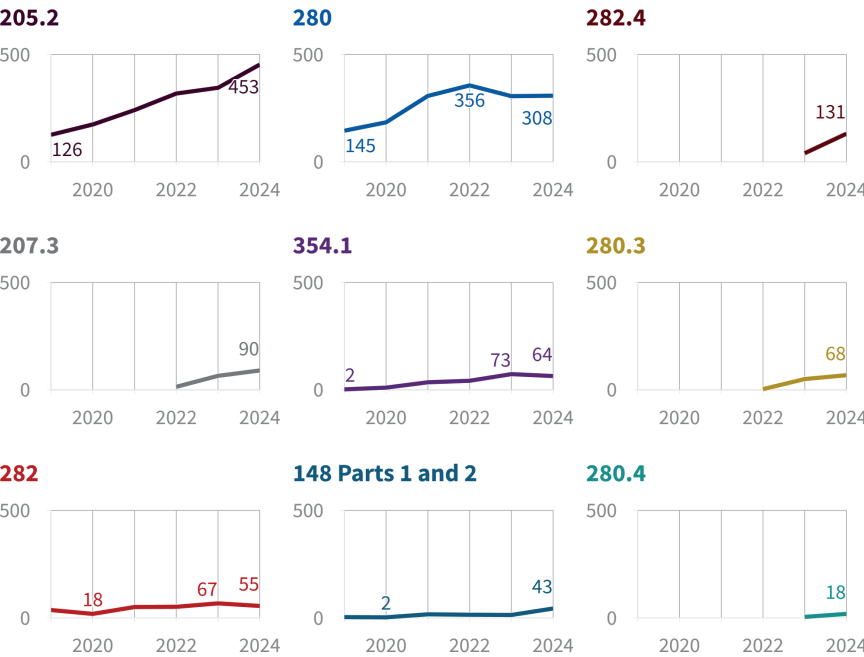
The Judicial Department takes into account only those sentences that have entered into force. By contrast, SOVA includes sentences issued at the first-instance level but excludes from its calculations those later overturned on appeal, once such information becomes available. It should also be noted that the Judicial Department’s data does not provide accurate counts of offenders convicted for public statements. If all primary and ancillary charges across the relevant articles are added together, offenders sentenced under multiple articles will inevitably be counted more than once. Conversely, if only principal offenses are counted, those whose sentences also included more serious articles are omitted.

SOVA’s monitoring further differs in scope: we do not include all parts of the articles concerning public speech. For Article 148 CC, only Parts 1 and 2 are considered, and for Article 207³, only paragraph “e” of Part 2. In addition, within the category of sanctions for speech, we exclude charges which can be classified as acts of vandalism. As a result, several sentences under Article 148, Part 2, nearly all under Article 354¹, Part 3, and some under Part 4 of the same article have been excluded from SOVA’s overall calculations.

According to the SOVA Center database, 511 individuals were convicted in 2024 for public statements. Given the discrepancies with the statistics of the Judicial Department, we estimate that our data reflect approximately half of all convictions issued during the year, with the degree of completeness varying across different articles. Nevertheless, the available information allows for certain general observations.

Individuals convicted under Criminal Code provisions on public speech

As principal or additional offenses



Source: Judicial Department of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation, 2025

In particular, we can observe the changes in the distribution of sentences and convicted offenders across Russia’s regions in recent years. We provide data for 15 regions that had the greatest number of convicted offenders in prior years or the greatest number of individuals who faced charges in 2024.

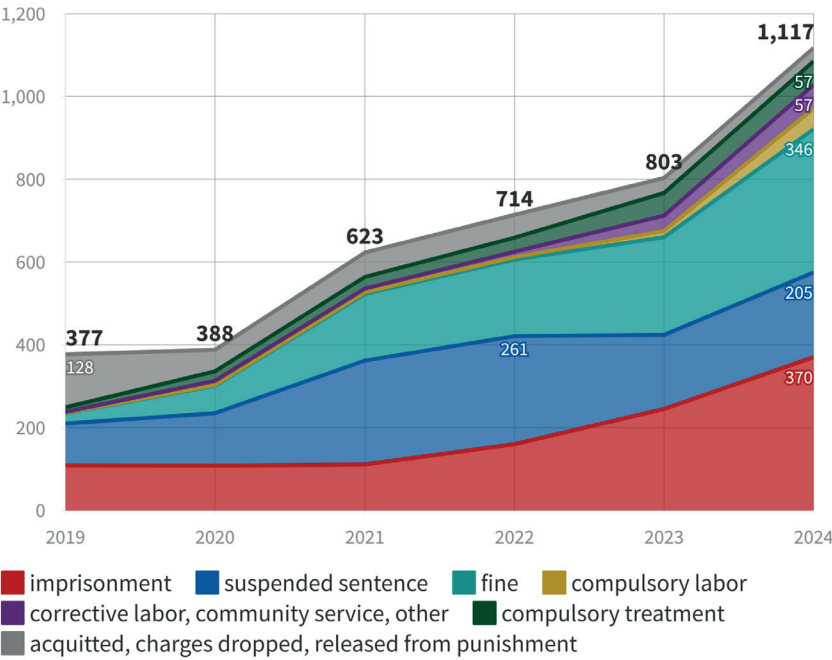
Regions	Sentences 2022		Sentences 2023		Sentences 2024		New Cases 2024		Sentences 2025 (As of 12.06)	
	Cases	Persons	Cases	Persons	Cases	Persons	Cases	Persons	Cases	Persons
Moscow	7	7	26	29	51	63	77	84	15	16
Saint Petersburg	12	12	11	15	21	22	22	24	11	11
Krasnoyarsk Region	4	4	11	12	16	17	18	19	3	4
Crimea (and Sevastopol)	8	8	11	14	16	16	11	11	5	5
Omsk Region	5	7	1	1	15	15	7	7	2	2
Stavropol Krai	5	5	3	3	12	14	16	17	10	10
Udmurt Republic	8	8	6	6	11	11	13	13	10	10
Samara Region	9	11	3	3	10	11	9	9	2	2
Tula Region	2	2	13	14	10	10	5	5	1	1

Republic of Tatarstan	4	4	6	6	9	9	15	17	5	5
Krasnodar Region	5	7	7	7	9	9	15	15	11	13
Sverdlovsk Region	3	3	2	2	8	8	21	21	8	8
Kemerovo Region	10	10	13	13	7	9	17	17	2	2
Moscow Region	3	3	3	3	6	6	24	24	3	4
Kirov Region	0	0	9	10	6	6	13	13	3	3
All of Russia	247	261	372	409	485	511	578	602	217	226

As you can see, St. Petersburg has been consistently close to the top of the list in recent years, and the Kemerovo Region has maintained a consistently high level, at least until 2025. On the other hand, Moscow became a leader in the number of sentences only in 2023 and has kept its first place ever since, partly because the majority of in absentia sentences for emigrants have been issued there. Krasnoyarsk Krai, the Tula Region, and Crimea moved to the top at the same time. In 2024, the Samara and Omsk Regions, Stavropol Krai, and the Udmurt Republic joined the list of leaders. For new cases of 2024, the Moscow Region and the Sverdlovsk Region stand out in addition to the two capitals; other prominent areas in this respect include the Kirov Region, Krasnodar Krai, and Krasnoyarsk Krai, as well as Tatarstan.

Trends in sanctions for public statements

As principal offenses



Source: Judicial Department of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation, 2025
Articles included: 148 Parts 1 and 2, 205.2, 207.3, 280, 280.3, 280.4, 282, 282.4, 284.2, 354.1 CC

Turning to the statistics on penalties under criminal provisions related to public speech, it is worth noting that, according to data from the Judicial Department, the most frequently imposed sanctions were imprisonment (366 individuals, or 36%), fines (341 individuals, or 34%), and suspended sentences (203 individuals, or 20%).

SOVA receives information about imprisonment far more frequently than about fines, but the table below allows us to at least estimate the proportion of those sentenced to imprisonment relative to the total number of those convicted for public statements in a given category. It is worth reminding that a convicted person can be assigned to more than one category, depending on what statements were included in the sentence.

Statement Category	Imprisonment	Suspended Sentence	Labor	Fine	Unknown	Total Punished
Ethnic Xenophobia	41	30	15	6	4	96
Religion	18	3	1	3	0	25
Against the Authorities	55	19	5	14	0	93
Pro-Ukrainian	163	14	11	55	9	252
Violation of Traditional Values	18	8	11	8	7	52
Other	19	3	6	0	1	29
Unknown	4	4	0	4	6	18
Total	283	77	43	84	24	511

Of convicted offenders known to us, the following percentages faced imprisonment: 43% of those punished for expressions of ethnic xenophobia, 72% of those punished for statements on religion, 59% of those punished for statements against the authorities, 65% of those punished for statements about events related to Ukraine, and 35 % of those punished for attacks on traditional values.

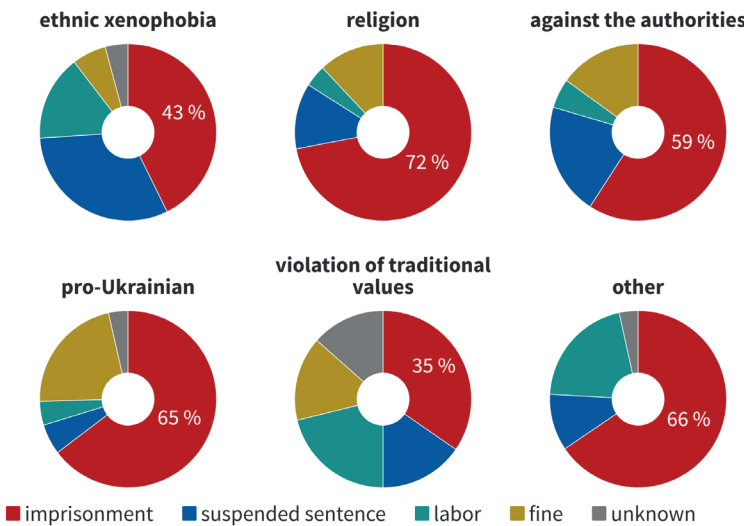
The table above also clearly shows that the majority of persons convicted in 2024 were found guilty of commenting on the events in Ukraine. This group accounts for nearly half of all those convicted (49%). Individuals convicted of ethnic xenophobia and for statements against the authorities are tied for second place, each representing 19%. Another 10% were punished for violation of traditional values, and only 5% for statements related to religion.

Per our calculations, 18% more people faced new charges in 2024 than received sentences in the same year.

Statement Category	Number of Cases	Number of Persons Involved
Ethnic Xenophobia	101	111
Religion	32	34
Against the Authorities	71	71
Pro-Ukrainian	271	290
Violation of Traditional Values	70	81
Other	42	41
Unknown	50	51
Total	578	602

Penalties for public speech

By category of statements



Source: SOVA Research Center, 2025
Counts show convicted individuals under all speech-related Criminal Code provisions with imposed punishments

2024 public speech cases: Suspects and defendants

By category of statements



Source: SOVA Research Center, 2025

As the table indicates, the proportion of individuals charged in 2024 with statements regarding events in Ukraine, ethnic xenophobia, and religion remained largely unchanged compared with 2024 convictions, at 51%, 19%, and 6%, respectively. However, the share of offenders prosecuted for statements against the authorities was lower – 12%, while the percentage of those prosecuted for violation of traditional values increased to 13%.

Let us now compare the number of people convicted in 2024 for online and offline statements.

Statement Category	Online	Offline	Online and Offline	Unknown	Total
Ethnic Xenophobia	63	29	4	0	96
Religion	12	11	2	0	25
Against the Authorities	83	6	4	0	93
Pro-Ukrainian	206	33	8	5	252
Violation of Traditional Values	30	8	10	4	52
Other	10	18	1	0	29
Unknown	15	0	0	3	18
Total	379	92	28	12	511

The majority of convictions – 74% of those sentenced – concerned statements made online, reflecting the predominance of public discourse on the Internet. The relatively high proportion of individuals punished for offline offenses in the “other” category, as well as their significant share in the ethnic xenophobia and religion categories, can be attributed to the above-mentioned widespread practice of penalizing the display of prohibited symbols and communications with other prisoners within places of detention.

Next, let us explain our method for evaluating the overall appropriateness of the cases. Summarizing the previous chapters, we can say that we have classified as inappropriate almost all the sentences known to us under Article 280³, most of the sentences under paragraph “e” of Article 207³, Part 2, and Article 148, Parts 1 and 2, a significant part of the sentences under Article 354¹, and only a small part of the sentences under Articles 205², 280, 282, and 282⁴ CC. These last four articles mainly contributed to “yes,” “other,” and “unknown” categories.

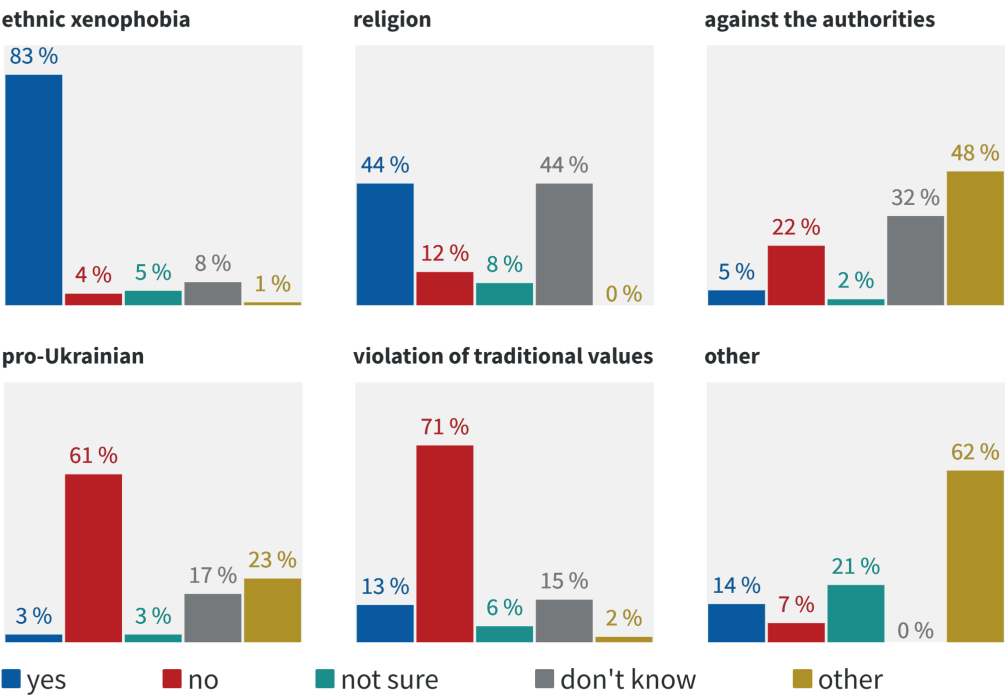
When considering specific categories, we can generally say that the bulk of law enforcement we view as inappropriate came from sentences for peaceful political statements against the government’s course and in defense of Ukraine or for statements about history, religion, the church, and symbols, which pose no public danger. We found 40% of defendants to be inappropriately convicted. We categorized 19% as justifiably punished for ethnic and religious xenophobia. 20% of those sentenced were classified as “other” – mainly people convicted of aggressive political statements and those who promote the values of the criminal underworld. In 21% of cases, we were unable to evaluate the appropriateness of the sentences due to a lack of information about the court decisions.

Statement Category	Yes	No	Not Sure	We Don’t Know	Other	Total
Ethnic Xenophobia	80	4	5	8	1	96

Religion	11	3	2	11	0	25
Against the Authorities	5	20	2	30	45	93
Pro-Ukrainian	7	153	7	44	58	252
Violation of Traditional Values	7	37	3	8	1	52
Other	4	2	6	0	18	29
Unknown	0	1	0	18	0	18
Total	96	202	18	107	109	511

Evaluation of convictions for public speech

By category of statements



Source: SOVA Research Center, 2025
“Yes” – the act is related to xenophobia and the conviction is appropriate; “no” – the conviction is inappropriate; “other” – conviction may be justified but unrelated to countering xenophobia.
An individual may be convicted for multiple acts across different categories, each of which can be rated separately. The figures include only defendants who received a court-imposed punishment.

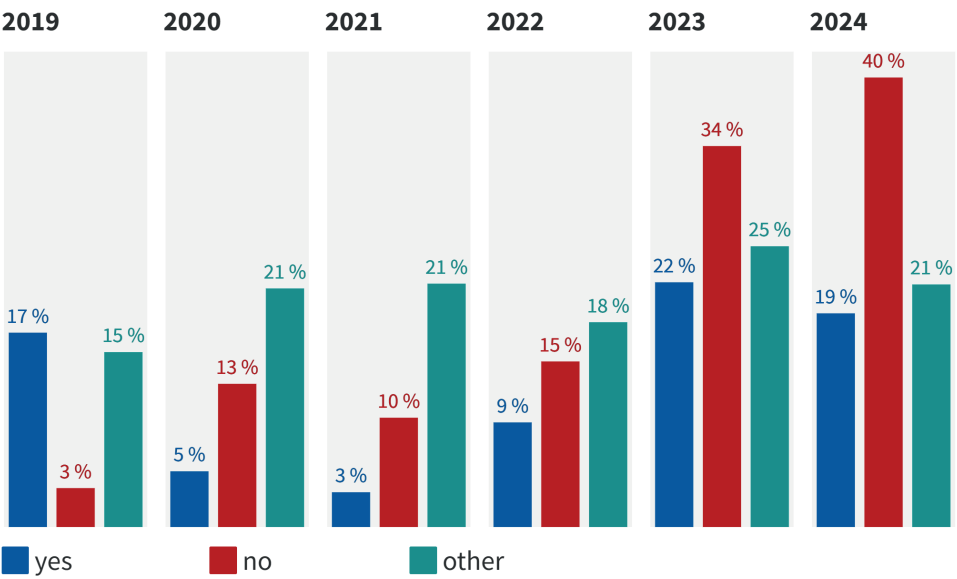
Separately, we must note that we know of 13 defendants under articles on public speech referred for compulsory psychiatric treatment by the courts in 2024. We believe that only two of these cases were appropriately initiated as criminal proceedings. In our view, five lacked compelling grounds for prosecution, while the remaining six were difficult to assess.

Finally, according to our preliminary estimates, at least 35% of the defendants in cases initiated in 2024, or approximately 200 individuals, were prosecuted inappropriately.

The graph below illustrates our assessment of the appropriateness of sanctions for public speech over the past six years. In 2023, following the introduction of criminal provisions discreditation and the dissemination of false information about the armed forces, the proportion of convictions we deemed inappropriate increased sharply. In 2024, fewer individuals faced charges under these articles, a shift that will influence our evaluations of sentences in 2025.

Public speech: Ratio of convictions by appropriateness

As a share of convictions that could be evaluated by SOVA Center



Source: SOVA Research Center, 2025
“Yes” – the act is related to xenophobia and the conviction is appropriate; “no” – the conviction is inappropriate; “other” – conviction may be justified but unrelated to countering xenophobia.
A person can be convicted for several acts from different categories, which can be rated differently. The figures include only defendants who received a court-imposed punishment.

Regulation of Organized Activities

In this part of the report, we discuss the 2024 court cases for involvement in organizations recognized as extremist or terrorist. We have grouped information about such charges not by articles of the CC, as we did in the section on sanctions for public speech, but using the same categories as in the previous section. First, we will talk about the 2024 sentences and newly filed charges for involvement in organizations that are ideologically close to ethnic xenophobia, next about organizations that participate in the armed conflict on Ukraine’s side, and then we’ll turn our attention to peaceful opposition organizations. Next, we will discuss the ongoing pressure against peaceful religious organizations and, finally, the sanctions for involvement in communities that do not fit into the concept of “traditional values.”

It should be noted that SOVA’s monitoring does not include charges related to participation in jihadist Islamic organizations – primarily due to the limited availability of information in this area of law enforcement. Court rulings are generally unpublished, and reports from law enforcement agencies and the media often do not specify the individuals charged or the organizations involved. For the same reason, the figures presented below exclude cases involving participation in Muslim or other religious organizations for which information is insufficient,²⁶ as well as cases related to religious associations not identified in official reports or court decisions.

For each category, we will indicate the number of individuals known to have faced sanctions for involvement in the respective organizations, the criminal articles under which they were prosecuted, the penalties imposed, the number of new cases, and our assessment of whether the charges were appropriate. We will discuss the application of the following articles of the CC:

- Article 282¹ on involvement in the activities of an extremist community;
- Article 282² on involvement in the activities of an extremist organization;
- Article 282³ on financing of extremist activities;
- Article 205⁴ on involvement in the activities of a terrorist community;
- Article 205⁵ on involvement in the activities of a terrorist organization.

Finally, we will present general statistics from the Judicial Department of the Supreme Court, along with our overall observations on prosecutions related to involvement in the activities of banned associations.

Nationalist Associations

In 2024, 21 people were convicted of participating in the activities of Russian ethnic nationalist groups, some of which could be characterized as neo-Nazi. Some groups were prosecuted as extremist entities, others as terrorist.

The SOVA database includes 18 members of far-right associations convicted in 2024 under Article 282¹ CC (organizing **an extremist community** or participating in it). For comparison, we know of 24 individuals convicted in 2023.

These 18 people belonged to three groups: seven members of a certain community from Novocherkassk, which, according to the investigation and the court, followed the ideology of the banned [NS/WP network](#); seven members of the ultra-right community of Klim Shirokov from Krasnoyarsk; and four members of the Community (*Obschina*) group from Temryuk in Krasnodar Krai.

Only the *Obschina* members faced Article 282¹ CC as their sole charge. The other offenders were found guilty under articles on violent crimes (for example, Article 116

26 . For instance, we do not have sufficient information about the activities of Muslim groups that the authorities consider followers of at-Takfir wal-Hijra or about the activities of the Altai pagan movement Ak Jang.

CC on assault motivated by hatred) and vandalism (Article 214 Part 2 CC)²⁷. According to the Investigative Committee, the *Obschina* members planned to commit attacks against migrants from the Caucasus, but likely never managed to carry out these intentions; at least, the relevant articles were not included in the sentence.

14 of the 18 convicted offenders were sentenced to imprisonment, two received suspended sentences, one was sentenced to corrective labor, and one to forced labor.

We know of three criminal cases opened in 2024 against 12 people for participating in the activities of the far-right communities Sparta 88, Made with Hate, and one more, whose name has not been reported.

We know of three far-right individuals found guilty in 2024 under Article 205⁵ CC (participation in the activities of **a terrorist organization**). Our database for 2023 also contains three individuals convicted under such charges.

All three were sentenced to lengthy terms of imprisonment for participating in the far-right MKU network, banned in Russia²⁸ (one of them was also convicted of participating in the “Columbine” movement, recognized as terrorist), as well as for violence, vandalism, and preparation for a terrorist attack.

