



3.4.1. Use of legal instruments against journalists

3.4.1. Use of legal instruments against journalists

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), as of 21 October 2025, 327 journalists and media outlets were designated as ‘foreign agents’.[385](#) As noted by the UN Special Rapporteur, Mariana Katzarova, 59 journalists were added to the register in 2024 and 40 journalists in the first four months of 2025.[386](#) The UN Special Rapporteur also noted that around 40 % of administrative charges for non-compliance with ‘foreign agent’ legislation (Article 19.34 of the Code of Administrative Offences) were initiated against journalists and bloggers.[387](#) Furthermore, in 2024, at least 16 journalists faced criminal prosecution for violations of ‘foreign agent’ obligations (Article 330.1 of the Criminal Code).[388](#)

As of 21 October 2025, 23 media organisations were listed as ‘undesirable’[389](#) – the label that brings criminal charges for someone who works with them or quotes their materials.[390](#) In 2024, as reported by Mediazona, Russian district courts issued 81 fines against journalists and readers for participation in the activities of ‘undesirable organisations’ (Article 20.33 of the Code of Administrative Offences). Of these, most cases concerned involvement with Meduza (45 administrative protocols), RFE/RL (12 administrative protocols), and TV Rain (9 administrative protocols). Nearly half of them (34) were initiated by the Yakutian branch of the Centre for Combating Extremism, known as Centre E, which reportedly monitored social media for links to banned outlets.[391](#)

Since February 2022, journalists have faced criminal charges under the ‘war censorship’ legislation. In September 2025, the UN Special Rapporteur noted that at least 18 criminal cases had been initiated on these charges, with at least 23 journalists being sentenced.[392](#)

Between July 2024 and July 2025, at least nine criminal cases were initiated against journalists under terrorism-related charges (Article 205.2 of the Criminal Code), with seven journalists convicted. In February 2025, the editor-in-chief of an independent media outlet was sentenced in absentia to 10 years in prison on charges of ‘fake news’ and ‘justification of terrorism’. Under the same combination of charges, a former news presenter was sentenced in absentia to eight years in prison for publishing an interview with a fighter from the Free Russia Legion, which was designated as a ‘terrorist organization’ in Russia in July 2025.[393](#) In March 2025, the FSB reportedly arrested a Yakutian anti-war journalist[394](#) in Yakutsk, the capital of the Sakha Republic,[395](#) who had left Russia in 2022 and returned in 2024,[396](#) on charges of ‘public calls to commit acts of terrorism, public justification of terrorism or terrorism propaganda.’[397](#)

In addition, between July 2024 and