We have information about eight criminal cases opened in 2024 under Article 205⁵ CC against 10 individuals for their involvement in the activities of the NS/WP and MKU networks and a group (recognized as terrorist) of supporters of [Vyacheslav Maltsev](#), the leader of the [Artpodgotovka movement](#). We have no information as to whether these four supporters of Maltsev were nationalists; while the Artpodgotovka movement, banned as extremist, was founded on nationalist ideas, Maltsev’s followers represent a wide spectrum of views.

We are aware of only one case in 2024 involving criminal prosecution for participation in an association of **non-Russian nationalists**. The Karmaskaly interdistrict court of Bashkortostan sentenced the remaining defendant [in the riot case](#) in the village of Karmaskaly, Marat Sharafutdinov, for preparing hooliganism motivated by ethnic hatred (Article 213 Part 2 with Article 30 CC) and for his role as a leader in the Bashkort organization (Article 282² Part 1 CC) recognized as extremist in 2020. Bashkort members from Karmaskaly were found guilty of planning to hold a “mass gathering” in the village and to organize an Armenian pogrom. Sharafutdinov was sentenced to nine years of imprisonment. However, in April 2025, the Supreme Court of Bashkiria overturned the sentence and sent the case for a new trial. The remaining participants in the riots were convicted back in 2023.

27. For more information on violent acts, see in this volume: Natalia Yudina. Neo-Nazis on the Rise...

28. The MKU network organization, created by neo-Nazi Yegor Krasnov in 2017, operated in Russia and Ukraine. Its supporters held racist and misanthropic views, recording videos of attacks on homeless people, drug addicts, and people of non-Slavic appearance, which they then shared with their comrades. Since 2021, dozens of far-right activists have been detained on suspicion of involvement in the MKU. On January 16, 2023, the Supreme Court of Russia recognized the movement as terrorist.

“Citizens of the USSR”

The activities of “Citizens of the USSR”²⁹ have long attracted the attention of Russian law enforcement agencies. This interest is understandable – representatives of this movement, which became widespread in Russia and neighboring countries in the 2010s, believe that the Soviet Union never ceased to exist de jure, and, therefore, the Russian Federation is an illegitimate structure. They generate many conspiracy theories, including xenophobic ones, and regularly call on citizens and officials to obey their self-created bodies rather than the Russian authorities.

Nine different associations of “Citizens of the USSR” were recognized as extremist from 2019 to 2024. They are included on the List of Extremist Organizations published on the website of the Ministry of Justice, as entries No. 74, 89, 93, 95, 103, 105, 110, 111, and 116 (the last four associations were added to the list during 2024; see the chapter on the ban on organizations below).

As far as we know, in 2024, out of nine “Citizens of the USSR” associations recognized as extremist, only three appeared in reports from investigative bodies and law enforcement sources on criminal cases under Article 282² CC: the so-called [“Union of Slavic Forces of Russia” \(USSR\)](#) founded by Sergei Taraskin; [a group with its center in Novokuibyshevsk](#) in the Samara Region that repeatedly changed its name; and the [“People’s Council](#) of Citizens of the RSFSR USSR of the Arkhangelsk Region.”

The SOVA database includes 36 “Citizens of the USSR” convicted under Article 282² CC in 2024. For 32 of them, Article 282² CC was the only charge. Four offenders were also found guilty under other CC articles, such as 282, 280, 282⁴, 222¹ (illegal storage of explosives). For comparison, in 2023, we added to the database 19 individuals convicted of participating in “Citizens of the USSR” organizations.

Activists are often prosecuted in group cases. Thus, in Yekaterinburg, 11 followers of Sergei Taraskin were found guilty under Article 282² CC in a single trial and sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment in a minimum-security penal colony.

In total, 27 “Citizens of the USSR” convicted in 2024 were sentenced to imprisonment. “The (acting) head of the Rostov region of the RSFSR within the USSR,” Oleg Kolesov, received seven and a half years of imprisonment, the rest – from one to six years. The courts issued suspended sentences to seven defendants and sentenced two to community service.

“Citizens of the USSR” faced charges for participating in meetings, giving lectures on their ideology, “calling for refusal to fulfill civic and legal obligations” (since they do not recognize the Russian Federation as a state), distributing propaganda leaflets and brochures, posting videos on the Internet, and “preparing and sending to government bodies documents aimed at obstructing the lawful activities of government bodies.”

We consider the convictions of 27 individuals to have been likely justified, as they or their organizations were actively engaged in xenophobic propaganda. In two cases, our assessment remains uncertain, and in seven cases, we lack sufficient information to draw a conclusion.

29. For more information on “citizens of the USSR,” see: Akhmetiev Mikhail. Grazhdane bez SSSR.

Soobshchestva ‘sovetskikh grazhdan’ v sovremennoy Rossii [Citizens without the USSR. Communities of ‘Soviet citizens’ in modern Russia]. Moscow: SOVA Center, 2022.

We know of five criminal cases opened in 2024 against six “citizens of the USSR.” Five were charged under Article 282² CC (in one case, also under Article 282³ CC on financing extremism). One “citizen of the USSR” became a defendant under Article 282¹ CC.

“Citizens of the USSR” face charges not only under articles for participation in banned organizations, but also under articles on public speech. Sentences against the four people mentioned above contained articles on public statements in addition to Article 282² CC. In total, 14 “citizens of the USSR” were convicted of public statements in 2024, and we wrote about them in the preceding section of the report. We view the sentences issued to nine of them as inappropriate.

Banned Ukrainian Organizations

We have information about 26 individuals convicted in 2024 for involvement in the activities of Ukrainian organizations banned in Russia. This number includes members of associations of Russian citizens fighting on the side of Ukraine. In 2023, we identified 12 people convicted on similar grounds, all of whom were found guilty of participating in the Right Sector.

In all cases, individuals in question did not participate in military actions and were charged with assisting these organizations through propaganda, data collection, sabotage, etc. In fact, the total number of people convicted of such assistance is significantly higher, not only because our data is incomplete, but also because some of them have faced charges under articles on treason, terrorist acts, participation in an illegal armed formation, etc., rather than articles on involvement in prohibited associations monitored by SOVA.

The 26 known offenders were convicted of involvement with organizations banned as terrorist. One exception is the Right Sector, which was recognized **as extremist** in 2014 and as terrorist only in 2025. Three people were convicted of participating in the Right Sector in 2024, all of them under Article 282² CC, one of them also under Article 167 CC. All three were sentenced to imprisonment for terms ranging from one to three years. We are not aware of any such cases newly opened in 2024.

The remaining 23 people were convicted under Article 205⁵ CC. All of them were sentenced to imprisonment for terms ranging from five to 19 years.

22 of them were convicted for participating in the activities of the Freedom of Russia Legion, a paramilitary formation recognized as a **terrorist** organization in Russia; moreover, two individuals were also punished for participating in the activities of the Russian Volunteer Corps – another paramilitary formation recognized as a terrorist organization in Russia. Only two offenders were charged solely under Article 205⁵ CC for their ties to the Freedom of Russia Legion. In the other cases, it was combined with CC articles 207³, 275, 205 Part 1, 281, 167, or 322 (illegal border crossing).

One person was convicted for participating in the activities of the Azov Regiment (in conjunction with Article 205² Part 2 CC). The other two people were convicted under Article 205⁵ for participation in the activities of unidentified Ukrainian organizations.

In our opinion, two people were clearly inappropriately convicted of their ties to the Freedom of Russia Legion: teenager [Arseny Turbin](#) from Livny of the Oryol Oblast, and Ukrainian citizen [Kristina Lyubashenko](#). Neither of them committed or prepared violent

crimes, and even their involvement in the Freedom of Russia Legion is highly questionable. Turbin received five years in a correctional colony, and Lyubashenko, who was also found guilty of spreading fake news about the army, received 12 years of imprisonment. We classified other sentences for participation in Ukrainian organizations as “other,” since these organizations are participants in the armed conflict and thus practice violence. For some sentences, we lacked information to assess their appropriateness.

We have information about 31 cases under Article 205⁵, initiated in 2024 against 45 people for involvement in the Freedom of Russia Legion, Russian Volunteer Corps, and Azov. Some of these people also faced charges of preparing terrorist attacks, treason, terrorist propaganda, etc. In two of these cases the sentences were already issued in 2024.

Another case was opened under Article 205⁴ (and Article 205² CC) against two people – leader of the Chechen separatists Akhmed Zakayev and his associate, Murad Yusupov – for creating a certain Chechen battalion within the Ukrainian Armed Forces.

Banned Opposition Organizations

Throughout 2024, the authorities continued to prosecute people for involvement in the activities of Alexei Navalny’s structures. Let us recall that the structures associated with Navalny – Anti-Corruption Foundation (*Fond borby s korruptsiyey*, FBK), the Foundation for the Defense of Citizens’ Rights (*Fond zashchity prav grazhdan*, FZPG), and the Navalny Headquarters – were recognized as extremist organizations in the summer of 2021. Since September 2021, even the activities that Navalny’s structures and supporters carried out before the ban have been considered the activities of an extremist community. At that time, the Main Investigation Department of the Investigative Committee opened a case under Article 282¹ CC against Navalny and a number of his supporters, stating that the extremist community came into existence no later than 2014. Subsequently, regional activists who had previously participated in Navalny’s organizations, his lawyers, and journalists who had collaborated with his structures became defendants in cases under Article 282¹ CC.

In 2024, according to our information, four sentences under Article 282¹ were issued against five people for participating in the activities of Navalny’s organizations. Two of them were simply found guilty of involvement in the activities of Navalny’s “underground” headquarters. One person posted leaflets about the judge, who had sentenced Navalny, and transferred money to the FBK (for this, he was also convicted under Article 282³). The remaining two painted graffiti in support of Navalny and against the special military operation (they were also found guilty under Article 214 Part 2 CC). All these people were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment, from two and a half to seven years.

Three activists from regional Navalny Headquarters – Liliya Chanyшева, Ksenia Fadeeva, and Vadim Ostanin – who had been convicted under Article 282¹ a year earlier, were released in 2024 as part of a prisoner exchange. Rustem Mulyukov, who was convicted alongside Chanyшева, was released due to illness.

Meanwhile, new cases under Article 282¹ were initiated during the year – against Navalny’s wife Yulia; Nina Volokhonskaya, producer of the Navalny LIVE YouTube channel; Alexandra Frolova, a media creator from Navalny’s team; and five journalists who had collaborated with his organizations: Olga Komleva, Antonina Favorskaya, Konstantin

Gabov, Sergei Karelin, and Artyom Kriger. The first three, who had left Russia, were placed on the wanted list, and the others – in detention.

According to SOVA’s data, at least 13 people were convicted under Article 282³ for making donations to the FBK after Navalny’s organizations were declared extremist. Some received heavy fines, while others were sentenced to prison – for example, Moscow cardiac surgeon [Ivan Tishchenko](#) was sentenced to four years of imprisonment without any additional charges. In total, we documented 32 such cases initiated against 32 individuals in 2024, with six of them resulting in convictions within the same year.

In 2024, a resident of Ulyanovsk was convicted under Article 282² Part 2 of the CC for posting leaflets of the Vesna youth movement recognized as extremist. In 2024, one such case was opened – a resident of Obninsk in the Kaluga Region was charged under Article 282² Part 2 for his involvement in the activities of both Navalny’s structures and Vesna. Six of the two dozen Vesna activists charged in a high-profile [case](#) opened in the summer of 2023 under a number of articles went on trial a year later, but have not been sentenced yet.

We view the charges of involvement in an extremist community or an organization banned for extremism, brought against supporters of [Navalny’s structures](#) and [Vesna](#), as inappropriate, since, in our opinion, there were no grounds for recognizing these organizations as extremist.

Overall, our database for 2024 contains 18 convictions against 19 supporters of peaceful opposition organizations, and we know of 41 such cases opened in 2024 against 41 individuals.

Banned Religious Organizations

With regard to the application of Criminal Code articles on participation in prohibited religious associations, SOVA’s monitoring covers only part of the spectrum (see above). Almost all of the information presented in this chapter concerns inappropriate sanctions.

Jehovah’s Witnesses

In 2024, the authorities continued to persecute Jehovah’s Witnesses,³⁰ whose organizations registered in Russia were banned as extremist in 2017. Religious worship (including online), reading and discussing religious literature together, preaching, and collecting money for community needs have become the grounds for charging believers with continuing the activities of banned organizations.

In 2024, at least 55 convictions were handed down against 126 Jehovah’s Witnesses under Article 282² CC, as well as under Article 282³ CC. The latter was applied in conjunction with Article 282² in the cases of 24 believers and served as the sole basis of conviction in one case. One believer, [Kirill Gushchin](#) from Kabardino-Balkaria, was acquitted, and another case was dismissed by the court due to the death of the defendant.

30. We believe that Jehovah’s Witnesses face prosecution under criminal law, followed by severe sanctions, for peaceful religious activity that poses no danger to society. In our assessment, the ban on Jehovah’s Witnesses’ organizations lacks a legitimate legal basis and constitutes an act of religious discrimination. Accordingly, we regard all prosecutions of Jehovah’s Witnesses for participation in, or financing of, banned organizations as inappropriate.

In 2023, according to our calculations, 71 convictions against 149 believers were issued and have remained in force.

Of the 126 convicted offenders, 37 individuals were sentenced to imprisonment. 25 of them were sent to penal colonies for terms of six to seven years, and one, [Alexander Chagan](#) from Tolyatti, for eight years. The courts sentenced ten believers to compulsory labor: nine received terms ranging from two to two and a half years, while one individual was sentenced to four and a half years. Meanwhile, 55 defendants received suspended sentences, 14 of them for terms of six to seven and a half years. For 23 people, the principle punishment was a fine, with 11 of them fined between 600,000 and 650,000 rubles. We have no information about the punishment assigned to one person.

According to the calculations of SOVA Center, at least 49 believers became defendants in new criminal cases on the continuation of the activities of banned organizations of Jehovah’s Witnesses and their financing (Articles 282² and 282³ CC) in 2024. The corresponding number in 2023 reached 107, so the rate of prosecution dropped 55%.

According to Jehovah’s Witnesses, whose method of calculation differs somewhat from ours, criminal cases were initiated against 100 believers in 2023. As of February 2024, charges had been brought against 41 individuals in the new year – representing a 60 % decrease compared to the previous year.

At the same time, the practice of filing group cases and charging several family members at once continued (Jehovah’s Witnesses reported nine new such families in 2024). Elderly believers (more than eight people were over 60 years old) and people with disabilities continued to face criminal charges. Jehovah’s Witness Alexander Lubin, who suffered from serious illnesses, died a few days after the pronouncement of [his sentence](#).

Followers of Said Nursi

We know of only one sentence for studying the books of Islamic theologian Said Nursi³¹ – two Muslims were [sentenced](#) in Moscow under Part 1 and Part 2 of Article 282² to six years and two years and nine months, respectively. We have no information about any new criminal cases initiated in 2024; the sanctions imposed during the year were limited to several administrative fines for storing prohibited literature.

Tablighi Jamaat

We know of four sentences issued in 2024 under Article 282² CC against 17 people for continuing the activities of the Islamic religious movement Tablighi Jamaat, which is recognized

31. In 2008, following the unjustified bans on the writings of Said Nursi – a Kurdish religious scholar who adhered to a moderate interpretation of Islam – an alleged group of his followers, Nurcular, was declared extremist by the Supreme Court on the grounds that it promoted the superiority of Islam over other religions. However, Russian Muslims who studied Nursi’s teachings had never formed a unified organization, meaning that a non-existent association was effectively outlawed. As a result, authorities were able to charge Muslims who read and discussed Nursi’s works under Article 282² of the Criminal Code. In 2018, the ECHR issued [a ruling](#) that, by banning Nursi’s books, Russian courts violated Article 10 of the European Convention, which guarantees freedom of expression. However, the sanctions against Muslims who study this literature have continued.

as extremist (not a single such sentence was issued the year before).³² Two sentences were issued in Moscow against ten natives of Kyrgyzstan. All of them were sentenced to imprisonment, but we have no information about the terms assigned to them. Two more citizens of Kyrgyzstan were convicted in Sakhalin: one of them was sentenced to six years’ imprisonment under Article 282² Part 1, and the other – to two and a half years of imprisonment under Part 2 of the same article. The court issued suspended sentences to five Muslims convicted in Penza. We are aware of one similar criminal case opened in 2024 – against four Muslims in the Rostov Region; according to the investigation, “under the guise of a religious group,” they “involved local Muslims in extremist activities, held secret meetings of their followers, and instilled a false opinion about the non-compliance with Russian legislation, including denying the need for Russian Muslims to participate in the special military operation.”

Hizb ut-Tahrir

In 2024, prosecutions continued against Muslims accused of involvement in the Islamic religious party Hizb ut-Tahrir, under criminal charges for organizing, participating in, and recruiting for a terrorist organization. The party has been banned in Russia as a terrorist organization, despite the lack of evidence of its involvement in violent activities.³³

Our position is as follows: when we know that people who continue (or allegedly continue) their participation in a banned organization are charged only under Article 205⁵ CC without any additional terrorist offenses, we consider such cases inappropriate – particularly because they involve disproportionately severe punishment.

Those involved in criminal cases of involvement with Hizb ut-Tahrir face charges for conducting meetings and discussing party literature and ideology. Such activities are prosecuted under Article 205⁵, which provides for particularly severe penalties. The Hizb ut-Tahrir followers are also charged with preparing for a violent seizure of power simply

32 . The Tablighi Jamaat movement was banned in Russia in 2009 – without, in our view, sufficient legal justification. While the movement engages in the propagation of fundamentalist Islamic beliefs, it has never been implicated in advocating violence. Accordingly, we consider sanctions against its adherents to be inappropriate. It is also noteworthy that the movement is not banned in Kyrgyzstan, where it remains highly popular, which explains the presence of its followers among Muslims entering Russia.

33 . Our position regarding the activities of Hizb ut-Tahrir is based, in particular, on the ECHR ruling, issued as an addendum to the decision based on the complaint of two convicted members of the organization against the actions of the Russian authorities. The European Court of Human Rights has stated that, although the teachings and practices of Hizb ut-Tahrir do not provide sufficient grounds to classify it as a terrorist organization and it does not explicitly advocate violence, a ban on other grounds could nevertheless be justified. Specifically, Hizb ut-Tahrir promotes the overthrow of certain existing political systems to establish a Sharia-based dictatorship, engages in anti-Semitic and radical anti-Israeli propaganda (leading to its ban in Germany in 2003 and in the United Kingdom in early 2024 following its support for the attack on Israel on October 7), categorically rejects democracy and human rights, and asserts the legitimacy of violence against states it considers aggressors against the “lands of Islam.” The objectives of Hizb ut-Tahrir are clearly incompatible with the values enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights, particularly the commitment to the peaceful settlement of international conflicts, the inviolability of human life, and the recognition of civil and political rights and democratic governance. Activities undertaken to advance such objectives are therefore not protected under the Convention.

because the party promotes the idea of creating a global caliphate – law enforcement and the courts do not require evidence of any real preparations. In recent years, the majority of believers facing sanctions have been from Crimea. Charges of involvement in Hizb ut-Tahrir appear to serve as a convenient instrument for suppressing opposition activity among the Crimean Tatar population of the peninsula.

We know of five sentences issued in 2024 against seven Hizb ut-Tahrir supporters: only one believer received seven years’ imprisonment, while the others were sentenced to terms ranging from 10 to 18 years’ imprisonment, with part of the term to be served in prison and various additional restrictions. For comparison, a year earlier, we knew of 10 sentences against 21 people. Of the seven convicted individuals, five were sentenced under Article 205⁵. Two of these were additionally found guilty of incitement to terrorist activity under Article 205¹ Part 1.1, and three – under Article 205². Two individuals were convicted of promoting party ideology in penal colonies. Rais Mavlyutov from Tolyatti, previously sentenced to 23 years in prison for involvement in Hizb ut-Tahrir, received additional 10 years under Article 205¹ Part 1.1, so that his total term of imprisonment reached 27 years. We do not know how much was added under Article 205¹ Part 1.1 and Article 205² to the term of Azat Gataullin from Kazan, previously sentenced to 19 years of imprisonment.

Notably, while in 2023, 17 out of 21 convicted persons were Crimeans, not a single resident of the peninsula was convicted in 2024. However, one of the three new cases of 2024 was initiated in Crimea – against ten residents of Dzhankoy and Bakhchisarai at once. Two more cases were opened in Kazan, one of them involving four members of a “[women’s cell](#).” They were placed in pre-trial detention despite having young children. Until then, throughout the entire history of Muslims prosecuted for involvement in Hizb ut-Tahrir, a woman had faced charges only [once](#). In total, 17 people became defendants in new cases in 2024.

Allya-Ayat

In 2024, we noted only two cases initiated against sun worshipers who follow the Allya-Ayat teaching. The believers advocate a cure for all illnesses through the use of special tea, saying the “life formula,” invoking the sun energy, repeatedly reading and applying to sore spots the issues of the *Zvezda Selennoy* magazine published by the doctrine’s founders. Seven issues of this magazine were recognized as extremist materials for promoting the superiority of the Allya-Ayat teaching over others. Several regional groups of believers were gradually banned based on the charges of distributing the magazine, which, in turn, led to the charges against the adherents under Article 282² CC. In Rostov-on-Don, five followers of the Allya-Ayat teaching became defendants in such a case – two men and three women; the 65-year-old leader of the group was charged with creating a “cell” of an extremist organization, and the others – with participating in it. New search raids were conducted in Altai Krai in connection with a criminal case initiated back in 2022. It is unknown whether any local believers faced charges. The Allya-Ayat groups do not encourage their members to display religious intolerance and do not use violent coercion to impose obedience to the teachings, so we see no signs of extremism in their activities.

Summary Data on Cases of Involvement in Banned Religious Organizations

To conclude the section on inappropriate sanctions for involvement in banned religious organizations, we present our data on the penalties imposed on those convicted under several criminal articles (it is worth remembering that charges under Article 282³ CC were most often filed simultaneously with charges under Article 282² CC).

	Imprisonment	Suspended Sentence	Compulsory Labor	Fine	Total
Organizing the activities of an extremist organization and participating in it					
282 ² Part 1	31	13	0	16	60
282 ² Part 1.1	0	7	1	0	8
282 ² Part 2	19	47	10	8	85 ³⁴
Financing extremist activities					
282 ³ Part 1	7	4	0	14	25
Organizing the activities of a terrorist organization and participating in it					
205 ⁵ Part 1	1	0	0	0	1
205 ⁵ Part 2	4	0	0	0	4
Total wrongful convictions under the articles on banned religious organizations					
	57	60	10	23	151

In total, we know of 36 new cases filed inappropriately against 100 people in 2024 for involvement in banned religious organizations.

Two of these cases are worth mentioning separately, since they involve groups committing crimes motivated by religious hatred. In Kabardino-Balkaria, at least 25 people were charged under Article 282¹ CC for creating so-called “Sharia patrols” in the city of Baksan and the village of Tyrnyauz. The patrols identified fellow believers whom they considered to be insufficiently observant of religious standards and subjected them to physical violence and psychological pressure. For example, in Tyrnyauz, at least 16 local residents suffered from these patrols’ actions, including being beaten with sticks. “Sharia patrols” have emerged in Russia on prior occasions, but, as far as we know, group criminal cases are rarely initiated. The previous such group of 11 people was [convicted](#) in Kabardino-Balkaria in 2022.

Associations Deemed Contrary to “Traditional Values”: LGBT

The International LGBT Movement was banned at the end of November 2023. The ban came into force in February 2024, and on March 1, the Russian Ministry of Justice included the movement and its structural divisions on the List of Extremist Organizations. While administrative sanctions for displaying LGBT symbols began in January, the first criminal case under Article 282² CC was opened in March – against the owner, art director, and administrator of Pose, an Orenburg LGBT club. According to the investigation, “the defendants, being persons of a non-traditional sexual orientation, acting as a group of persons by prior conspiracy,” organized and supported the work of the LGBT establishment, promoting non-traditional sexual relations among the bar’s visitors.

In total, according to our information, at least nine similar cases against 15 individuals were initiated under Article 282² CC in 2024. Five of them against ten persons were opened against the owners and employees of gay clubs. Another one was opened against two people for organizing gay dating in Vladikavkaz. In the Kemerovo Region, an inmate, who was serving an

34 . We have no information on the penalty imposed on one convicted offender.

18-year sentence in a maximum-security penal colony for sexualized violence against a child, was charged with participating in the activities of an “international LGBT movement” cell and involving other prisoners in it. In Inza of the Ulyanovsk Region, the director of a dialysis center and a center for massage and traditional oriental medicine was charged with coercion to homosexual act under both Article 282² Part 2 and Article 133 Part 1 CC. According to the investigation, he proposed to his subordinate “engaging in non-traditional sexual relations” and threatened to fire him or create unbearable conditions if refused. Allegedly, he also, “being a supporter of Satanism, promoted the idea of same-sex relations among his subordinates as a way of introducing them to devil worship.” A defendant in another case, [Andrei Kotov](#), the director of travel agency Men Travel in Moscow, died in a pretrial detention center, possibly by suicide. He had been charged with “organizing trips for LGBT supporters around Russia and abroad for money.” Kotov complained of violence and degrading treatment in detention.

We [believe](#) that the ban on the LGBT movement as an extremist organization was an unjustified and clearly discriminatory measure that deprived part of society of the opportunity to defend their rights and peacefully express their views. We regard prosecutions for involvement in the “international LGBT movement” as inappropriate.

Other Banned Associations: AUE

SOVA Center recorded 43 sentences [issued in 2024](#) against 99 people for their involvement in the public movement Prisoners Criminal Unity (*Arestantskoe Ugolovnoe Yedinstvo*, AUE) recognized as extremist in 2020. We counted at least 34 new cases of this kind, opened in 2024 against at least 95 defendants, and we believe that our information is far from complete.

The defendants in AUE involvement cases are prosecuted under various parts of Article 282² (we know of 19 individuals convicted under Part 1, 72 under Part 2, and two under Part 1.1 of this article in 2024), and often also under Article 282³ Part 1 CC for financing the activities of “cells” (22 convicted offenders). In addition, some sentences include Article 210¹ CC on occupying a high position in the criminal hierarchy, Article 163 CC on extortion, Article 171² CC on illegal organization of gambling, and some others. As a rule, the defendants are inmates of penal colonies. They are charged with promoting “criminal traditions, the prestige of committing crimes, and hatred and aggression towards law enforcement officials” on the territory of correctional institutions, “controlling the actions of other inmates, collecting money, distributing prohibited items” or organizing gambling tournaments among inmate groups in the colony, and transferring the proceeds to criminal authorities. Most often, criminal cases are initiated against those currently serving their sentence in a colony, but sometimes former inmates end up on trial, charged for the activities they had carried out while serving their sentences or for involving others in such activities after their release.

We believe that the ideology of the criminal underworld and the AUE subculture is oriented towards illegal activity and is, by its nature, incompatible with the constitutional rights of citizens. While the dissemination of such an ideology may legitimately be prohibited and subject to criminal liability, the ideology itself is neither political in character nor directed at altering the constitutional order. Therefore, in our opinion, it should not fall under the anti-extremist legal framework. Moreover, there is no compelling evidence to suggest that AUE is a structured movement rather than a subculture. We do not assess the appropriateness of charges related to involvement in AUE, instead categorizing such sentences as “other” in our database.

Overview of Convictions under Articles on Participation in Prohibited Organizations

To conclude our analysis of the use of the CC articles on participation in prohibited organizations, we present some aggregated data.

According to the Judicial Department of the Supreme Court, 473 people were convicted under the above-mentioned articles on involvement in banned organizations in 2024 as their principal offense.

Below we provide a table that shows the trends of recent years for individual articles, taking into account both the principal offense and additional charges.

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Creating an extremist community and participating in it						
282 ¹	17	20	27	34	58	24
Organizing the activities of an extremist organization and participating in it						
282 ²	67	100	138	259	320	317
Financing extremist activities						
282 ³	5	4	6	26	28	58
Creating a terrorist community and participating in it						
205 ⁴	29	29	59	32	58	88
Organizing the activities of a terrorist organization and participating in it						
205 ⁵	131	108	80	105	171	146
Total for articles on banned organizations, for the principal offense only						
	188	186	233	345	491	473

As the table shows, the number of individuals sentenced has increased each year since 2020. However, in 2024, not only did this number fail to rise compared to 2023 – it actually decreased by about 4%. This decline was due to the reduced application of Articles 282¹ and 205⁵. The most frequently used Article 282² also failed to show an increase. Compared to 2023, the number of convicted offenders increased only under Article 282³ (which more than doubled) and showed a noticeable increase under Article 205⁴.

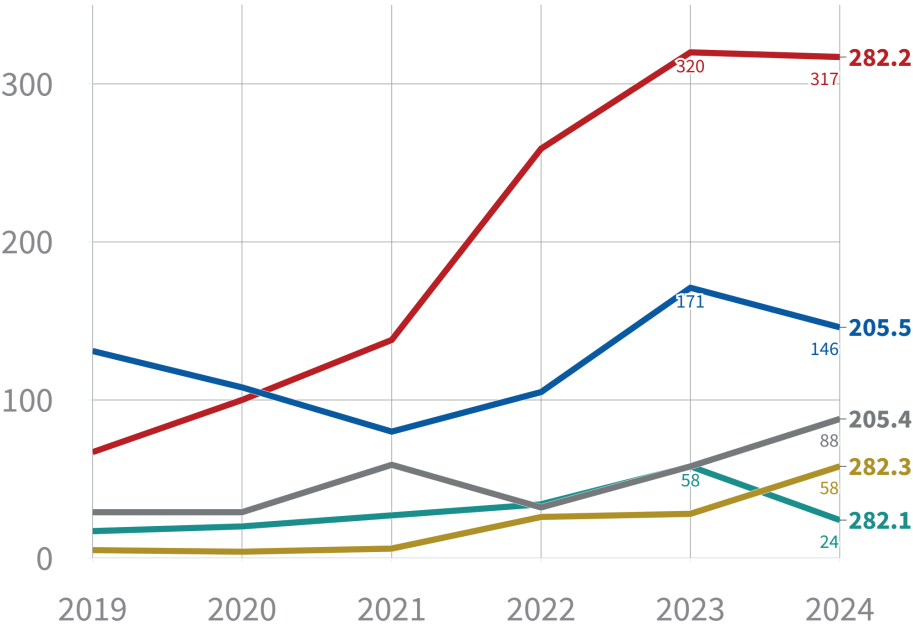
The table below presents data from the Judicial Department on the penalties imposed in 2024 under the relevant articles. In addition, one individual was acquitted, while five were referred by the courts for compulsory treatment. Six cases were dismissed: one for lack of elements of the offense, one for “other reasons,” and four – based on the note to Article 282², according to which a person who has committed a crime for the first time and voluntarily ceased participating in the activities of an extremist organization is exempt from criminal liability unless their actions contained other offenses. Five people were exempted from punishment.

	Imprisonment	Suspended Sentence	Compulsory Labor	Fine	Total
Creating an extremist community and participating in it					
282 ¹ Part 1	5	1	0	0	6
282 ¹ Part 1.1	2	0	0	0	2

282 ¹ Part 2	13	1	0	0	14
282 ¹ Part 3	1	0	0	0	1
Organizing the activities of an extremist organization and participating in it					
282 ² Part 1	62	12	0	9	83
282 ² Part 1.1	9	2	0	0	12
282 ² Part 2	92	69	8	7	179
282 ² Part 3	0	0	0	0	0
Financing extremist activities					
282 ³ Part 1	17	8	0	11	38
282 ³ Part 2	0	0	0	0	0
Creating a terrorist community and participating in it					
205 ⁴ Part 1	7	0	0	0	7
205 ⁴ Part 2	37	0	0	0	37
Organizing the activities of a terrorist organization and participating in it					
205 ⁵ Part 1	7	0	0	0	7
205 ⁵ Part 2	87	0	0	0	87
Total for articles on banned organizations, for the principal offense only					
	339	93	8	27	473

Individuals convicted under Criminal Code provisions on involvement in extremist or terrorist associations

As a principal or additional offense

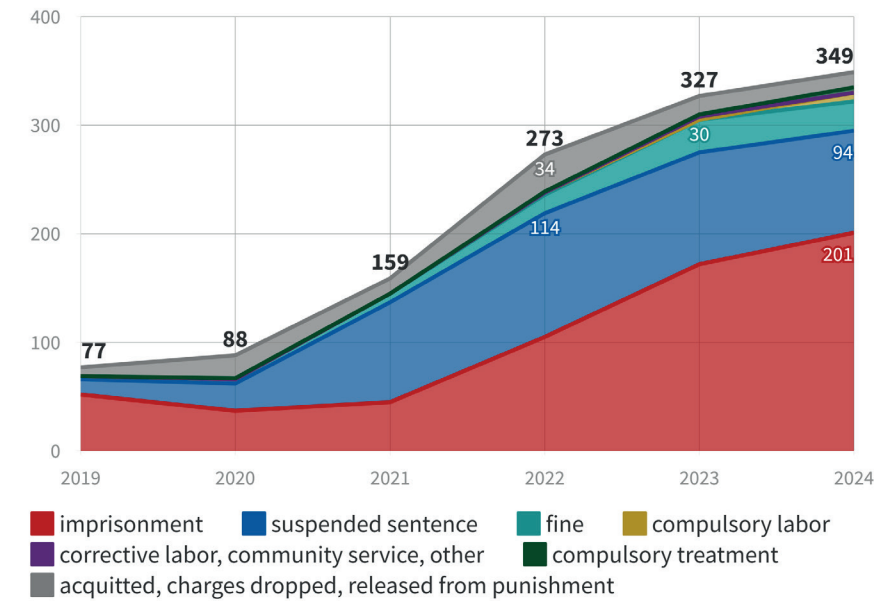


Source: Judicial Department of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation, 2025

Since these cases mostly involve grave or especially grave crimes, the majority of convicted offenders (72%) were sentenced to imprisonment. Another 20% received suspended sentences, 6% were fined substantial amounts by the court, and 2% were sentenced to compulsory labor.

Trends in sanctions for involvement in extremist associations

As principal offenses



Source: Judicial Department of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation, 2025
Articles included: 282.1, 282.2, 282.3 CC

SOVA Center is familiar with only a subset of 2024 sentences for involvement in banned organizations. Our database lacks data on the application of Article 205⁵ and especially 205⁴ CC – because we do not track sanctions for participation in jihadist organizations and because our information on the number of sentences for involvement in Ukrainian organizations is incomplete.³⁵ Nevertheless, we shall provide information we have on the distribution of convicted offenders by articles and categories.

Act Category	Article 282 ¹	Article 282 ²	Article 282 ³	Article 205 ⁵	Total
Ethnic Xenophobia	18	2	0	3	23
Religion	0	145	25	5	152
Against the Authorities	6	38	14	0	57
Pro-Ukrainian	0	3	0	23	26
Other	1	99	23	2	102
Unknown	0	1	0	0	1
Total	25	285	61	32	358

35. Let us also remind you once again that our database does not contain data on law enforcement in the territories annexed to Russia in 2022–2024.

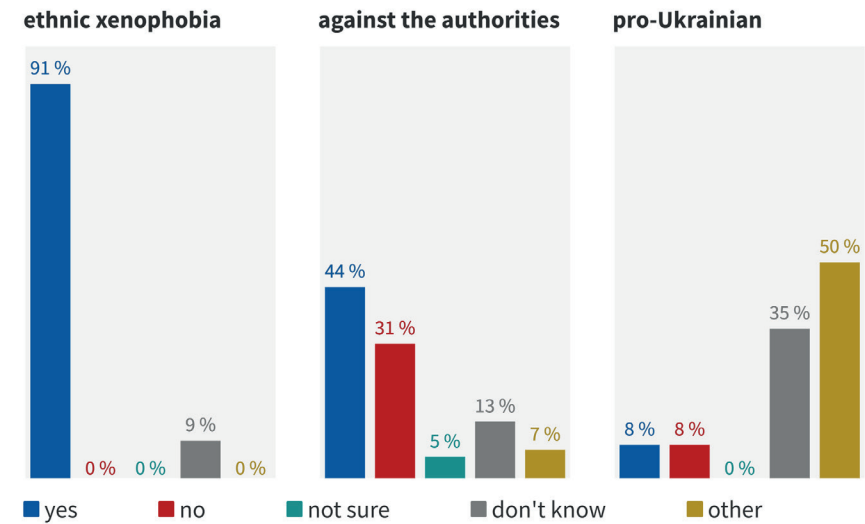
As the table shows, the largest number of convicted individuals in our records faced punishment for belonging to banned religious organizations, the AUE subculture (“other” category), and peaceful opposition organizations (“against the authorities” category).

Accordingly, we consider the majority of sentences issued to these individuals inappropriate. In second place are offenders whose cases, in our view, are unrelated to manifestations of ethnic xenophobia – such as involvement in AUE or paramilitary Ukrainian organizations – but we do not view their sentences as inappropriate. Offenders convicted for involvement in organizations promoting an ideology of ethnic xenophobia rank only third in number.

Act Category	Yes	No	Not Sure	We Don't Know	Other	Total
Ethnic Xenophobia	21	0	0	2	0	23
Religion	0	151	0	1	0	152
Against the Authorities	27	19	3	8	4	61
Pro-Ukrainian	2	2	0	9	13	26
Other	0	0	0	1	101	102
Unknown	0	0	0	0	1	1
Total	50	172	3	18	119	362

Evaluation of convictions for involvement in extremist and terrorist associations

By category



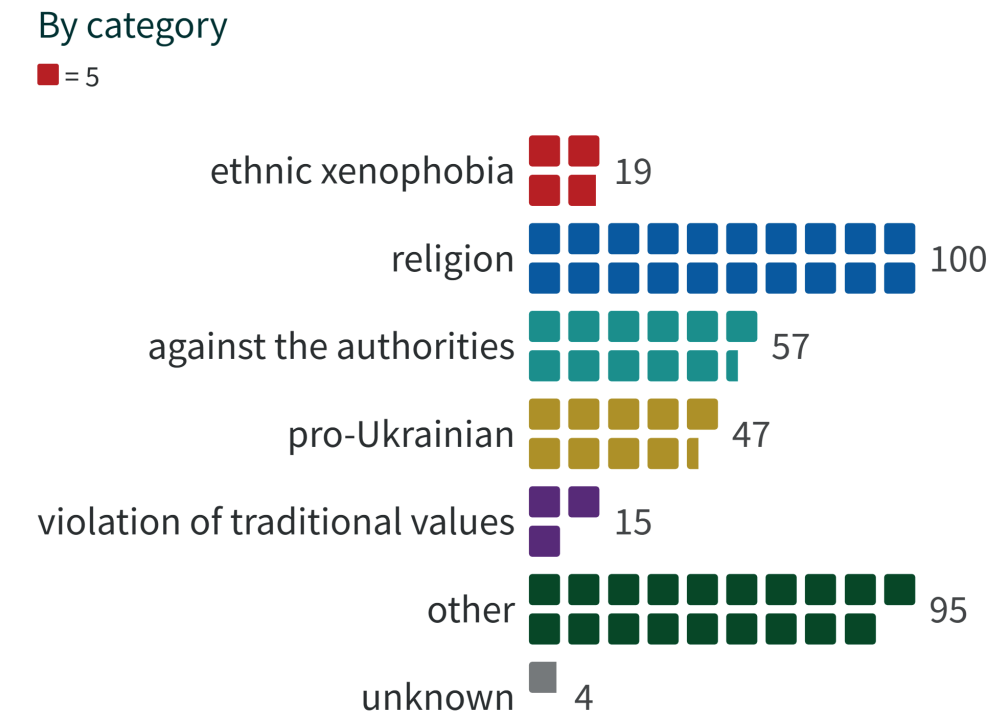
Source: SOVA Research Center, 2025
“Yes” – the act is related to xenophobia and the conviction is appropriate; “no” – the conviction is inappropriate; “other” – conviction may be justified but unrelated to countering xenophobia.
An individual may be convicted for multiple acts across different categories, each of which can be rated separately. The figures include only defendants who received a court-imposed punishment.

We know of 169 new cases against 311 individuals opened in 2024 under the articles on membership in banned organizations. Their distribution across categories is as follows:

Act Category	Number of Cases	Number of Persons Involved
Ethnic Xenophobia	10	19
Religion	39	100
Against the Authorities	49	57
Pro-Ukrainian	32	47
Violation of Traditional Values	9	15
Other	34	95
Unknown	2	4
Total	174	336

Our preliminary estimates suggest that at least 87 of these cases against 131 individuals were initiated inappropriately.

2024 cases on involvement in extremist and terrorist associations: Suspects and defendants



Source: SOVA Research Center, 2025

Federal List of Extremist Materials

In 2024, the growth rate of the Federal List of Extremist Materials (FLEM) decreased by over fifty percent compared to the previous year. The list was updated 18 times, and 38 entries were added to it (vs. 82 the year before).³⁶ By the end of 2024, the list contained 5454 entries (5470 as of July 1, 2025). Notably, the annual growth of the list has been slowing down since 2018, in an apparent indication that the authorities are aware of the FLEM’s ineffectiveness as a mechanism for countering extremism.

Thematically, the additions were distributed as follows:

- Xenophobic materials of modern Russian nationalists (songs, pictures) – 2 entries;
- “Citizens of the USSR” leaflet – 1 entry;
- An article from the “Bulletin of the Balkar People” collection about the 2008 conflict between Kabardians and Balkars in the village of Kyondelen – 1 entry;
- Radical Ukrainian materials calling for the annihilation of Russians (book, songs) – 12 entries;
- Other Ukrainian materials (books by Ukrainian authors) – 9 entries;
- A book from the “Sensei of Shambhala” series, published by the Ukrainian movement Allatra, and its electronic version – 2 entries;
- Satanist books – 5 entries;
- A militant Islamists’ material (“Who has diverted?!” (*Kto zhe otklonilsya?!*), a book about the differences between Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State) – 1 entry;
- Songs about school shootings – 3 entries;
- Unknown materials – 2 entries.

Thus, deviating from usual patterns, materials from Russian nationalists and neo-Nazis made up only a small portion of new FLEM entries in 2024, while various materials from Ukraine constituted the majority.

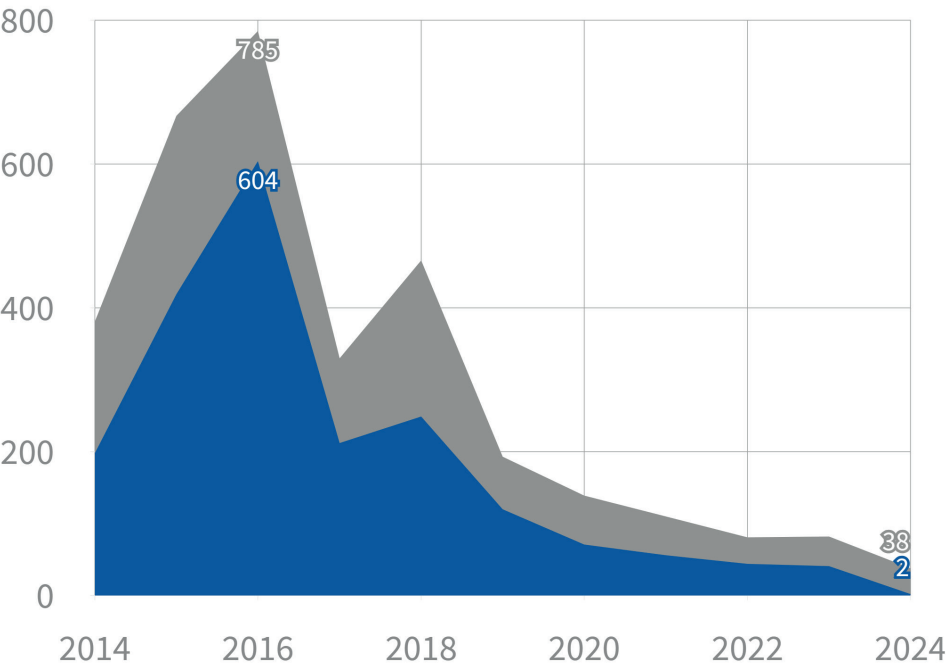
We believe that at least five of these materials were banned inappropriately. In three cases, the works in question were Ukrainian historical studies that contained no aggressive rhetoric. Another was “The Satanic Bible” by American occultist Anton Szandor LaVey, which, while including elements derogatory toward non-Satanists – Christians in particular – did not contain calls for violence. In addition, we consider the banning of the track “Columbine” by rappers Slava KPSS and Zamai to be unfounded. Upon closer examination, the song does not pertain to school shootings but rather addresses the balance of power in Russian hip-hop culture. It is worth noting that the share of inappropriately banned materials in 2024 was slightly lower than the year before – 13% (5 out of 38) vs. 16% (13 out of 82) in 2023.

Two materials are described so vaguely that their nature remains unclear. The list includes two audio files, labeled only by identification numbers, with accompanying information stating that they were posted on a VKontakte page and feature a male voice singing in a foreign language.

36 . On prosecution for dissemination of materials from the FLEM under Article 20.29 CAO (dissemination of extremist materials) in 2024, see in this volume: Sanctions for Administrative Offenses...

Growth of the Federal List of Extremist Materials: Materials by Russian nationalists vs. all others

Based on classification by SOVA Center



Source: Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation; SOVA Research Center, 2025

Recognizing Organizations as Extremist or Terrorist

In 2024, courts recognized 11 organizations as **extremist**. They included three additional “citizens of the USSR” organizations:

- People’s Council of Citizens of the USSR/RSFSR of the Amur Region (also known as: People’s Council of the Amur Region on the territory of the Amur Region of the RSFSR within the USSR, or People’s Council of the Amur Region);
- People’s Council of the RSFSR/USSR of the Kemerovo Region;
- The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics – the Renewed Federation of Equal Sovereign Socialist Republics Secretariat of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR (also known as: Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR or PSS RSFSR).

Regarding the first two entities, we know that their members had previously been prosecuted, among other charges, for anti-Semitic propaganda and calls for violence against government officials. We have no such information about the third organization, best known as the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, based in Vereshchagino, Perm Krai. Although its members had previously faced administrative and criminal liabili-

ty, they are generally known for conducting peaceful activities and showing no inclination toward violence.

Two more organizations were recognized as extremist after being charged with attempting to “undermine the constitutional order of the Russian Federation” and “seize power in the country by violent means.” However, in our view, neither organization called for the violent overthrow of the government or promoted violence against government officials.

In February, the Khabarovsk Regional Court recognized the interregional public movement “I/WE Sergei Furgal” as extremist. The prosecutor’s office stated that the “extremist ideology” of the movement was that of “inciting hatred and hostility towards representatives of government institutions” and seeking to destroy “the legal foundations and values of society.” The prosecutor’s office believes that the movement’s goal is “to create conditions for changing the foundations of the constitutional system,” and to achieve these goals, the movement allegedly “calls for carrying out extremist and terrorist activities, organizing mass riots, and committing violent acts against government officials, etc.” Ex-governor’s supporters did hold protests without permits (mainly in 2020), but these were generally peaceful. We believe that such actions cannot be interpreted as attempts at a violent change of power in the country and do not fall under the definition of extremist activity. There are only five known cases of criminal prosecution against participants in pro-Furgal rallies in different regions under the article on repeated violation of the regulations for holding public events (three cases were dismissed) and one court case on the use of violence against a government official. There were no criminal cases against Furgal’s supporters under “extremist” articles; few of them faced administrative charges, but we classified these as inappropriate.

In June, the Omsk Regional Court recognized the Omsk Civic Association (*Omskoye grazhdanskoye obyedineniye*, OGO) as an extremist organization. The OGO described itself as an “association of free citizens from Omsk.” Its Telegram channel published news on issues such as corruption in the Omsk Region and the special military operation in Ukraine, and provided human rights guidance, including information on accessing alternative civilian service. One of the association’s founders was activist Nikolai Rodkin, who had left Russia. A criminal case against him was opened in August of the previous year under Article 282 Part 1 CC for “humiliating the dignity of a group of persons united by serving on the Supreme Court” (previously, he was improperly fined under Article 20.3.1 CAO for harsh statements against the police). According to the prosecutor’s office, the association held mass events, including some without official permits, and could allegedly be used by “anti-Russian forces” to bring about regime change. Additionally, the OGO was charged with continuing the activities of Alexei Navalny “under the guise of” anti-corruption efforts. In effect, the movement was punished for its anti-corruption investigations and political criticism.

In June, the Anti-Russian Separatist Movement and 55 of its structural divisions were declared extremist. The Ministry of Justice, which filed a lawsuit to ban the movement, accused it of activities “to destroy the multinational unity and territorial integrity of Russia.” The case mainly involved organizations operating outside of Russia at the time. Among them were the Free Russia Foundation (previously recognized as an “undesirable organization”), the Free Nations League, the Asians of Russia Foundation, the Human Rights Center Ichkeria, the International Committee of Indigenous Peoples of Russia, and other movements and associations. Obviously, there is no single organization called the “Anti-Russian Separatist Movement” and linked by a common structure. Instead, the authorities banned a range of organizations and activist initiatives – separatist, regionalist,

or those advocating for the protection of the cultural rights of Russia's peoples. Such bans allow law enforcement to prosecute a wide array of activists remaining in Russia by charging them with involvement in a supposed common structure. In our view, restrictions are only justified in cases of calls for violent separatism; peaceful discussions concerning the status of a particular territory should not be subject to limitation.

In August 2024, the Supreme Court of the Republic of Tatarstan declared the Tatar People's Party "Renaissance" (*Yanarysh Tatar Halyk Partiyase*) an extremist organization. Its members allegedly advocated armed struggle for the independence of Tatarstan, operated several Telegram groups, and published videos online calling for resistance (their YouTube channel had approximately one thousand subscribers). The court's decision also noted that criminal and administrative cases had previously been initiated against the party's leader and members. According to the court, several former members of the All-Tatar Public Center (*Vsetatarsky Obshchestvenny Tsent*, VTOTs), recognized as an extremist organization in 2022, were also members of Yanarysh. The VTOTs leadership had established the Independent Government of Tatarstan (in exile), which was likewise designated as extremist in 2024 as part of the above-mentioned "Anti-Russian Separatist Movement."

In December, the St. Petersburg City Court recognized the local Scientology Church as an extremist organization (still not included on the List of Extremist Organizations by mid-2025). In its claim, the prosecutor's office indicated that the activities of the St. Petersburg Scientology Church were aimed at "inciting hatred and enmity, humiliating the dignity of individuals identified on the basis of their belonging to social groups, and calling for the refusal to comply with social norms and laws." The claim was related to a [sentence](#) in an extremist community case issued against Scientologists in St. Petersburg, which, in our opinion, was inappropriate. One of the convicted individuals, Ivan Matsitsky, head of the local Church of Scientology, was also listed as a defendant in the banning case. In court, representatives of the Scientologists pointed out that their St. Petersburg organization had ceased to exist back in 2022, and that its members, who were found guilty in the extremist community case, had left Russia. Nevertheless, the prosecutor's claim was upheld. In our assessment, assertions of exclusive spiritual authority are inherent to virtually all religious traditions, and the imposition of sanctions against Scientologists, or the prohibition of their literature on this ground, cannot be regarded as legitimate. The teachings of Scientology's founder, L. Ron Hubbard, indeed recommend that, for the welfare of the broader community of believers, certain individuals exhibiting particular attitudes should be excluded from offering consultations or instruction, and that close contact with them should be avoided, and they are best ignored. However, most religious denominations impose comparable restrictions on participation in religious practices and rituals. Such guidance to avoid or refrain from engagement with specific individuals should not, in itself, be construed as incitement to hatred or as a violation of human dignity.

In 2024, the List added three more extremist "associations of individuals." Two were banned in 2023: Entry No. 117 included Ukrainian entrepreneurs and politicians Rinat Akhmetov and Boris Kolesnikov, their relatives and business partners, and Entry No. 113 included Ukrainian entrepreneur and official Konstantin Yefimenko and his sister Yelizaveta Andreeva. The third "association," banned in 2024, included former Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko, his son Oleksiy, and business partner Oleg Kazakov (No. 112).

Two more similar "associations" were banned in 2024 and added to the list in 2025: Ukrainian businessman Yevhen Cherniak and his business partners, and journalist Alexander

Nevzorov and his wife Lidia. Another similar "association," involving vodka magnate Yuri Shefler and banned in 2024, has not yet been included in the list.

The legality of this practice of recognizing such groups of business partners and relatives as "extremist associations" raises a number of concerns.³⁷

In total, 13 organizations were added to the Federal List of Extremist Organizations in 2024, as published on the Ministry of Justice's website (compared to three in the previous year); three of them had been banned earlier, in addition to those already mentioned.³⁸ Thus, by the end of 2024, the list contained 117 entries (122 entries as of July 1, 2025).

The Forum of Free States of Post-Russia and its structural divisions were banned in November 2024. In January 2025, they were included in the list of organizations recognized as **terrorist**, published on the FSB website, which now includes 172 entries. The Forum itself is an amorphous structure that brings together paramilitary groups fighting on the side of Ukraine, as well as separatist and nationalist organizations, including Russian nationalist groups such as the Northern Brotherhood, Zaleskaya Respublika, Smolenskaya Respublika, etc.). Some of the organization names listed in the decision do not correspond to any known groups, and some entities have denied any involvement with the Forum.³⁹

Nine entries were added to the list of terrorist organizations in 2024 (vs. four the year before). Some of these organizations were banned in 2024, and some in 2023, including:

- Four Ukrainian armed formations: the Georgian Legion (banned on April 18, 2024), Dnipro-1 Regiment (December 14, 2023), Donbas 46th separate assault battalion (October 22, 2024) and a certain terrorist community created by employees of the Main Directorate of Intelligence of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine and operating in Enerhodar, Zaporizhzhia Region (August 08, 2024). In December 2024, the 2nd Donbass battalion was recognized as terrorist; it was added to the list in January 2025.
- Three Islamist associations, two of which were created in penal colonies: the Jamaat community, created in Penal Colony No. 7 of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia for Dagestan (September 22, 2023), and "Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jamaat" formed in Penal Colony No. 2 of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia for Kalmykia (October 22, 2024), as well as the "Islamic State (Jamaat) Islamic Bakkiya" [sic. as of December 14, 2023].
- Russian branch of the neo-religious syncretic movement Aum Shinrikyo (May 14, 2024).⁴⁰

37. For more details, see: Family Values. Anniversary of One Innovation in Russian Anti-Extremist Policy, SOVA Center. 2025. January 10 (<https://www.sova-center.ru/en/misuse/reports-analyses/2025/01/d47100/>).

38. These are the Executive Committee of the Council of People's Deputies of Krasnoyarsk Krai (No. 105), the Ethnic National Association (ENA, No. 106), and the LGBT International Public Movement (No. 107).

39. The Free Nations of Post-Russia Forum and its divisions added to the list of terrorist organizations, SOVA Center. 2025. January 13 (<https://www.sova-center.ru/racism-xenophobia/news/counteraction/2025/01/d50882/>).

40. The international movement Aum Shinrikyo was recognized as terrorist back in 2016. The Russian branch was banned after its head Mikhail Ustyantsev was convicted in 2020 and sentenced to 15 years in prison under Article 205⁴ Part 1 Article 205⁵ Part 1, and Article 239 Part 1 CC. He was charged with providing health services to citizens, specifically, yoga and qigong classes, supplying them with relevant religious items and literature, and collecting donations from them, which he sent to Aum Shinrikyo leaders in Japan.

Anarchist group Concept ANV (Vanguard of the People’s Will) (*Kontseptsiya A.N.V. (Avangard Narodnoy Voli)*), whose members are suspected of plotting to blow up a thermal power station in Tyumen in 2022 (May 16, 2024).

By the end of 2024, the list of terrorist organizations included 59 entities (67 as of July 1, 2025).

Summary

In 2024, the legislation on combating extremism and terrorism did not undergo significant changes. The amendments were made to refine existing mechanisms and expand their scope. As for general trends in regulating the expression of opinion and the activities of public associations, we can note the increasingly restrictive legal status of migrants, as well as sanctions against “foreign agents” and “undesirable organizations” that reflect the growing mistrust of the authorities towards any foreign presence and influence. New measures were also adopted to regulate Internet traffic and the dissemination of information online.

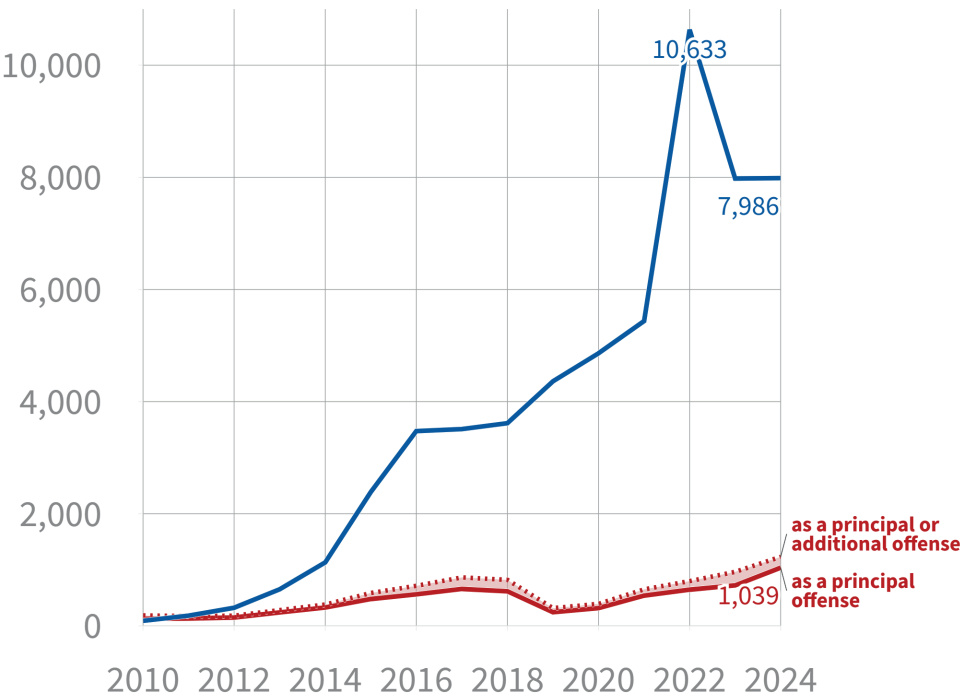
The Federal List of Extremist Materials added only three dozen items in 2024 – much more modest gains than in previous years. Prosecutors are likely losing interest in this instrument due to its ineffectiveness. Bans against organizations accused of extremism and terrorism, by contrast, appear to be an effective tool for expanding liability to a broad range of individuals connected to these groups – and for intimidating an even wider circle. In 2024, the authorities were particularly active in targeting separatist organizations: first, they banned 55 alleged separatist associations under the collective label “Anti-Russian Separatist Movement”; later, they designated a subset of these, along with other groups (172 in total), as terrorist organizations under the umbrella of participants in the Free Nations of Post-Russia Forum.

In criminal law enforcement, we noted a sharp increase (44%) in the number of people sentenced under articles on public speech. The charges were most commonly based on various statements about the military actions in Ukraine, harsh criticism of the authorities and law enforcement agencies, or manifestations of ethnic xenophobia. Article 205² CC on the propaganda of terrorism and its justification was the most frequently applied relevant provision. Law enforcement agencies thus continue to prioritize potential liability under the gravest article on public speech – calls for violence directed at influencing state authorities. At the same time, as in previous years, investigators and courts concentrate on the literal content of statements, disregarding their actual degree of public danger. The number of convictions under Article 205² CC has shown steady growth year by year, and available data on cases initiated in 2024 indicate that this trend persists.

However, in 2024, the overall increase in new defendants was significantly smaller – an 18% rise – compared with the growth in convictions. There was a drop in the number of new cases under Articles 207³ and 280³ CC on “fakes” about the army and its discrediting, respectively, while Article 280 CC on calls for extremism did not show any growth.

It is also noteworthy that the application of CAO provisions related to countering extremism in 2024 remained generally consistent with the previous year, notwithstanding the fact that such measures have traditionally shown more dynamic growth, given the preventive function ascribed to the CAO.

Individuals sanctioned under CC and CAO provisions on public speech



Source: Judicial Department of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation, 2025
Articles included: 148 Parts 1 and 2, 205.2, 207.3, 280, 280.1, 280.3, 280.4, 282, 282.4, 284.2, 354.1 CC
20.3, 20.3.1, 20.3.2, 20.3.3, 20.3.4, 20.29, 13.48 CAO

The proportion of individuals sentenced to imprisonment on the basis of public statements in 2024 showed only a marginal increase compared to 2023: 36 % versus 34 %. It should also be noted that a considerable share of these convictions was issued in absentia, with their number in 2024 exceeding that of the previous year. By contrast, the growth observed between 2021 and 2023 was much more substantial. At the same time, if we shift the focus from relative figures to absolute numbers, the upward trend appears far more pronounced: the number of individuals actually deprived of liberty for speech has risen steadily from 108 in 2020 to 370 in 2024.

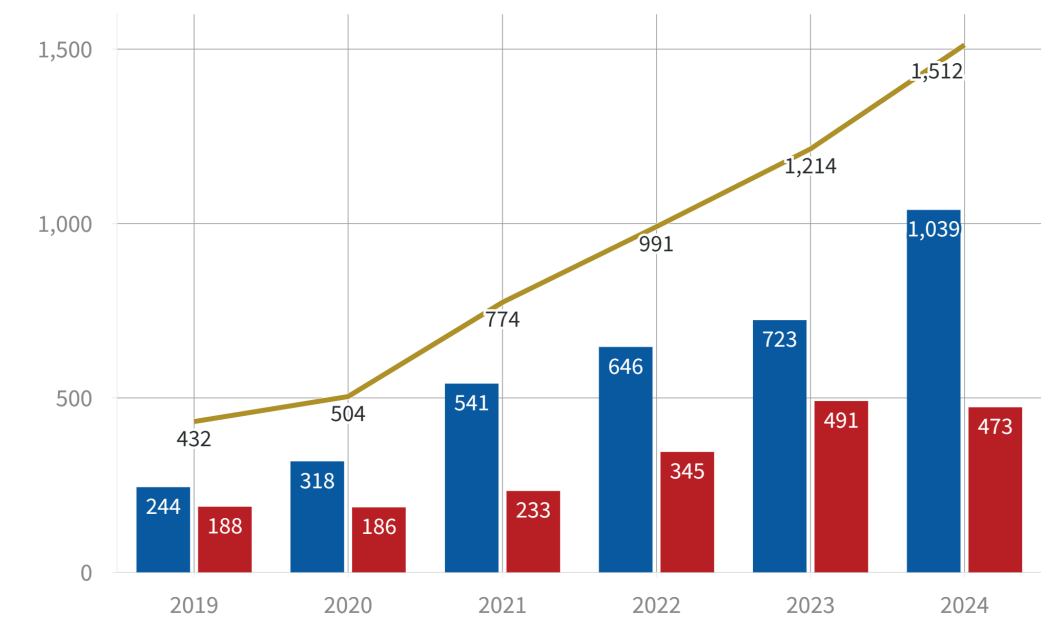
As for involvement in prohibited associations, data from the Judicial Department of the Supreme Court on individuals convicted under the relevant articles of the CC indicate that, after four consecutive years of annual growth, their number decreased in 2024 by 4 % compared to the previous year. It is difficult to assess the number of defendants in newly initiated criminal cases in 2024 due to incomplete information, but it can be assumed that the increase was minimal or even negative relative to 2023. This shift is primarily attributable to a decline in the number of prosecutions under the most frequently applied provision of this kind – Ar-

ticle 282² CC on involvement in extremist organizations. Over the past decade, this article has been applied most often against Jehovah’s Witnesses; however, their prosecution declined significantly in 2024. Consequently, the share of individuals prosecuted under this article for involvement in the AUE criminal subculture, militant Islamist groups, opposition structures, and pro-Ukrainian organizations has likely increased.

The graph below shows the aggregated Judicial Department data on the law enforcement trends in our area of interest over the past six years. We see that after a large increase in 2021, the number of people convicted under the relevant articles of the CC demonstrated an almost linear annual increase in 2022–2024; it reached 25% in 2024.

Individuals convicted for public speech and involvement in extremist or terrorist associations, and total convictions

As a principal offense



Source: Judicial Department of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation, 2025
Articles included: 148 Parts 1 and 2, 205.2, 205.4, 207.3, 280, 280.1, 280.3, 280.4, 282, 282.1, 282.2, 282.3, 282.4, 284.2, 354.1 CC

Our data is still significantly incomplete, so we cannot provide the exact number of people facing new charges for public statements or involvement in extremist and terrorist organizations. We can only assume that in 2025, the increase in convictions will be smaller than in 2024.

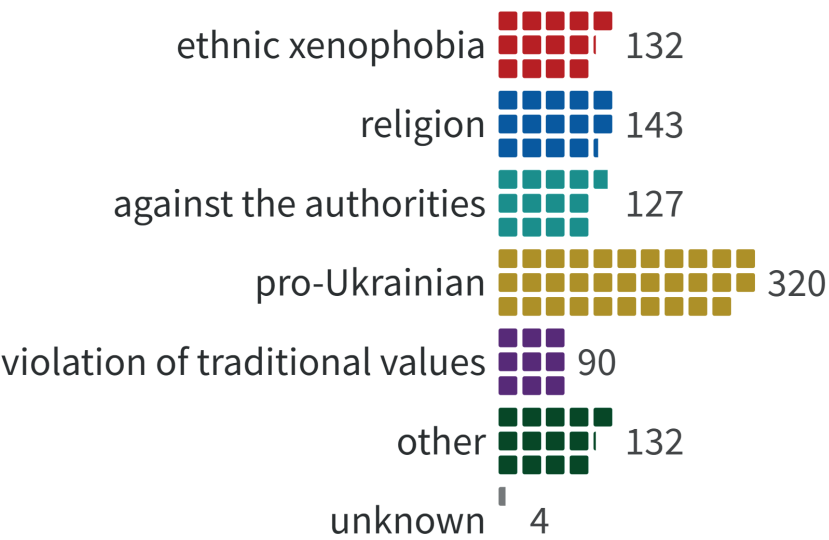
When summing up the new cases reported in 2024, they are distributed across the categories as follows:

Act Category	Number of Cases	Number of Persons Involved
Ethnic Xenophobia	112	132
Religion	74	143
Against the Authorities	117	127
Pro-Ukrainian	296	320
Violation of traditional values	79	90
Other	72	132
Unknown	2	4
Total	743	937

2024 cases on public speech and involvement in extremist or terrorist associations: Suspects and defendants

By category

■ = 10

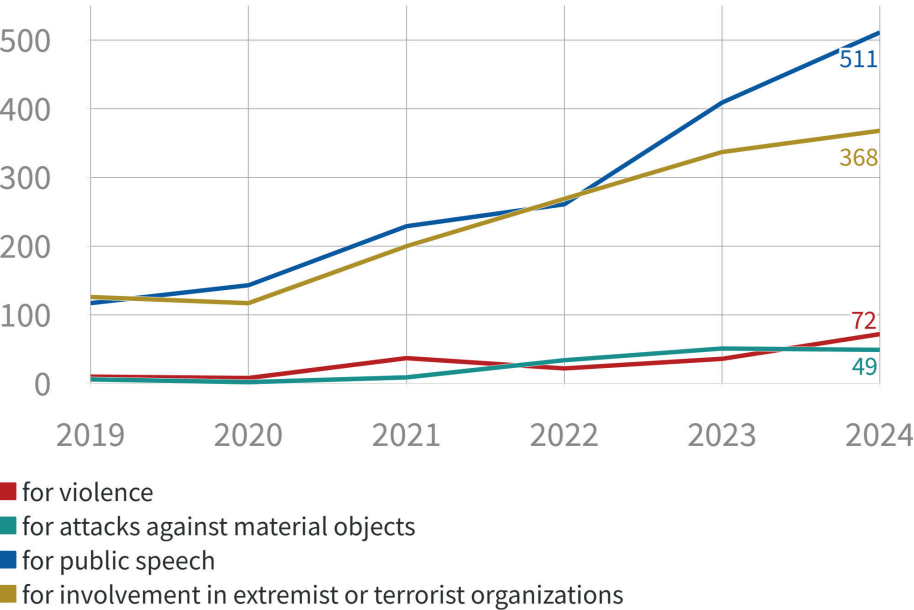


Source: SOVA Research Center, 2025

It would be premature to conclude that, in 2024, the law enforcement system had reached a plateau in legal actions against prohibited public statements and participation in banned organizations. At the same time, it is evident that the growing incidence of terrorist acts and sabotage amid the ongoing armed conflict, together with the rise in hate crimes, has diverted law enforcement agencies from fully enforcing the system of societal control measures carefully developed over many years – namely, the Russian anti-extremist legislation.

Individuals convicted under Criminal Code provisions on extremism

By type of crime



Source: SOVA Research Center, 2025
The figures include only defendants who received a court-imposed punishment.
An individual can be sentenced for acts of more than one type.

Challenges to Freedom of Conscience in Russia in 2024

This report is based on the information gathered through monitoring carried out by SOVA Center. The information is available on our website in the section “Religion in Secular Society” (www.sova-center.ru/religion), including links to sources in the media and on the Internet; only sources not noted on the website are referenced in the report. Only necessary updates are given on the events of the previous year.¹ It is not our goal to provide a comprehensive description of all events in the religious and public sphere; the events mentioned in the report tend to be illustrative of the observed trends.

Problems and stories related to the abuse of anti-extremism legislation are mainly presented in other reports dedicated to that topic².

Summary

In 2024, many of the trends that we have observed and noted in previous reports have seen further development. Most importantly, the state policy of discrimination against religious minorities has continued.

The anti-migrant campaign carried out by the authorities had a negative impact on the situation of Muslims, who during the year were subjected to pressure simultaneously from officials, law enforcement, vigilante organizations, and fellow citizens. The “hijab problem” has once again become relevant: an attempt to ban it legally at the federal level has failed, but regional legislators in the Vladimir region have included the hijab and niqab in the list of clothes not recommended for wearing in educational institutions. Most of the examples of non-state discrimination that we are aware of also targeted Muslims.

The pressure on Muslims was most clearly manifested in the situation with the construction and use of prayer facilities. The construction of mosques and Muslim prayer houses was almost always marked by protests from local residents, who often used xenophobic arguments. Occasionally, residents also objected to the presence of venues used by Muslim organizations in their neighborhoods. Such complaints have led to multiple closures of existing houses of worship (13 occurred in the Moscow region alone). Raids of mosques and houses of worship targeting illegal migrants were carried out regularly in different regions, which also disrupted worship services.

In most cases, the construction of Orthodox churches proceeded without direct conflict with local residents; however, the latter often spoke out against the construction of

1. Olga Sibireva. Challenges to Freedom of Conscience in Russia in 2023 // SOVA Center. 2024. March 25 (<https://www.sova-center.ru/en/religion/publications/2024/03/d47072/>).

2. See in this volume: Maria Kravchenko, Natalia Yudina. Counter-Extremism in 2024: Regulation of Public Speech and Maria Kravchenko, Yudina N. Organized Activity and Sanctions for Administrative Offenses Related to Extremism in 2023–2024.

new churches during public hearings. Surveys conducted in different regions show that religious buildings in general are not among the citizens' priorities: in fact, they would prefer anything else over new churches.

Some religious organizations made it to the list of organizations whose activities in Russia are considered undesirable, and some religious figures were added to the list of foreign agents, but their numbers were not dramatic. Four evangelical organizations, the Temple of Satan organization, and three religious figures were included in these lists, respectively. Administrative and criminal prosecution continued for cooperation with organizations whose activities had previously been deemed undesirable, and new sentences were imposed, including real prison time.

The criminal prosecution of Jehovah's Witnesses for organizing activities and financing an extremist organization continued. According to Yaroslav Sivulsky, Representative of the European Association of Jehovah's Witnesses, "sentences were fewer but tougher." Alexander Chagan from Togliatti received the longest punishment of eight years in prison. As before, searches of Jehovah's Witnesses' homes in the new cases were often accompanied by violations, including use of violence against believers.

As before, Protestants and Muslims were more often subjected to administrative prosecution for "illegal missionary activities." Fines remained the most frequently used form of punishment under this article, and the number of cases increased.

The intensity of criminal prosecutions for "insulting religious feelings" has increased compared to the previous year, when we also noted an increase in the number of convictions under this article. As before, the majority of convictions and new cases were related to offensive publications online.

Public defenders of religious feelings continued to be primarily concerned with the organization of public campaigns against figures and events that, in their opinion, offended these feelings. As in previous years, these defenders were activists from the Sorok Sorokov Orthodox movement in collaboration with right-wing radical associations. Notably, both sides, both defenders of religious feelings and those who, from their point of view, offended these feelings, often referenced the ongoing hostilities in Ukraine: the former emphasized the gravity of the ongoing "blasphemy," committed at the time when Russian fighters were defending Orthodoxy weapon in hand, while for the latter, their support of the Russian army served as proof of their commitment to traditional values.

Legal Regulation

During the year, legislative acts affecting the activities of religious organizations were adopted or considered.

On June 11, 2024, the State Duma adopted in the third reading, and on June 22, Vladimir Putin signed amendments to the federal laws "On Privatization of State and Municipal Property" and "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations," which prohibit the transfer of religious property from state ownership to any third parties, with the exception of religious organizations. These amendments were adopted due to the absence at that time in the current legislation of a direct ban on the alienation of religious property in a general manner, which allowed the authorities to sell such properties to third parties.

The adopted amendments made this impossible, and transactions involving the alienation of religious property concluded after 2010 can now be declared void in court.

On July 10, the State Duma passed in the third reading, and on July 22, President Putin signed amendments to Part 4 of the Civil Code, which, among other things, now includes a provision for checking new trademarks to ensure they do not insult the feelings of believers. The law was written with the participation of the Russian Orthodox Church. In accordance with the law, the Ministry of Economic Development has issued an order mandating the Interreligious Council of Russia to participate in the examination of registered trademarks conducted by Rospatent. Religious organizations involved in the examination need not be members of this council.

On July 23, the State Duma approved in the second and third readings, and on August 8, President Putin signed amendments to the Administrative Code granting the Interior Ministry the right to administratively expel foreign citizens from Russia for certain offenses, including illegal missionary activity (Part 5 of Article 5.26 of the Administrative Code).

On July 30, the State Duma passed in the second and third reading, and on August 8, President Putin signed amendments to the laws "On the Sanitary and Epidemiological Welfare of the Population" and "On the Fundamentals of Healthcare in the Russian Federation," allowing clergy of centralized religious organizations to visit patients in intensive care units to conduct worship services. In November, the Ministry of Health approved new requirements for clergy visits to hospitals in accordance with the adopted amendments. The document gave the clergy of centralized religious organizations the right to visit hospitals at the invitation of the patients themselves or their relatives, but only with the permission of the head of the medical institution. The Ministry of Health recommended that medical institutions appoint employees responsible for organizing such visits and provide rooms for meetings with spiritual mentors and performing religious rituals. Clergy will not be visiting infectious diseases departments and, in case of a quarantine, patients from other departments. As the draft was being discussed, the Russian Orthodox Church tried to strike out this paragraph, but the Ministry of Health refused to oblige.

On November 12, the State Duma passed in the third reading, and on November 23, President Putin signed amendments to the Code of Administrative Offences, introducing the liability for the propaganda of child-free lifestyle in the media, the Internet, and movies. After the first reading, Patriarch Kirill, who generally supported the bill, asked its authors to add exemption for religious celibacy. His request was granted, and a note was added to the bill's second reading to clarify that *"it is not an administrative offense to disseminate information about monasticism and the monastic way of life, observance of the vow of celibacy and related refusal to procreate and (or) to commit public actions aimed at presenting monasticism and the monastic way of life, observance of the vow of celibacy and related refusal of procreation as attractive, if such information and public actions are based on the internal regulations of centralized religious organizations or religious organizations within their structure."*³

In this form, the bill was adopted in its final reading. Thus, the dissemination of information about celibacy within the doctrine of those religious associations that do not have a centralized organization in Russia will now be punishable.

3. Federal Law No. 401-FZ, dated November 23, 2024, "On Amendments to Article 6.21 of the Code of Administrative Offences of the Russian Federation" // System of Official Publication of Electronic Legal Acts. 2024. November 23 (<http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202411230022?index=2>).

On October 22, the Ministry of Education and Youth Policy of the Vladimir region issued an order changing the requirements for schoolchildren’s clothing and banning the wearing of religious clothing in schools. The order expanded a 2017 decree regulating student clothing by adding hijabs, niqabs, and other religious clothing to the list of items that are not recommended for school wear. The regional branch of the Ministry clarified that the changes “*ensure the secular nature of state and municipal educational institutions and the preservation in them of religious neutrality.*”⁴

Bills not (yet) developed

The aforementioned regional ban on the wearing of religious clothing in schools was undoubtedly inspired by attempts to legally ban religious clothing at the federal level, but these projects have not been developed.

On May 20, Valery Fadeyev, Chairman of the Presidential Council for the Development of Civil Society and Human Rights, in an interview with *Parlamentskaya Gazeta* said that the wearing of niqabs (a garment for Muslim women that covers entire body and face, leaving only a slit for the eyes) should be banned, “since nowadays niqabs are banned even in some Central Asian countries.”

A week later, at the initiative of Vladislav Davankov, first deputy head of the New People parliamentary faction, a bill was submitted to the State Duma giving regional and municipal authorities the right to ban the wearing of niqabs and other religious clothing covering the face and giving educational institutions the right to set requirements for the appearance, color, style, and rules of wearing students’ clothes and to ban the wearing of religious clothing if more than half of the student or parent council members support this measure. The bill caused outrage among the Muslim community.

In September, the government announced that it did not support Davankov’s bill and believed that it “needed significant revision.” In January 2025, the author withdrew the bill.

Another bill to ban niqabs was drafted by the Communist Party of the Russian Federation almost simultaneously with New People. Notably, the word “niqab” was never mentioned in the text of this bill, however, the authors provided an extensive list of cases when a citizen’s closed face should not be considered administrative offence, and religious clothing was deliberately not included in this list. As Mikhail Matveyev, one of the main authors of the bill, explained, “*we are moving away from arguments about religious clothing so as not to give “the infringed” another reason to make a row and lead us into arguments about what fashion is in this or that desert of the world today. What we are concerned about is the safety of Russian citizens.*”⁵

The government’s feedback to this bill was negative, and it was never submitted to the State Duma.

4 . Due to the large volume of media inquiries regarding Order No. 32-n of the Ministry of Education and Youth Policy of the Vladimir region dated October 22, 2024, we consider it necessary to provide the following explanations // Ministry of Education and Youth Policy of the Vladimir region. 2024. October 26 (<https://министерство.образование33.рф/pres-tsentr/news/76279/>).

5 . The bill banning the wearing of face-concealing clothing is ready and has been submitted by me and my colleague Obukhov for official review by the Government of the Russian Federation.... // Mikhail Matveyev Komment Telegram channel. 2024. June 11 (<https://t.me/matveevkomment/7835>).

Two more bills (neither of which has been adopted) concerning the activities of religious organizations have caused a wide public resonance. Both of them amend the law “On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations.”

On October 30, a draft amendment to Article 16 of this Law, developed by a group of deputies from the New People party, was submitted to the State Duma. The bill introduces a ban on holding worship services in non-residential premises of apartment buildings, as well as on holding systematic worship services in residential premises. According to the explanatory note, the proposed measures are aimed against “*gatherings of large groups of strangers who do not reside in an apartment building in question, including illegal migrants,*” which “*increase the risks of worsening the criminal situation in the area, provoke domestic conflicts, and violate fire and public safety standards.*”⁶

Commenting on this legislative initiative, representatives of various religious organizations noted that it contradicts the principle of freedom of conscience and violates the Constitution. Even the Head of the Legal Department of the Moscow Patriarchate, Abbess Xenia Chernega, who supported the bill as a whole, expressed concern that its adoption would “*place the sacraments of Communion, Unction, and other religious rites performed by clergymen in residential buildings at the request of citizens living in them, including those seriously ill or near death, under threat of prohibition.*”⁷

In response to the concerns expressed by believers, Oleg Leonov, a member of the New People faction and deputy chairman of the State Duma Committee for the Development of Civil Society and Public and Religious Associations, explained that the bill was aimed solely against “sects,” which “as a rule, do not have their own temples,” and that the proposed measures would not prevent religious ceremonies from being carried out at home.

Another draft amendment to the same law was introduced in December by deputies of the National Assembly of the Republic of Dagestan. This bill introduces an indefinite ban on the establishment of religious organizations by the leaders and members of the governing bodies of prohibited organizations; grants regional authorities the right to coordinate with the territorial bodies of the Ministry of Justice decisions on registration of local and centralized religious organizations; deprives religious organizations that are not part of centralized organizations of the right to distribute religious literature and religious objects; and extends the timeframe for making decisions on the registration of religious associations from one month to six months “for carrying out a state religious expert examination.”

Several other legislative acts that have been adopted or are currently under consideration, including those related to the activities of religious organizations, relate to anti-extremist legislation, and are therefore mentioned in the other report⁸.

6 . Note to Bill No. 755625-8 // Legislative support system (SOZD). 2024. October 30 (<https://sozd.duma.gov.ru/bill/755625-8>).

7 . Comment by the Head of the Legal Department on the legislative initiative aimed at prohibiting worship in residential premises // Patriarchia.ru. 2024. November 14 (<http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/6174671.html>).

8 . The report will soon be published on our website.

Problems Concerning Places of Worship

Problems Concerning the Construction of Temples

As before, religious organizations occasionally encountered difficulties with the construction of religious buildings.

The construction of Orthodox churches led to conflicts less frequently than in previous years. The largest was the ongoing conflict over the construction of a temple on an embankment in Krasnodar's Yubileyny neighborhood. Krasnodar residents protested against the construction, collected signatures for petitions to various authorities, and even turned to Putin for help, asking him to intervene and stop the construction of the temple and the destruction of the green zone. In addition to collecting signatures, solitary pickets were held, for which some of the activists were charged with administrative offences. In particular, City Duma deputy Alexander Safonov and social activist Vitaly Cherkasov were fined under Part 2 of Article 20.2 of the Administrative Code (organizing or holding rallies without notifying the authorities) for organizing the collection of signatures against the construction of the temple during a meeting with voters. Police came and talked to some of the protesters, such as the concierge of one of the houses on Klara Luchko Boulevard, who kept the signature lists. The protests continued in 2025.

We are not aware of any other conflicts as remarkable as this one, but we do know that urban residents are in general not enthusiastic about construction of Orthodox churches and religious buildings; they believe that the existing ones suffice and that other facilities are much more necessary.

These sentiments are reflected in the results of both nationwide and regional public opinion polls. For example, a June VTsIOM poll showed that only 8% of Russians believe that there are not enough functioning Orthodox churches in their locality; 77% of respondents say there are enough temples in their locality, and 10% of respondents believe that there are too many. The shortage of churches was mainly reported by rural residents (14%), while the excess was noted by residents of Moscow and St. Petersburg (21%)⁹. The survey results published in January by the Omsk authorities showed that 90% believed that there were enough religious buildings and construction of new ones was not necessary¹⁰.

In practice, citizens most often spoke against construction of new churches during public hearings or in social networks and online voting, but in most cases their protests did not lead to major conflicts.

For example, in Tolyatti, the Samara region, the hearing participants protested against the construction of a temple near 40 Years of Victory Street. Following the hearing, the city authorities declined the approval of the construction, proposed by the parish of the

9. The Path to the Temple // Russian Public Opinion Research Center (VTsIOM). 2024. June 18 (<https://wciom.ru/analytical-reviews/analiticheskii-obzor/doroga-k-khramu>).

10. Residents of Omsk oppose the construction of temples and mosques // Aktzenty. 2024. January 19 (<https://akcent.site/novosti/28768>).

Church of the Great Martyr Anastasia Uzoreshitelnitsa [Deliverer from Potions], and announced the construction of a kindergarten there instead. The hearing participants in Samara, who discussed the potential for construction on Novo-Sadovaya Street, also spoke in favor of a kindergarten or a school instead of a church.

Residents of the Pushkinsky district in the city of Zavolzhye, Nizhny Novgorod region, appealed to the head of the Gorodetsky Municipal District, Alexander Mudrov, to revoke the decision to build a temple near residential buildings on Grunin and Bauman streets and move it closer to the cemetery.

Residents of Novosibirsk demanded to stop the construction of a church on Nemirovich-Danchenko Street, fearing that the heating infrastructure would be damaged, leaving the entire residential area without heating. The mayor's office confirmed that although the site had indeed been handed over to the ROC for free use, no building permit had been issued.

The St. Petersburg authorities refused to hand over part of the Sestroretsk Dunes Nature Reserve to the church for the construction of a spiritual and educational center with wellness and restaurant compounds and a hotel. Local residents have collected more than 800 signatures against the construction and tree felling.

Often, however, the authorities ignored the opponents of construction even when they made up the majority of votes at public hearings. Thus, after the majority at the public hearing voted against changing the status of a land plot at the Akhedzhak Datcha and the construction of a temple there, the Krasnodar Land Use and Development Commission recommended rejecting all the votes against the diocesan project and counting only the five votes in support of the construction. The site in question is located near the backwater of the Kuban River and the Park of the 30th Anniversary of Victory, previously owned by Louise Akhedzhak, the daughter of the former deputy governor of the Krasnodar Territory, and is a protected area.

The St. Petersburg authorities recommended not taking into account the voices against the construction of a temple in memory of the participants of the SMO (special military operation) at the corner of Peterburgskoe Chaussee and Detskoslensky Boulevard in Pushkin, opposed by the majority of participants in both the public debate and the survey in the Citizen Pushkin local activists group.

The Murmansk authorities similarly ignored the residents' opinion and went ahead with the construction of the St. Nicholas Cathedral of the Savior's Transfiguration on Kapitän Burkov Street. Most of the public debate participants, with honorary residents of the city and Alexander Makarevich, a deputy of the Murmansk Regional Duma, among them, asked for the construction to be moved elsewhere so as not to overload the infrastructure and the narrow road and not to exceed the height of the Alyosha Memorial to the Defenders of the Soviet Arctic, the symbol of the city.

The Samara authorities gave permission to use the land plot opposite the Press House, at the intersection of Aurora and Garazhnaya Streets, for the construction of a temple, although the public hearings participants would prefer to see an educational institution here.

The mayor of Vladivostok issued a permit for the use of a land plot on Basargin Street for religious activities, although the majority of residents of the area who participated in the discussion did not support the building of a church there.

In Nizhny Novgorod, after local residents' protests, the diocese decided against the building of two churches: on Hero Smirnov Street in the Avtozavodsky district and in the green zone in the Prioksky district. In the second case, the city authorities counted only part of the votes cast against the construction, ignoring the majority of participants, but

then the latter appealed to the prosecutor’s office, and the diocese itself announced it would move the construction elsewhere.

As in the previous year, there were many protests in different regions against the construction of mosques. In most cases, the main reason for the discontent of local residents, as in the case of Orthodox churches, were potential inconveniences associated with the proximity of a religious building – aggravated transport situation, an increased load on infrastructure, noise, or the locals’ preference to see the construction of facilities other than mosques.

This was the case, for example, in Yelizovo, Kamchatka Krai, where citizens protested against the construction of a mosque at public hearings; in Vladivostok, whose residents opposed the conversion of a former next-door store into a Muslim prayer house; and in Khabarovsk, where the local residents’ protests against mosque construction mosque made the Investigative Committee look into the legality of the site use.

In addition to the disruptions to daily life, protesters often cited the risks associated with the growing number of migrants visiting the mosque. Thus, residents of New Moscow opposed the construction of an interfaith center with a mosque in the Kommunarka district, as they believe the criminal situation in the area would be aggravated *“manifested due to the presence of such a large ideological complex serving a huge number of migrants who are extremely radicalized against Russian people.”*¹¹ Opponents of the construction appealed to Putin and the head of the Investigative Committee, Alexander Bastrykin, with a request to intervene and prevent *“people from Central Asia from replacing us.”*

Residents of the Verkhnyaya Kurya district of Perm, who also opposed the construction of a mosque, shared with Bastrykin their apprehension of a worsening criminal situation and the “lawlessness” caused by migrants. The opponents of the mosque did not limit themselves to appeals on social networks and expressed their views in graffiti, writing on the fence surrounding the construction site: *“return the land to the children. This is where a school should be.”* The head of the Investigative Committee is now monitoring the situation with the construction of the mosque, but the protests continued in early 2025.

In most cases, the authorities supported opponents of the construction of mosques. For example, the authorities of Bataysk, the Rostov region, refused to change the purpose of a land plot on Limanny Passage where a mosque was to be erected after most of the participants of the public discussion voted against the changing of the site status and against the construction.

After the local residents’ protests, the Yekaterinburg authorities refused to issue a permit to the Muslim community Islam Nuri to build a charity house in the village of Sadovy. The city administration cited the threat to environmental safety due to the proximity of the cattle burial ground and the increased burden on the transport and engineering infrastructure of the area as the justification for the refusal.

Protests against the construction of a mosque in Ufa led to the city authorities terminating the agreement with the Muslim community on the allocation of a land plot on Mendeleev Street. Opponents of the construction were wary of the felling of trees, noise, and other inconveniences associated with the activities of a religious organization, as well as the influx of migrants. In addition, they expressed preference for the construction

11. Residents of Kommunarka oppose the construction of an interfaith center // Telegram channel Tsargrad-TV. 2024. October 14 (<https://t.me/tsargradtv/91062>).

of a social facility, not a religious one, on that sire – a children’s educational or medical institution.

We are not aware of any conflicts related to the construction of religious buildings of other religions.

Problems With the Use of Existing Buildings

As in the previous year, Muslim organizations were most often confronted with difficulties in using existing buildings. Most of the cases known to us concerned Moscow and the Moscow region. During the year, 13 Muslim prayer houses were closed in the Moscow Region alone.¹²

In addition, three prayer houses that had previously been declared illegal by court decisions were demolished in the Moscow region: Abu Bakr in Troitsk (New Moscow), Druzhba between Mytishchi and Lobnya, and a prayer house near the village of Kiovo near Mytishchi.

As a rule, the inspections, resulting in sanctions against Muslim prayer premises, were carried out after complaints from local residents, who were unhappy about the proximity of a religious organization. Similarly to protests against the construction of mosques, anti-migrant rhetoric was often used. For instance, after residents of the village of Malakhovka complained in a video message to Putin about the large number of migrants gathering in the prayer house and posing a danger to local residents, the agreement between the Lyubertsy authorities and the local Muslim religious organization Svet on the gratuitous use of the building was terminated. Interestingly, the head of the community, Imam Ramil Rahmankulov, attempted to save the prayer house and stressed that his community had been sending humanitarian aid to Donbass since 2014, and was now helping the Russians fighting in Ukraine, but officials ignored these arguments and terminated the lease.

Such local residents’ complaints often enjoyed the support of radical right-wing organizations. For example, residents of an apartment building on Dmitrovskoye Chaussée in Moscow, supported by Russkaya Obschina [Russian Community], appealed to Bastrykin demanding that a Muslim prayer room located in the building, where hundreds of people gathered on Fridays, be shut down. Residents of Balashikha, near Moscow, also complained about the inconveniences associated with the Iman Muslim prayer house, visited by “crowds of migrants.” Their complaints were also supported by Russkaya Obschina.

Orthodox organizations outside the jurisdiction of the Russian Orthodox Church also faced difficulties in using their property.

In Noginsk, near Moscow, the Trinity Church under the jurisdiction of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine was demolished after the court decision to demolish it as an illegal building was made back in 2016 (at that time the parish referred to itself as the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kiev Patriarchate). The parish tried to appeal this decision all the way to the European Court of Human Rights, but in 2022 the ECHR found the demolition decision lawful and the parish’s complaint unacceptable.

The administration of Slavyansk-on-Kuban tried to get the court to recognize the Pokrovsko-Tikhonovsky Temple of the Russian Orthodox Church, built on a plot belong-

12. During the year, 13 prayer houses were closed in the Moscow region. // Moskovskaya Oblast 24. 2025. January 16 (<https://mo-24.ru/za-god-v-podmoskove-zakryli-13-molelnyh-domov/>).

ing to the bishop of this church, as illegal and demolish it, but the court found that the building was built lawfully and dismissed the claim.

We are aware of very few cases of other religious organizations having problems with using existing property. The seizure of property from Jehovah's Witnesses continued. We are aware of such seizures in four regions: In Moscow, a three-storey house in the Mikhalkovo estate area, two apartments and a basement near Sretensky Boulevard and non-residential premises in the Northern Administrative District were seized; in Tyumen, a plot of land and an apartment building; in Kazan, three four-room apartments in the Vakhitovsky district; and in Kuibyshev, the Novosibirsk region, a plot and an uninhabited building. In all cases, the courts ruled that the donations of property to foreign organizations of Jehovah's Witnesses were fictitious and seized it in favor of the state. The Office of the Federal Register for the Chuvash Republic issued a warning to the owner of an apartment building in the village of Pihtulino, where the Cheboksary Society for Krishna Consciousness was holding meetings. An inspection, carried out after neighbors complained about the use of the house as a religious facility, established that the building was originally built as a place of worship, but on a site intended for residential development. The warning suggested that the building owner stop the misuse of the site or change the type of permitted use.

The Abakan City Court seized a land plot from the local religious organization of Evangelical Christians (Pentecostals) "Church of Glorification" for debts. The church failed to pay the fine imposed in July 2022. Together with the late fees, the total amounted to almost 850,000 rubles.

A long-term conflict over the building of the House of the Gospel in St. Petersburg, which the Baptist community sought access to, has finally been resolved. The building is surrounded by the territory of the Elektroapparat factory, and for a long time attempts to negotiate access were unsuccessful. In the end, the Baptist community received the keys to the building and was able to begin restoration work and hold worship services.

Conflicts Over the Transfer of State and Municipal Property to Religious Organizations

As before, state and municipal property continued to be transferred to religious organizations from time to time, and most often to the Russian Orthodox Church. We are not aware of any cases where such transfers caused conflicts.

For example, in the Solnechnogorsk district of the Moscow region, the building of the Church of St. Michael the Archangel, designed by Vasily Bazhenov, was transferred to the parish of the village of Tarakanovo. The parish has been restoring this church since 2006. It is an object of cultural heritage of regional importance.

The Ministry of Property and Land Relations of the Vladimir region has transferred to the St. Andrew's [stauropegial](#) Monastery of Moscow the Church of the Intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, also an object of cultural heritage of regional significance, built in 1777 in the village of Kliny in the Kolchuginsky district.

Ufa City Hall has transferred to the ownership of the Ufa Diocese the land plot under the Cathedral of the Nativity of the Virgin, previously in perpetual use of the diocese.

Sometimes the property was transferred to other religious organizations. For example, St. Petersburg authorities handed over to the Catholic parish of Our Lady of Lourdes the building of the House of the Clergy in Kovensky Pereulok, where historically the Sunday school and the office were located. And in the Leningrad Region, the Vuoksela Church building near Priozersk was transferred to the ownership of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria.

In February, the Samara Region Arbitration Court granted the claim of the local "Husain's Name" Muslim religious organization to the Department of Urban Planning, the Mayor's office, and the administration of the Kuibyshev district of Samara for recognition of ownership of the mosque building on the Kryazhskoye Chausee.

In Tyumen, the Muslim religious organization Krinkul was able to confirm, after several years, its ownership of the school building in the Kazarovo neighborhood. According to archival data, the building was built as a mosque, but it housed a local school, and the Muslim community did not claim it. After the school moved, the Muslims tried to claim ownership of the former mosque, but the city authorities handed it over to the Centralized City Library System instead. The community filed a lawsuit and passed several courts. In September, the court of appeal confirmed that the community could indeed claim the ownership of the building of the former mosque.

In some cases, religious organizations were unable to obtain the rights to the property even through the court. For example, in Yaroslavl, the parish of the Church of St. Leontius of Rostov was unable to defend its ownership of an uninhabited building where a boiler room, an icon painting workshop, and utility rooms were located. Although the parish had completed the restoration of the building, which it had received for perpetual use, installed windows and doors, and connected electricity and other utilities, the regional arbitration court ruled that the ownership of the building remains with the city.

The transfer of museum property to the Russian Orthodox Church continued, and as a rule such transfers proceeded without disputes. In January, Andrei Rublev's Trinity icon, transferred to the use of the Russian Orthodox Church a year earlier, was displayed for worship at Christ the Savior Cathedral, where it remained until June, although representatives of the Ministry of Culture had promised that the icon would be sent for a lengthy and extensive restoration. In June, it was moved to the Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius, where it is to stay permanently. The transportation of the 15th century artifact first to Christ the Savior Cathedral and then to the Lavra was carried out without a special climate controlled case, and in the Lavra, it is exhibited in a regular display case that cannot guarantee the very specific temperature and humidity conditions required for the icon's preservation.

The process of transferring the Ryazan Kremlin's cathedrals and churches to the Russian Orthodox Church has been completed. In November, the Church of the Descent of the Holy Spirit, the last church belonging to the museum compound, which housed the museum library, was transferred to the Ryazan Diocese.

The authorities of the Kurgan region have concluded an agreement with the diocese on the transfer of icons, currently kept in the storerooms of museums, that were seized from churches during the Soviet times. In January, the first icon was transferred to the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral in Kurgan.

In Zabaykalsky Krai, the debate was resumed on the possibility of transferring the building of the Decembrists' Museum to the Chita Diocese. However, the Minister of Culture of the region Irina Levkovich assured in April that *"the issue of transferring the building of the*

Decembrists' Museum to the ownership of the Russian Orthodox Church was not considered. The possibility of searching for a building and improving the surrounding area was also not discussed. There are no plans to move the museum's collection."¹³

We should add that in cases of transfer of cultural monuments, the authorities sometimes sanction religious organizations that fail to take good care of the property. For example, the Arbitration Court of the Perm region ordered the regional Spiritual Administration of Muslims to restore a mosque in the city of Osa, which is an object of cultural heritage. After an inspection had revealed the unsatisfactory condition of the mosque and minaret, the regional inspectorate for the protection of cultural heritage sites appealed to the court, since the religious organization that owned the monument had failed to respond to both the initial order to eliminate violations and the subsequent warning. According to the court's decision, the regional Spiritual Administration of Muslims will have to carry out the restoration of the mosque over the next three years.

Discrimination Based on Religion

Liquidation of Religious Organizations

Unlike in 2024, there were several cases of liquidations of religious organizations. In September, the Kurganinsky District Court of Krasnodar Krai granted the claim of the district prosecutor's office to ban the activities of the Kurganinsky House of Prayer, which is part of the International Union of Evangelical Baptist Christians, "until violations are eliminated by sending a notification about the start of the religious group's activities" to the relevant authorities. The violations, which included "illegal missionary religious activities" and the creation of a religious group without notifying the relevant authorities, were revealed in the course of a prosecutor's inspection. We do not know whether the Kurganinsk House of Prayer has resumed its activities.

In May, the Omsk Regional Court, at the request of the regional department of the Ministry of Justice, liquidated the local Greek Catholic parish of the Intercession of the Most Holy Theotokos. The reason for the liquidation was gross violations of federal law. In March, this decision was confirmed by the Court of Cassation. Earlier, a case was initiated against the minister of this parish, Igor Maksimov, under Part 1 of Article 354¹ of the Criminal Code (rehabilitation of Nazism) and Part 2 of Article 148 of the Criminal Code (insulting the religious feelings of believers, committed in places designated for worship).

In October, the Supreme Court of Crimea satisfied the claim of the regional Ministry of Justice and liquidated the independent Alushta Muslim community. The reasons for the liquidation included "actions aimed at carrying out extremist activities" and a number of violations, including the untimely expulsion from the community of its former chairman Lenur Khalilov and former member of the organization Ruslan Mesutov, who were convicted for involvement in Hizb ut-Tahrir. According to the lawyer Rustem Kyamilev, the Spiritual Ad-

13. The Ministry of Culture denied a media report about the transfer of the Decembrists' Museum in Chita to the Russian Orthodox Church // Chita online. 2024. April 19 (<https://www.chita.ru/text/culture/2024/04/19/73480499/>).

ministration of Muslims of Crimea, whose jurisdiction did not include the Alushta community, was involved in the liquidation.

In other cases, it was more of a legal statement of a fait accompli. In October, the Ros-soshansky District Court of the Voronezh region satisfied the claim of the regional Ministry of Justice to liquidate the local church of Evangelical Christian Baptists, which had effectively ceased its activities after the death of its presbyter.

In October, the Rostov Regional Court, also following a claim filed by the Ministry of Justice, liquidated the Rostov Religious Jewish Community, which was part of the Congress of the Jewish Religious Organizations and Associations in Russia (CJROAR). As in the above-mentioned case, the community had long ceased to be active.

This same court heard the cases on the liquidation of two more religious organizations, the Assyrian Church of the East in Shakhty and the Jewish Community of Novocherkassk. In the first case, the Ministry of Justice withdrew its claim as the community managed to eliminate the detected violations. We are not aware of the outcome of the other case.

Recognition of the Activities of Religious Organizations as Undesirable and of Religious Figures as Foreign Agents

The Prosecutor General's Office continued to add religious organizations to the list of organizations whose activities are recognized as undesirable in Russia, but not very actively. During the year, three evangelical non-governmental organizations were added to this list: two affiliates of the Great Commission Ministries religious organization – the Canadian Great Commission Media Ministries (GCMM, Great Commission Media Ministry, Great Commission Mission Media Service) and the American Great Commission Media Ministries (GCMM, Great Commission Media Ministry, Great Commission Mission Media Service), and their affiliate in Finland, International Russian Radio & Television (IRR/TV). In addition, the international organization the Satanic Temple (TST) was also recognized as undesirable. According to the Prosecutor General's Office, these organizations destabilize the socio-political situation in Russia and support Ukraine, the Ukrainian armed forces, the Russian opposition, and extremist organizations.

Followers of religious organizations previously recognized as undesirable were subjected to administrative and criminal prosecution. The Central District Court of Prokopyevsk, the Kemerovo region, found Sergei Mikhalev, the pastor of one of the religious groups of Evangelical Christians, who published materials of the New Generation on his VKontakte page, guilty under Part 1 of Article 284¹ of the Criminal Code (participation in the activities of an undesirable organization after administrative punishment for a similar act) and sentenced him to one year of compulsory labor with a deduction of 15% of wages, which is to be transferred to the state.

The Central District Court of Togliatti fined local resident Olga Patrolina under Article 20.33 of the Administrative Code (participation in the activities of an undesirable organization) for posting a link to a song about Christ sung in the New Generation church. Another believer, a native of Uzbekistan, was fined by the same court under the same article for publishing a sermon by the pastor of this church.

The Moscow Simonovsky District Court heard and ruled in the case of ongoing activities of Vladimir Muntian's Vozrozhdeniye [Revival] Charitable Foundation and the All-Ukrainian Spiritual Center Vozrozhdeniye religious organization, both based in Ukraine. Mikhail Koval, I. Nagornova, and N. Ukhova were accused under Part 3 of Article 284¹ of

the Criminal Code (organizing the activities of an undesirable organization). All of them admitted their guilt (Koval and Ukhova – in full, Nagornova – in part), but the verdict of the court is unknown to us. Victoria Kosheleva from Sochi was found guilty under Part 2 of Article 284¹ of the Criminal Code (provision of financial services intended to support the activities of an undesirable organization) for cooperation with the same organizations and was sentenced to two years of imprisonment in a penal colony.

In Pyatigorsk, Oksana Shchetkina, the leader of the local organization Friends of Falun Gong, was sentenced to a real prison term under Part 3 of Article 284.1 of the Criminal Code. Several other cases under the same part of the same article on cooperation with Falun Gong organizations were investigated in different regions. In Moscow, three people were charged, and two of them, Natalia Minchenkova and Gennady Buslov, were sentenced to prison. Similar cases were initiated in Krasnodar and Tomsk. The leader of the local Falun Gong organization in Mordovia, I. Maksinyaev, was convicted under the same part of the same article in January 2025 and was sentenced to compulsory labor.

Nadezhda Lai, the head of Falun Gong in Irkutsk, four residents of Krasnodar, and Zoya Orlenko, Kirill Belan, and Alexander Kozlov were fined for cooperation with Falun Gong organizations under Article 20.33 of the Administrative Code.

In addition, we have information regarding criminal cases related to cooperation with the Allatra movement. Cases have been filed against residents of Omsk and Moscow under Parts 2 and 3 of Article 284¹ of the Criminal Code. Another case has been brought against an Omsk resident under Part 1, while residents of Solnechnogorsk near Moscow, Moscow, and Bashkortostan (two women) are facing charges under Part 2 of Article 284¹.

Three religious figures were added to the list of foreign agents in 2024: Albert Ratkin, the pastor of Evangelical Christian (Pentecostal) Word of Life Church, Archbishop Grigory Mikhnov-Vaitenko of the Apostolic Orthodox Church, and priest Andrei Lvov, defrocked from the Russian Orthodox Church and converted to the Apostolic Orthodox Church, who had left Russia.

Criminal Prosecution

The criminal persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses continued. During the year, new criminal cases were opened on the continuation of the activities of an extremist organization. According to the Jehovah's Witnesses themselves, 41 people were charged in new cases (data as of mid-December). According to our data, at the beginning of March 2025, at least 143 believers were being held in colonies and pre-trial detention centers.

According to the Jehovah's Witnesses, during 2024, 116 believers were found guilty under Art. 282² (organizing the activities of an extremist organization) and Art. 282³ of the Criminal Code (financing the activities of an extremist organization); 43 of them (37%) were sentenced to prison time, and 24 got more than 5 years. According to Yaroslav Sivulsky, Representative of the European Association of Jehovah's Witnesses, *"this year, sentences were fewer but tougher."*¹⁴

14. "Sentences are fewer but tougher." Repression Against Jehovah's Witnesses: the Results of 2024 // Report by Jehovah's Witnesses. 2024. December 23.

Alexander Chagan, a Jehovah's Witness from Tolyatti, was given the longest term of eight years of imprisonment in a general regime colony with a one-year restriction of liberty and a three-year ban on participation in activities related to religious organizations. Three believers from Khabarovsk, Nikolai Polevodov, Vitaly Zhukov, and Stanislav Kim, were sentenced to terms between eight years and two months and eight years and six months, but on appeal the sentence was commuted to suspended imprisonment and a shorter term.

According to the Jehovah's Witnesses, 96 homes were searched in 2024, of which 17 were carried out in Crimea. Four cases of violence by security forces during searches and one case of torture in places of detention were recorded. In addition, Rinat Kiramov, a Jehovah's Witness from Akhtubinsk, who is serving a sentence in the Tula region, complained of torture.

Criminal persecution of representatives of other religious organizations continued too. In Izhevsk, in December, Sergey Artemyev, the pastor of the local religious organization of Evangelical Christians (Pentecostals), the Light of the World Church, was charged in court under Part 1 of Article 239 of the Criminal Code (creation of a religious association whose activities involve violence against citizens or other harm to their health, and leadership of such an association) and Paragraph B of Part 3 of Article 111 of the Criminal Code (intentional infliction of serious harm to health, resulting in mental disorder). From February to November, the pastor was under house arrest, although even the victims petitioned for a commutation of his punishment.

The investigation alleges that between 2019 and January 2024, Artemyev "conducted weekly worship services for parishioners on a paid basis, during which he deliberately and consciously used and systematically applied: methods of mental and psychological influence on a person, <...> psychological violence" with the goal of "continuing to receive money from parishioners" and extract "financial profits from the controlled adepts."¹⁵ At the same time, one of the victims, whose testimony the prosecution referred to, stated that she did not recognize herself as such, since the pastor had not caused her "the slightest harm, nor had he harmed any of the servants of the Light of the World Church." At the time of writing of this report, the case was still being considered in court.

In Ulyanovsk, a case under Parts 2 and 3 of the same article (creation of a non-profit organization whose activities involve encouraging citizens to refuse to perform civil duties or commit other illegal acts, and participation in such an organization) and Article 205² of the Criminal Code (public calls for terrorist activities, public justification of terrorism) was brought against Metropolitan Zosima (Leonid Vlasov), the leader of the Russian Orthodox Church of the Tsarist Empire. Vlasov was detained in February together with several of his followers. He calls himself the prophet, patriarch, and king of the "triune Russia" – Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus, and urges his followers to give up their passports and tax numbers. The case was brought to court in November, but the verdict had not yet been rendered at the time of writing of this report.

It is also worth noting the prosecution of followers of the *Alla Ayat* teachings under Article 282² of the Criminal Code. In Rostov-on-Don, a case was brought against five individuals under this article. Four of them – including Sergey Moiseyev, the 65-year-old

15. Court chooses preventive measure for the head of a local religious organization // Telegram Channel United Press Service of the Courts of Udmurtia. 2024. February 2 (<https://t.me/sudUdm/704>).

founder of the Rostov group – were placed in pre-trial detention, while the fifth was put under house arrest.

Restriction of Missionary Activity

The persecution of religious organizations for “illegal” missionary work continued. According to the statistics from the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation on the application of Article 5.26 of the Administrative Code (violation of legislation on freedom of conscience, freedom of religion and religious associations), the number of cases considered in 2024 increased and reached 431 (compared to 354 in 2023).

The number of persons punished under this article has also increased compared to 2023: a total of 294 persons were punished, including 184 individuals, 90 legal entities, 18 officials, and 2 people engaged in entrepreneurial activities without forming a legal entity (in 2023, a total of 228: 139, 74, 15, and 0, respectively).

Fines continued to be the most frequently used form of punishment: they were imposed in 255 cases. In 38 cases, warnings were issued to the perpetrators, and in one case mandatory work was ordered. Administrative arrest was not used as a punishment. In 15 cases, the main punishment was supplemented by administrative expulsion from Russia, and in 23 cases by confiscation.

The total fines under the regulations that came into force increased significantly compared to the previous year and amounted to 4,747,000 rubles (in 2023 – 2,771,000 rubles).¹⁶

Most of the cases prosecuted under this article during the year that we are aware of involved Muslims, with Protestants coming in second. For example, a native of Azerbaijan was fined in Tula under Part 4 of this article (carrying out missionary activities in violation of the requirements of the legislation on freedom of conscience, freedom of religion and religious organizations) for organizing premises for namaz without obtaining a permit from a religious organization; in Tuapse, Krasnodar Krai, Baptist pastor Anatoly Mukhin was fined under the same part of the same article for organizing a worship service of an unregistered religious group in the presence of two non-Baptist believers. In Belorechensk, Krasnodar Krai, Baptist pastor Daniil Litovkin was fined under the same part of the same article for organizing a visit by a group of Baptists to a city hospital to wish patients Happy Easter and distribute gifts and a religious newspaper.

The local religious organization of Muslims of Semikarakorsky district of Rostov region and the head of a Christian center in Krasnoslobodsky district of Mordovia were fined under Part 3 of Article 5.26 (carrying out activities by a religious organization without indicating its official full name, including the issue or distribution of unmarked literature as part of missionary activities).

Muslims were most often prosecuted under Part 5 of this article (carrying out missionary activities by a foreign citizen in violation of the requirements of the legislation on freedom of conscience and freedom of religion and religious associations). Usually the of-

16 . Summary statistics on the activities of federal courts of general jurisdiction and magistrate judges for the first half of 2024 // Judicial Department of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation (<https://cdep.ru/index.php?id=79&item=8773>).

fense consisted in organizing or conducting namaz without documents confirming the authority to conduct missionary activities. In particular, Uzbek citizen Nobijon Obitov in Bashkiria, Ohunjon Isabaev in the Tula region, and Abdukodir Abdukhalilov in Troitsk (New Moscow) were fined for this offense.

Often the fine under this part of Article 5.26 was supplemented by administrative expulsion from the country. This, for example, happened in Moscow to citizens of Tajikistan A. Yakubov and Muhammadrachab Erov, and Bakhodir Sabirov, in Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky – the citizen of Uzbekistan Rasuljon Mamatoirov, in Tuapse – citizens of Tajikistan Samariddin Saliev and Jalili Saidzoda.

Representatives of other religious organizations have also been prosecuted under this article. For example, in Sochi, the 85-year-old former vicar of the local Catholic parish of the Apostles Simon and Thaddeus, Vladislav Klotz, was fined under Part 5 of this article, followed by administrative expulsion, and in Zelenodolsk, the court imposed a similar penalty under the same part of the same article on Irish citizen Hugh Turvey for his participation in the Shravanam Kirtanam festival, “*where he conducted religious spiritual practices Sankirtana, gave lectures on Vaishnavism, and chanted Hari Krishna mantras*”¹⁷ without permits. In the Rostov region, a priest of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church, Dionisiy (Dmitry Belolipetsky), was fined under Part 4 of the same article for conducting religious activities without notifying the relevant authorities.

Other Examples of Discrimination

As in previous years, instances of police interference in the life of Muslim organizations were recorded. As a rule, it was connected with raids to detect illegal migrants, which were often accompanied by various violations and disruptions of worship services. We know of such cases in Cheboksary, in Engels in the Saratov region, and in Balashikha, Kotelniki, and Lyubertsy near Moscow.

The most notorious of all was the November incident in Khabarovsk, where officers of the Federal Security Service (FSB) and the Federal Migration Service (FMS), together with riot police, broke into the prayer house of the local Muslim religious organization Blagonravie [Good Morality] during Friday prayers. Using foul language, they forced the believers face down on the floor. 25 people were crammed into two cars using a stun gun. Some elderly believers lost consciousness and some had convulsions. Notably, no illegal migrants were detected during that raid.

The Muslim community went to court. According to the chairman of the organization, Mussa Kushtov, this was the third raid by law enforcers in a year. At the same time, multiple inspections have repeatedly confirmed that the community was using the rented building legally and there were no violations in its activities. The behavior of law enforcement officers in Khabarovsk was discussed at the meeting of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims in Moscow.

17 . Case No. 5-564/2024 // Website of the Zelenodolsk City Court of the Republic of Tatarstan. 2024. July (https://zelenodolsky--tat.sudrf.ru/modules.php?name=sud_delo&srv_num=1&name_op=case&case_id=337125340&case_uid=9013b31f-d052-4c63-94e0-ae7efb7dc6ff&delo_id=1500001).

Another example: a case under Part 2 of Article 322¹ of the Criminal Code (organization of illegal migration committed by an organized group of persons) was brought against members of the Hafizlyk local religious organization of Muslims in Moscow. The case was initiated after a complaint from residents of the Nizhegorodsky district of Moscow, who were unhappy about the proximity of a religious organization.

In St. Petersburg, Michael Schwarzkopf, pastor of the Petrikirche, Propst (senior pastor) of the Northwestern Church District of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of European Russia, was forced to leave the country together with his family before his residence permit expired because he was charged under Part 5 of Article 18.8 of the Administrative Code (repeated violation by a foreign citizen of the visa regime of the Russian Federation). The reason for the administrative case was the fact that he stayed for more than seven days at a place different from his official registration address without notifying the authorities. However, both apartments – the one where the pastor was registered and the one where he actually lived – belong to the Lutheran community.

Unlike in the previous year, we are aware of several cases of non-state discrimination, and most of them are related to the wearing of Muslim clothing in public places, including educational institutions. For example, the management of the Lyantorsk Oil Technical College in Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous Okrug refused to allow a freshman girl wearing a headscarf to attend classes. The girl's family said they were prepared to take legal action. In one of Mirny's schools in Yakutia, a teacher ordered a seventh-grader in a headscarf to leave class. The child switched to homeschooling. A lecturer at Ivanovo State Medical University, Zhidomorov, forced a female Muslim student to read to the class a poem the lecturer authored about the dangers of the hijab "for educational purposes" in class. The university started an official inquiry into the incident.

In Obninsk, the Kaluga region, a Muslim couple was forced to leave a restaurant by the security guards at the request of other patrons, who claimed that wearing a hijab in public places was unacceptable. And in Nizhnevartovsk, the administration of at least two swimming pools banned female visitors wearing burkinis.

We would like to mention an incident in Moscow, where a Muslim Yandex Taxi driver refused to drive the rabbi of the Yahad youth organization, Michael Stavropol, explaining that the reason was not the ethnicity, but the religion of the passenger. The Yandex Taxi security service said it would examine the incident and impose measures on the driver.

Positive Verdicts

Sometimes believers and religious organizations were able to protect their rights, including through the courts.

Thus, the periodical of the Falun Dafa Information Center managed to challenge a 50,000 ruble fine imposed by the Kalininsky District Court of St. Petersburg in 2023 under Article 20.33 of the Administrative Code for publishing information about Falun Gong organizations recognized as undesirable in Russia. The St. Petersburg City Court overturned the ruling and sent the case to the district court for a new review. In March, the Kalininsky District Court dismissed the case for lack of corpus delicti.

Imam Ismail Yurdamov managed to get the 8,000 ruble fine under Part 4 of Article 5.26 of the Code of Administrative Offenses canceled. In February, the Kirov District Court of Crimea canceled the corresponding ruling of the magistrate court. The court of second instance took into account that Yurdamov performed religious rituals in the village of Privetnoye at the request of the residents of the village and the acting imam, as the latter could not perform the rituals himself due to his age and health condition.

The Evangelical Christian Baptist Church of Novocherkassk, the Rostov region, challenged a fine under Part 3 of Article 5.26 of the Administrative Code for unlabeled literature. In April, the Fourth Cassation Court of General Jurisdiction partially satisfied the complaint of the religious organization and cancelled the fine of 30,000 rubles, overturning the decisions of two previous instances and closing the case due to the expiration of the statute of limitations.

The sentence for "illegal missionary work," given to the priest of the Armenian Catholic Church, Mais Melikyan, an Armenian citizen, was partially commuted. He was fined 35,000 rubles under Part 5 Article 5.26 of the Code of Administrative Offences and expelled from the country by the Lazarevsky District Court of Sochi for storing in a garage used as a chapel the Armenian translation of the Old Testament without the markings of a religious organization. The Krasnodar Krai Court in November canceled the expulsion clause, leaving the fine unchanged.

In the Chelyabinsk region, the Federal Tax Service was twice unsuccessful in its attempt to collect arrears from the branch of Jehovah's Witnesses in Austria registered in Miass. In May, the Arbitration Court of the region refused to satisfy the claim of the Federal Tax Service to recover arrears in the amount of 6500 rubles, and in September – 23,000 rubles. In both cases, the reason for the refusal was the expiration of the established time limit for collection.

In December, after multiple refusals, the Ussuriysk District Court of Primorsky Krai approved the transfer of shaman Alexander Gabyshev to a general hospital, softening the regime of forced treatment.

Protecting the Feelings of Believers

Protection from Above

Law enforcement under Part 1 of Article 148 of the Criminal Code (public actions expressing clear disrespect to society with the aim to insult religious feelings of believers) was even more active than the year before, when we noted an increase in the number of cases under this part of this article. Over the course of the year, we are aware of at least 25 sentences issued under it (in 2023, we knew of 14; according to official data, verdicts came into force against 13 people in 2023 and against 43 in 2024). We consider most of them to have been imposed unlawfully¹⁸. It should be noted that often no information was provided on the exact punishment imposed on the perpetrator.

18. For more details, see in this volume: Maria Kravchenko, Natalia Yudina. Counter-Extremism in 2024: Regulation of Public Speech and Organized Activity; Maria Kravchenko, Natalia Yudina. Sanctions for Administrative Offenses Related to Extremism in 2023–2024.

The harshest sentence of those where the punishment is known to us was handed down to blogger Khavir Yarmagomedov. In December, the Dorogomilovsky District Court of Moscow sentenced him to seven years in a general regime colony, a fine, and a ban on administering Internet sites for eight years. The blogger was found guilty not only under the article mentioned above, but also under Paragraph B of Part 3 of Art. 242 (illegal trafficking in pornographic materials committed on the Internet) and Paragraphs A and D of Part 2 of Art. 242¹ of the Criminal Code (trafficking in materials or objects containing pornographic images of minors). Yarmagomedov was prosecuted under Article 148 of the Criminal Code for his stream, where he stomped on a cross and spat on it.

In two other cases, the perpetrators were sentenced to real terms, also under several articles. In September, the Novoaleksandrovsky District Court of Stavropol Krai found three young men guilty under Part 1 of Article 148 and Part 2 of Article 213 of the Criminal Code (hooliganism committed by a group of persons motivated by religious hatred); they burned a New Testament in a brazier, uttering insults and ridicule, then published the video in Telegram. Taking into account the unserved part of the punishment under the previous sentence, the court gave 20-year-old Danila Zharikhin two years and two months in prison and a ban on driving for nine months; 21-year-old Dmitry Sobenin was sentenced to two years in a penal colony; and the minor Yuri M. was sentenced to ten days of suspended imprisonment with a probation period of two years. In December, the Krasnoarmeysky District Court of Volgograd found trash-streamer Pavel Prokudin guilty under Part 1 of Article 148 of the Criminal Code and Part 1 of Article 282 of the Criminal Code (incitement to hatred or enmity, as well as humiliation of human dignity) for criticizing the Russian military participating in military operations in Ukraine, negative statements about the elderly, and insulting statements about God and believers. The court sentenced him to two and a half years' imprisonment and 150 hours of compulsory labor, with the real term imposed under Art. 282.

Blogger Sofia Angel-Barocco was sentenced by the Maikop City Court in September to a suspended sentence of two years and a fine of 100,000 rubles with a ban on administering Internet resources for two years under Part 1 of Article 148 and Part 2 of Article 280 of the Criminal Code (calls for extremist activity committed on the Internet) for publishing a YouTube video claiming that *"churches around the world are burning because of the spells"* and expressing approval of the terrorist attack in Jerusalem in 2023. In December, the Leninogorsk City Court of Tatarstan sentenced blogger Artem Medkov, who broke a wooden cross and resisted the police officers who detained him, to two years of probation. The court found him guilty under Part 1 of Article 148 and Part 1 of Article 318 of the Criminal Code (use of violence against a representative of the authorities without endangering their life and health).

The longest compulsory labor – 150 hours under Part 1 of Article 148 each – was given to Valery Gorya from Armavir for insulting comments in Telegram about Allah and Muslims, and Denis Bolokhnov, a resident of Ryazan, for "negative comments about the religious feelings of believers."

We have information about six verdicts under Part 2 of Article 148 of the Criminal Code (the same actions, but committed in places specially designated for worship, other religious rites and ceremonies), whereas in 2023 there was only one conviction under this part of the article. Here the strictest punishment, three and a half years in a colony, was imposed on Nikita Zhuravel, whom the Visaitovsky District Court of Grozny in February found guilty under Part 2 of Article 148 and under Part 2 of Article 213 of the Criminal Code for burning the Koran in front of a mosque and publishing a video about it.

The highest fine of 300,000 rubles under the same articles was imposed by the Novomoskovskiy District Court of the Tula Region on Mikhail Dzyubinsky, who in 2023 organized a pogrom in the Dormition Monastery. In addition to a fine, the court sentenced him to compulsory treatment. The longest term of compulsory labor, 440 hours, was given to blogger Sofya Burger, who in March was found guilty by the Leninsky District Court of Krasnodar under Part 2 of Article 148 for publishing a video in which she danced in a cemetery with a cigarette in her mouth and made obscene gestures with her hands.

In December, the Kolpinsky District Court of St. Petersburg, at the request of the prosecutor's office, banned the distribution of the video "New Wave" by rapper Morgenstern (Alisher Valiev), declared a foreign agent, and DJ Smash, for "disrespecting the rituals and rules of the church."

In December, after Tatyana Yanusik, a deputy of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Khakassia from the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, published a photo of herself with her arms outstretched against the backdrop of a sculpture of Christ, some residents of the republic complained that the photo offended religious feelings. Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Khakassia Sergey Sokol instructed the Commission on Regulations to "carry out appropriate work with the author of the incident and provide a moral assessment of the action." We do not know whether the instruction was carried out or what its outcome was).

Protection from Below

As before, public defenders of religious feelings most often defended the feelings of Orthodox believers. As in the previous year, in most cases, organized groups of activists – mainly the Sorok Sorokov organization – stood up to defend the feelings of Orthodox believers, but more often than in the previous year they acted in conjunction with far-right organizations, such as Russkaya Obschina.

As before, defenders of religious feelings often targeted cultural events. The main tactic of Orthodox activists was to organize public campaigns against figures and events that, according to activists, offended the feelings of believers. For example, in Tambov, complaints from Orthodox activists and Russkaya Obschina led to the cancellation of a concert by three heavy rock bands scheduled for September 21 at the HEROES bar. The reason for the complaints was the Lucifer's Dungeon and Frostlagte Måne and Mor's concert announcement, which said: *"Being harbingers of the Apocalypse, we will open the gates to hell and unleash real demons. Don't miss this Saturday Sabbath."* In addition, the activists were outraged by the fact that the concert was scheduled for September 21, the day of the celebration of the Nativity of the Virgin.

In Samara and Volgograd, performances by comedian Guram Demidov were cancelled after complaints from Sorok Sorokov, who found his joke about Christ opening a chain of booze supermarkets and selling wine for the price of water offensive.

After Russkaya Obschina's complaint, the Investigative Committee for the Kaluga region launched a procedural review of *"pseudo-religious entertainment events"* during which *"the cult of death and religious Satanism were demonstrated"* at the Mafia club in Kozelsk, the Kaluga region. The event in question was a Halloween party.

A Samara sushi restaurant chain Sushkin sbIn was forced to change its name and close the restaurant after complaints about insulting the feelings of believers from Russkaya Obschina and State Duma deputy Alexander Khinstein and the opening of a criminal case

against the chain administration under the relevant article. The activists were offended by the name, which, in their opinion, referred to the expression “son of a bitch,” used in combination with the image of the Virgin in the restaurant decor.

Protests were not always successful. Omsk Cossacks and representatives of the Omsk Parents’ Assembly demanded cancellation of the ballet Rasputin starring Sergei Polunin, because “G. E. Rasputin was slandered and defamed by the people who prepared and carried out a coup in Russia.” <...> They intentionally created the ugly image of Rasputin, who was a friend of the royal family. It is unacceptable for an Orthodox person to mock a saint, it offends the feelings of believers.”¹⁹ However, the authorities refused to cancel the ballet. Metropolitan Dionysius (Porubai) of Omsk and Taurida, in an interview with a local TV channel, did not bless his flock to attend this performance.

Defenders of religious feelings also turned their attention to New Age stores. For example, Orthodox activists organized police visits to the Magic Lilu store on Novy Arbat. When the police arrived, they forced the shoppers out, temporarily closed the store, and seized “pornographic figurines and goods with extremist symbols.”

Defenders of religious feelings did not stop at organizing public campaigns against activities they objected to and complaining to various authorities. From time to time, they themselves paid visits to venues where, in their opinion, blasphemy was being committed, demanding that it be stopped. In St. Petersburg, Russkaya Obschina, Russian Imperial Movement (RID), and the Russian People’s Militia (about 100 people in total) disrupted a “satanist” party in the S’aint bar on Rubinstein Street, decorated with crosses, angels, images of saints, and references to the Bible, the events of the Middle Ages, and the Young Pope TV series. Note that the bar is located in the courtyard, there is no sign at the door, and the iron entrance door can easily be mistaken for the basement door, making it difficult for a casual visitor to find it and get in. Upon arrival, the activists announced: “We are Orthodox Christians, and for us, the activities of your bar are associated with incitement of inter-religious strife, which is prohibited by our legislation. In any case, we will not allow you to continue this activity in our city,”²⁰ and called the police. An attempt to enter another venue belonging to the same chain failed because the staff were alerted and locked the door. However, following the visit to the bar on Rubinstein Street, the chain owner, Sophie Noskova-Abramovich, was fined 30,000 rubles under Part 1 of Article 148 of the Criminal Code.

In St. Petersburg, Orthodox activists and representatives of Russkaya Obschina came to the Starcon science fiction, film, and science festival, where they were angered by a cosplayed interior from the horror game Resident Evil Village. Defenders of the feelings of believers likened the portraits of the video game characters to a “sacred corner” with icons, found it blasphemous, and called the police. The police seized the exhibits, and Obschina representatives wrote a statement to the authorities.

In April, Sorok Sorokov tried to disrupt the ZLOFest festival of horror films held in Moscow. At the call of Orthodox activists, the police arrived and removed the guests from the

19. Omsk Cossacks demand cancellation of the Rasputin ballet with Sergei Polunin // Omsk Online. 2024. March 31 (<https://ngs55.ru/text/culture/2024/03/31/73404857/>).

20. “And Catholics approved.” Militia shut down a satanists’ bar in St. Petersburg // AiF – Sankt-Peterburg 2024. February 1 февраля (https://spb.aif.ru/society/a_katoliki_odobrili_druzhinniki_zakryli_v_peterburge_sataninskiy_bar).

venue. The representatives of Russkaya Obschina also arrived at the festival and made sure that some of the most “sacrilegious” images were removed.

Sorok Sorokov complained about comedian Alexander Revva, who used the exclamation “The Mother of God gave birth in a barn!” as a joke in an episode of the Stars NTV show on the eve of Easter. In addition to Orthodox activists, actress Yana Poplavskaya also voiced objections to the show. As a result, the next episode was not aired, and no explanation was given by the NTV management. Irina Filatova, a CPRF member of the State Duma, asked Alexander Bastrykin, head of the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation, to investigate Revva for insulting the religious feelings of believers; we have no information about the outcome.

In several instances, conflicts related to offending the feelings of the Orthodox have arisen around the objects of urban sculpture. The administration of the Russian North national park, at the request of the Vologda Metropolitan Church, dismantled the figure of Veles, installed on Maura Mountain as part of the creation of the tourist Path of Myths and Legends. Metropolitan Savva (Mikheev) of Vologda and Kirillov was outraged that the pagan idol appeared opposite the Kirillo-Belozersky Monastery, in the place where a chapel used to stand. Vologda Region Governor Georgy Filimonov supported the diocese.

In Dalnegorsk, Primorsky Krai, Priest Andrei Vasyakin, dean of the Dalnegorsk district, appealed to the mayor of the town, Alexander Terebilov, on behalf of the Orthodox believers to remove the sculpture of the alien Ushan, a character from the cartoon The Mystery of the Third Planet. In his opinion, art objects dedicated to “demonic creatures” are inappropriate on the street where the worship cross stands and processions are held. The mayor refused to do so, noting that the townspeople did not complain about the sculpture, and “the cartoon character is kind, cheerful, and resourceful, takes care of nature, and takes a responsible approach to his work.” Nevertheless, the mayor agreed to explore “compromise options to isolate the art object from the gaze of the participants of the procession for the duration of the procession.”²¹

Voronezh authorities, despite the opinion of the diocese, approved the monument to the leader of the Sektor Gaza band Yuriy Khoy (Klinskikh) in the city. According to Priest Vitaly Tarasov, head of the culture department of the Voronezh Metropolitan Church, Sektor Gaza’s music popularizes “anti-family values; debauchery; drug use and drinking; insulting the feelings of believers; Satanism”. However, the city’s Cultural Heritage Commission voted in favor of the monument, in support of which some 25,000 citizens had previously voiced their support.

From time to time, Orthodox believers continued to be outraged by drawings and images of churches with missing crosses. After the issue of a new 1000-ruble banknote was suspended in 2023 after Orthodox Christians complained that the image of the church of the Kazan Kremlin lacked crosses, while the image of Suyumbike Tower had a crescent moon, the Central Bank announced that no religious sites would be depicted on the bill. In November, Central Bank Governor Elvira Nabiullina announced the decision to “take a step back and develop a new design for the reverse side” and hold a contest, for which 25 objects in the Volga Federal District were selected: after an online voting, the image of the winning object will be placed on the reverse side of the 1000-ruble bill. The controversial sites of the Kazan Kremlin were not selected for the contest.

21. Dalnegorsk authorities refuse to remove an artifact depicting an alien after a local priest complained that it offended the feelings of believers // Podyom! 2024. December 18 (<https://pdmnews.ru/39196/>).

Complaints about insults to the feelings of believers from individual defenders were extremely rare. We know of only one such case: a resident of Belgorod appealed to Governor Vyacheslav Gladkov with a complaint about the packaging of bread from the local Kolos factory. The package depicts the canonized Russian Orthodox Church Prince Vladimir. According to the complaint, placing such packaging in the trash is blasphemy and brings down God's wrath on Belgorod residents. She filed a similar complaint in 2022, but so far the packaging has not been altered.

In rare cases, cultural event organizers took action before receiving any complaints from offended believers. For example, the administration of a Moscow club where the Poot' [The Path] band from Pskov was to play in February, canceled the concert out of concern that the band's performance of "anti-Christian" songs might offend the feelings of believers. At the same time, the club administration referred to the opinion of the district administration. It was not clear who complained to the district administration.

There were examples of representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church defending those who, according to some of their co-religionists, offended their religious feelings. Thus, the Bratsk Diocese did not support its priest, who threatened to fine the participants of the Dubak Challenge, a social media challenge where people post photographs of themselves throwing splashing water into the freezing cold air. The priest claimed that a flash mob with churches in the background was offensive to the Orthodox. The diocese said, however, that the photos with the water freezing against the background of the temple "*are not only not offensive, but also beautiful*." The priest was forced to remove his post with threats.

We know of only a few cases in which believers of other faiths claimed that their feelings had been offended. For example, the owners of a nightclub in Ulan-Ude, under public pressure, had to paint over a graffiti created two years earlier depicting half Buddha face and half skull. After the discussion of the graffiti on social networks, where many said that the drawing offended the feelings of believers, the owners of the building were fined for violating the facade renovation procedure. They then painted over the image and apologized to those whose feelings were hurt.

After the residents of Buryatia and Kalmykia were outraged by the bathroom accessories (toilet brushes, liquid soap dispensers, and toothbrush holders) with images of Buddha in the Leman Pro store chain, the company promised to remove these items from stores. However, the Shajin Lama of the Republic of Kalmykia, Geshe Tenzin Choidak, filed a complaint with the republican prosecutor's office, and an investigation was launched. The prosecutor's office of the Moscow region also investigated this incident on the complaint of the Deputy Chairman of the State Duma, Sholban Kara-ool, and then ordered the chain management to eliminate the violations. In addition, a case was opened under Part 2 of Article 5.26 of the Administrative Code (willful public desecration of religious or devotional literature, objects of religious veneration, signs or emblems of worldview symbols and attributes) on the distribution of goods with the image of Buddha.

The St. Petersburg restaurant Gifts of Ossetia promised to revise its menu after the Supreme Council of Ossetians was outraged by the assortment of pies. According to the council, chicken and pork pies offend the feelings of the Ossetian people because *«poultry and pork are considered "dirty" and "unclean", and in the history of the Ossetian people they have never been used in meal preparation and have also been considered sacrilege.»*²²

22. Ossetian pork pies to be removed from a restaurant menu in St. Petersburg // TASS. 2024. September 13 (<https://tass.ru/obschestvo/21861401>).

Insufficient Protection from Defamation and Attacks

Violence and Vandalism

The level of religious violence remained low. We know of three cases of religiously motivated attacks, and all three targeted Muslims.

In July, a female passenger on the Moscow metro attacked a hijab-wearing passenger with a knife. The victim then pepper-sprayed the attacker in the face. The attacker was stopped by other passengers. She was drunk and shouted insults at the victim.

In September, the chief mufti of the Tyumen region, Zinnat Sadykov, was attacked in his office by a man armed with a hammer and a tear gas canister. The Mufti managed to call for help and was not hurt. The attacker sought revenge for the detention of two imams suspected of raising money for ISIS and recruiting people to fight in Syria.

In September, a woman in Moscow attacked two underage Dagestan girls wearing hijabs. The woman called them "Tajik," accused them of arrogance, told them to go back to "their country," and said that with their appearance they supported men's violence against women. Then she knocked the phone out of one girl's hand and grabbed the other by the hair through the head scarf. In 2025, the attacker was fined 10,000 rubles under Article 20.3.1 of the Administrative Code (incitement to hatred or enmity, as well as humiliation of human dignity).

We have information about nine cases of vandalism motivated by religious hatred (seven in 2023). Orthodox sites were most often attacked by vandals (five cases). In June, in Tyumen, an attacker tried to set fire to the church of St. Demetrius of Don using Molotov cocktails. The entrance to the building sustained damage, none of the parishioners and employees of the church were injured.

In April, a native of Udmurtia, while intoxicated, staged a pogrom in the church of St. Michael the Archangel in Zelenograd, smashed an icon and threatened to set fire to the building. He was found guilty under Part 2 of Article 148 of the Criminal Code and sentenced to compulsory labor. In the same month, a resident of Ivanovo staged a pogrom in the Dormition Cathedral, smashing icons and other temple property with a candlestick. In addition to Part 2 of Article 148, the perpetrator was found guilty under two more articles of the Criminal Code and sent for compulsory medical treatment.

Graffiti appeared on Orthodox sites twice, both in St. Petersburg. In February, a vandal wrote "ROC for murderers" on the wall of the Intercession Church at the Polytechnic University and on the Church of the Virgin of Tenderness Icon. He also wrote "University supports murderers" on the wall of the Polytechnic University building. The perpetrator was charged with three criminal counts and sent to a pre-trial detention center. In August, an inscription appeared on the arch near the Blessed St. Xenia of Petersburg Church with a reference to a Koran verse calling for the persecution of polytheists. A case of insulting the religious feelings of believers was opened against the suspect, a graduate of the Institute of Music, Theater, and Choreography of Herzen University.

Muslim sites were targeted four times, and two of these incidents can be classified as dangerous, although no one was injured. In June, in Fryazino near Moscow, a supporter of the M.K.U. (a racist online community calling itself Maniacs. Cult of Murder) blew up the entrance to a Muslim center and was detained by police. In December, on the eve of Christmas according to the Gregorian calendar, the attackers tried to set fire to the Nur mosque in Serpukhov, but ran away, leaving molotov cocktails outside the building. A cell of the neo-Nazi movement NS/WP claimed responsibility for the arson attempt.

In July, parts of pork carcasses were placed at the doors of mosques twice, once in Moscow and once in Tyumen.

Defamation of Religious Minorities

As before, defamatory materials against religious minorities regularly appeared in the media, and as before, most often Protestant organizations or new religious movements were targeted. They were referred to as “sects,” targeted with typical “anti-sectarian” rhetoric, and accused of extortion, brainwashing their parishioners, and espionage.

Thus, most publications, describing the numerous trials of Jehovah’s Witnesses in different regions, usually referred to the defendants as “sectarians” and “recruiters.” For example, Nizhny Novgorod Online, reporting on the detention of “over two dozen adherents” of Jehovah’s Witnesses in the region, emphasized: “The leader of the cell tried to flee to the Astrakhan region, as he was taking conspiratorial measures. He had 1.5 million rubles and another thousand euros in cash on him.”²³

The Mash Telegram channel, writing about the attempt of the Perm administration to return the Palace of Culture building bought by Pentecostals to municipal ownership, calls the believers “American sectarians” and distorts, probably intentionally, the last name of the Head Bishop of the Russian Church of Evangelical Christians, Eduard Grabovenko, accusing him of avarice and extorting money from parishioners: “*Grobovenko (“grob” means “coffin” in Russian) has organized his own business club named after the son of God, “has earned tens of millions of rubles exploiting those especially gullible, “the Grobovenkos profited from people on almost everything – from entrance tickets to listen to sermons to literally slave labor.”*²⁴

Every once in a while, various publications published lists of dangerous “sects,” bringing in Orthodox “anti-sectarians” as experts to explain the dangers. For example, Sovershenno Sekretno [Top Secret] published an interview with Alexander Dvorkin, who listed almost all religious movements that have operated in Russia since the 1990s as the organizations that “*influence the psyche of entire groups of people, turning them into submissive slaves.*”²⁵ In a similar publication, Life.ru mentioned Nurcular, claiming that the organization “*had a well-defined structure,*” and its “*adherents*” were “*trained, in fact, as shahid capable of becoming*

23. Security forces liquidate the activities of an extremist cell in the Nizhny Novgorod region // Nizhny Novgorod Online. 2024. July 2 (<https://www.nn.ru/text/incidents/2024/07/02/73779845/>).

24. American sectarians from the “New Testament” have occupied the Perm Palace of Culture named after V.I. Lenin and are demanding 500 million rubles from the local administration for it // Mash Telegram channel. 2024. September 27 (<https://t.me/mash/57940>).

25. Alexei Statsenko. Sects that have gone online // Sovershenno Sekretno. 2024. October 19 (<https://www.sovsekretno.ru/articles/obshchestvo/sekty-ushedshie-v-set191024/>).

a living bomb at the first word of the leader”²⁶ (in reality, the existence of a unified structure of Said Nursi’s followers in Russia has not been confirmed, and it is known with certainty that this movement is not only not combative, but is not politicized at all).

In some cases, religious organizations have been able to defend their reputations through the courts. For example, the Evangelical Lutheran Parish of St. Anna (Annenkirche) in St. Petersburg filed a lawsuit against blogger Vadim Egorov for the protection of honor, dignity, and business reputation (Article 152 of the Civil Code) after Egorov published an interview with artist Nika Kletsky; in the interview, the blogger called Annenkirche “*a separatist association*” and “*a bit of an anti-Russian project.*” The parties reached an amicable agreement, Egorov promised to make a public apology, and the Vyborg District Court dismissed the case.

Insufficient Protection of Religious Minorities

The public activity of fighters against “sectarians” and other minorities was low last year, but we know of several examples of such activity, usually from right-wing radical organizations. For example, in January and March, the National Liberation Movement (NOD) held a series of pickets near the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Moscow. The reason for the pickets was the declaration published by the Vatican in 2023, allowing for the blessing of same-sex couples (but not of marriage). The picketers held signs accusing Catholics of supporting “sodomy,” assaulting Russia’s sovereignty, etc. In addition to the NOD flags, the picketers held Soviet flags and portraits of Stalin. The head of the Moscow Archdiocese of the Roman Catholic Church, Archbishop Pavel Pezzi, was forced to appeal to Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin with a request to protect the religious organization from the actions of the NOD.

In April, activists of Russian People’s Militia demanded that an employee of the Novosibirsk pharmacy Melody of Health on Karl Marx Street remove her headscarf, because, in their opinion, the hijab was not a tradition of Russian Islam, but signalled wearer’s belonging to radical Islamic movements. After that, representatives of Militia appealed to the pharmacy manager demanding measures against the hijab-wearing employee. The pharmacy administration did not forbid the employee to wear a headscarf in the workplace.

Persecution of Clergy for Criticism of the Armed Conflict with Ukraine

As in the previous two years, clergy of various religious organizations publicly criticized the military conflict with Ukraine. Those who publicly criticized the actions of the Russian authorities and the army were sanctioned by the state, and sometimes by religious organizations.

26. The seven most dangerous religious organizations in Russia and why people are attracted to them // Life.ru. 2024. September 23 (<https://life.ru/p/1688808>).

We are not aware of cases of clergymen being held administratively responsible for such statements, but we are aware of several cases of criminal prosecution. Thus, in Krasnodar Krai, 86-year-old Archbishop of Slavyansk and South Russia Viktor Pivovarov (Russian Orthodox Church) was found guilty under Part 1 of Article 280³ of the Criminal Code (repeated discrediting of the armed forces) and fined 150,000 rubles. In 2023, he was brought to administrative responsibility for anti-war preaching.

In May, a case was initiated against Eduard Charov, a preacher from Krasnoufimsk, who does not identify with any Christian denomination, under Part 1 of Article 280³ and Part 2 of Article 205² of the Criminal Code (public justification of terrorism on the Internet). The article on the repeated discrediting of the army was used because of a repost of an image with arguments about patriotism, which said that a real patriot should not justify *“poverty and corruption with imaginary greatness and spiritual bonds.”* And Charov’s positive comment under the news about the arson of the military enlistment office was qualified as a justification for terrorism.

A case was initiated against Ilya Vasilyev, rector of the religious association Moscow Zen Center, under Paragraph E of Part 2 of Article 207³ of the Criminal Code (public dissemination under the guise of reliable reports of deliberately false information containing data on the use of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, motivated by political, ideological, racial, national, or religious hatred or enmity). The reason for the case was two Facebook posts. Vasilyev has been in custody since June.

In October, a case under Article 280⁴ of the Criminal Code (public calls to carry out activities against the security of the state) was brought against Nikolai Romaniuk, pastor of the Holy Trinity Church of Christians of Evangelical Faith in Balashikha, for a sermon in which he criticized the idea of Pentecostals participating in the fighting in Ukraine. During the search, although he did not offer any resistance, the pastor was hit on the head with a rifle butt; he suffered a micro-stroke and became deaf in one ear. Searches took place at several other ministers and parishioners of this church, as well as at the house of prayer in Balashikha. The pastor has been in jail since October.

The former hieromonk of the Russian Orthodox Church John (Kurmoyarov), who was convicted in 2023 for “fakes about the army” and converted to the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, failed to challenge the court’s decision. After serving his sentence, he left Russia in 2024.

As in 2023, priests were also punished for their anti-war position by their own religious organizations, and such cases are known to us only with regard to the clergy of the Russian Orthodox Church. Some were expelled from holy orders (we know of two such cases). Most of them were banned from serving (we know of seven cases). This, in particular, happened in June to the cleric of the Yekaterinodar and Kuban dioceses, Archpriest Andrey Drugai, who refused to recite the Prayer for Holy Russia, prescribed by the Patriarch, and signed a letter in support of the defrocked Moscow Archpriest Alexy Uminsky, which will be discussed below. After the ban, Drugai left Russia.

In March, the rector of the Trinity Church in Dmitrov near Moscow, Priest Alexander Vostrodyumov, was banned from serving until Easter (May 5). Later, the ban, imposed for “incorrect statements on the Internet,” was extended. It is known that Father Alexander signed the clergy’s anti-war appeal in 2022.

In April, Priest Dimitri Safronov, a cleric of the Moscow Church of the Intercession of the Most Holy Theotokos on Lyshikovaya Gora, was banned from serving for three years

by the Patriarch’s decree, also for refusing to say the Prayer for Holy Russia. In addition, on the fortieth day after the death of Alexei Navalny, he served a memorial service at the politician’s grave. The priest was sent to the church of St. Pimen the Great in Novye Votniki as a psalmist for the duration of the ban.

Another Moscow priest, a cleric of the Church of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross of the Patriarchal Compound in Mitin, Priest Konstantin Kokora, was banned for the same period of time for refusing to read the Prayer and was also appointed as a psalmist to another church.

Archpriest Vadim Perimenov, a cleric of the Kain Diocese of the Novosibirsk Metropolitan Area, for the same “offense” was first transferred to a rural parish and then banned from serving for a period of one year. In a letter to the ruling bishop, he explained that in his decision not to recite the prayer, he was *“guided by the Holy Scriptures... and his conscience,”* as he considers it *“unacceptable for himself to pray for victory in the fratricidal war between Orthodox Christians.”*

In September, the rector of the Chelyabinsk Church in honor of the martyr Peter, Metropolitan Krutitsky, Peter Ustinov was banned from serving. According to Ustinov, the main reason for the ban was his refusal to recite the Prayer for Holy Russia. In addition, the bishop was displeased with the priest reading some of the texts in Russian (and not in Church Slavonic) during the divine service and using disposable spoons for communion.

In March, the Holy Synod recalled Priest Dimitri Ostanin, who was serving in Norway, from Bergen for his anti-war position, and then the Patriarch’s decree banned him from serving.

In several cases, a ban on serving was followed by a more severe punishment of defrocking. In January, the Moscow diocesan court defrocked Archpriest Alexy Uminsky, by that time already removed from rectory of the Moscow Trinity Church in Khokhly, where he had served prayer services for peace, publicly disagreeing with the official position of the church regarding military operations in Ukraine and refusing to read the prescribed prayer. The official reason for the defrocking was a violation of the 25th Rule of the Holy Apostles, violation of the priestly oath. In February, this decision was approved by the Patriarch. It should be noted that the Patriarch appointed Archpriest Andrey Tkachev, known for his fundamentalist views and numerous scandalous statements on TV and on the Internet, to replace the rector of this generally liberal parish. Father Alexy left Russia and was soon reinstated in the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

In April, Priest Andrey Kudrin, a cleric of the Church of the Icon of the Virgin of Life-Giving Spring in Bibirevo, Moscow, was dismissed from his post and banned from priesthood. The official reason for the ban was not provided, but it was known that, since the beginning of the military conflict in Ukraine, Father Andrey was reciting a prayer for the reconciliation of the peoples of Russia and Ukraine instead of the Prayer for Holy Russia. In July, the church court of the Moscow diocese defrocked the priest, and in August the decision was approved by the Patriarch.

Vologda Hieromonk Tikhon (Sokolovsky), who was first banned by the ruling bishop from Internet activity, then from preaching, and in July 2024 from serving, was finally defrocked in 2025. By the time of his defrocking, Father Tikhon had converted to the Apostolic Orthodox Church.

Statistical Summary on Crimes and Punishments

Types of violence and categories of violent hate crime victims

Data as of June 30, 2025

	2010		2011		2012		2013		2014		2015		2016	
K – Killed, I – Injured	K	I	K	I	K	I	K	I	K	I	K	I	K	I
Total	44	421	27	215	20	200	28	209	37	134	14	97	12	89
Dark-skinned	1	28	1	20	0	26	0	7	0	15	0	6	1	0
Migrants from Central Asia	20	86	10	38	8	38	15	62	14	30	7	8	4	24
Migrants from the Caucasus	5	45	8	18	4	17	3	28	3	14	0	8	2	1
Migrants from the Middle East and North Africa	0	2	0	5	0	2	0	1	0	6	1	3	0	0
Migrants from other Asian Countries	3	19	0	15	0	5	0	7	1	5	0	2	1	4
People of “non-Slavic Appearance”	7	104	1	26	1	16	0	34	3	12	0	10	1	8
Ideological Opponents	3	67	1	40	1	57	0	7	0	16	0	17	0	15
Moral Opponents	1	3	3	4	6	2	2	3	13	1	3	8	2	1

2017		2018		2019		2020		2021		2022		2023		2024*	
K	I	K	I	K	I	K	I	K	I	K	I	K	I	K	I
9	71	9	80	9	73	1	54	3	70	1	31	4	119	1	277
1	0	0	1	0	1	0	2	0	5	0	3	1	4	0	2
0	11	2	3	3	12	0	4	1	6	0	1	0	20	0	49
0	4	0	0	0	1	1	8	0	5	0	0	0	7	0	23
0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
0	3	0	3	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	3	0	1
0	8	4	11	0	19	0	8	2	17	0	5	0	31	0	89
4	19	0	24	0	5	0	9	0	9	0	7	0	15	0	24
4	1	1	15	1	8	0	2	0	2	0	0	3	6	0	66

	2010		2011		2012		2013		2014		2015		2016	
Russian	1	8	1	9	0	5	0	4	0	5	0	0	0	4
Jews	0	3	1	2	0	0	0	2	0	1	2	1	0	3
Religious Groups	0	22	0	24	0	10	0	21	2	12	0	18	0	21
LGBT	0	3	0	3	0	12	2	25	0	10	0	9	1	4
Others or We Don't Know	3	31	1	11	0	10	6	8	1	7	1	7	0	4

° The data set is not yet complete.

Excluding victims of mass brawls. Excluding the North Caucasus; excluding Crimea until 2016.

We do not include credible threats of murder in the table. We know of 6 such incidents in 2010, 10 in 2011, 2 in 2012, 10 in 2013, 2 in 2014, 8 in 2015, and 3 in 2016. None were reported in 2017–2018, 3 in 2019, 5 in 2020, 5 in 2021, 1 in 2022, 1 in 2023, 3 in 2024.

2017		2018		2019		2020		2021		2022		2023		2024°	
0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	6	0	3
0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
0	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	1	0	0
0	12	2	15	5	14	0	17	0	21	0	6	0	19	1	6
0	8	0	3	0	9	0	2	0	4	1	3	0	6	0	12

Material targets of ideologically motivated attacks

	2010		2011		2012		2013		2014		2015		2016	
D – dangerous attempts, O – other attempts**	D	O	D	O	D	O	D	O	D	O	D	O	D	O
Total	36	142	13	81	12	84	23	48	14	43	10	46	7	40
Religious	17	43	12	53	11	61	23	41	9	26	9	24	7	25
Orthodox	8	8	3	9	5	33	12	19	5	8	4	5	2	8
Muslim	2	7	1	16	2	5	5	4	4	4	2	5	0	4
Jewish	1	14	1	13	1	7	3	7	0	5	1	4	2	4
New Religious Movements	4	10	5	11	2	11	2	9	0	8	2	9	3	7
Catholic	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protestant	2	1	2	3	1	4	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Armenian	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other Religious ***	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	2
Other Objects	19	99	1	28	1	23	0	7	5	17	1	22	0	15
Government Institutions	12	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	0	4	0	1
Ideological Objects	5	95	1	27	1	23	0	7	4	13	1	18	0	14
Other ****	2	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

* Data is not yet complete.
** The most dangerous include explosions and arson; others include various property damage, including graffiti (but excluding isolated instances of graffiti on walls).
*** These include objects of Buddhists and other unspecified religions, as well as religious objects that

	2017		2018		2019		2020		2021		2022		2023*		2024	
D O D O D O D O D O D O D O D O	D	O	D	O	D	O	D	O	D	O	D	O	D	O	D	O
	14	35	7	27	6	14	7	23	7	22	4	18	3	12	5	15
	9	21	7	13	6	9	7	11	4	8	3	9	2	5	3	6
	4	7	4	7	3	3	3	5	1	3	3	2	1	3	1	4
	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	2	2	2
	1	0	3	1	1	4	1	2	1	2	0	5	1	0	0	0
	3	11	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	1	1	0	2	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	0	2	0	1	0	0	1	2	1	3	0	1	0	0	0	0
	5	14	0	14	0	5	0	12	3	14	1	9	1	7	2	9
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
	4	14	0	14	0	5	0	7	3	11	0	9	1	4	0	7
	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	2	1	0	0	3	2	2

**** These include objects that do not correspond to other categories or that could not be attributed.

Except for the North Caucasus and, until 2016, except for Crimea.

Convictions for “Crimes of an Extremist Nature”

Besides the propaganda of hatred and crimes directly related to the concept of “extremism,” this data includes ordinary crimes motivated by hatred*. We rate sentences as completely or mostly appropriate or inappropriate. In some cases, however, we are unable to assess their appropriateness or determine whether they fall under efforts to counter xenophobia, even if they are legally justified.** Three numbers in each column describe appropriate, inappropriate, and all other sentences.

Year	Sentences (in which at least one defendant was found guilty)			
Crimes	against Individuals	against Property	public Statements	participation in a Group **
2007	35/0/0	4/0/0	29/0/1	2/0/8
2008	33/0/0	5/0/0	46/2/0	3/0/4
2009	53/0/1	10/0/0	54/3/0	5/12/2
2010	87/0/0	13/0/1	69/8/3	9/6/8
2011	62/1/2	8/0/0	70/7/1	12/7/7
2012	30/2/2	5/0/0	83/4/1	6/7/2
2013	32/1/0	8/0/0	126/5/10	8/7/6
2014	21/0/2	4/0/0	151/4/6	5/8/14
2015	24/1/0	9/1/0	207/13/9	12/16/3
2016	17/2/0	3/0/1	202/14/8	8/22/1
2017	9/0/0	4/0/0	211/15/21	4/27/3
2018***	15/0/2	2/1/0	56/11/136	4/25/3
2019	5/0/0	1/0/0	15/4/92	8/26/6
2020	5/0/0	2/0/0	6/12/107	3/41/13
2021	13/0/1	2/0/3	7/21/197	6/96/15
2022	9/0/1	6/14/4	17/37/199	17/87/29
2023****	14/0/4	6/29/7	75/130/180	14/90/74
2024****	21/0/3	4/29/10	94/195/217	22/86/81

* Sentences for violent crimes and acts of vandalism are included insofar as the court recognized hatred as an aggravating circumstance. Also included are sentences for vandalism qualified under Articles 354¹, 148, and extremist articles of the CC.

** This refers to participation in an “extremist community” or in an organization banned for extremism, as well as Hizb ut-Tahrir and (pro)Ukrainian organizations banned under Article 205⁵ CC.
*** Since 2018, the “Don’t Know” category has been applied more broadly in our ratings to cover sentences unrelated to countering nationalism and xenophobia.

Offenders			
against the Individual	against Proterty	public Statements	participation in a Group
95/0/0	8/0/0	42/0/5	4/0/27
100/0/0	7/0/0	64/3/0	10/0/14
132/0/2	19/0/0	70/4/0	9/25/2
297/0/0	22/0/1	78/9/5	32/6/19
194/4/2	15/0/0	78/9/1	26/12/19
65/4/3	7/0/0	96/11/1	9/15/10
60/1/0	11/0/0	128/5/11	12/15/11
45/0/3	6/0/0	156/4/8	13/21/26
60/1/0	18/1/0	215/15/9	26/32/6
39/2/0	4/0/1	217/15/8	22/38/2
23/0/0	6/0/0	230/17/22	6/76/11
46/0/7	6/1/0	66/12/136	9/76/6
10/0/0	4/0/0	20/4/93	15/93/18
8/0/0	2/0/0	7/18/118	8/78/31
36/0/1	3/0/7	7/22/200	12/169/19
16/0/6	11/18/5	24/38/205	47/185/37
32/0/4	9/35/8	88/137/196	27/192/118
66/0/6	4/37/10	97/202/234	52/173/144

**** The data is still incomplete. Since 2023, different episodes within the same sentence may be classified under different appropriateness categories, so the sum of the three figures in a cell can exceed the total number of sentences/offenders.

Xenophobia, Freedom of Conscience and Anti-Extremism in Russia in 2024:
Reports' collection by SOVA Research Center

Cover design: **Verstak Design Bureau**
Infographics: **Mikhail Akhmetiev**
Layout: **Maria Konkova**

Signed to print on September 11, 2025. Format 60x90/8. Headset Circe
Published Sheets: 10.4.

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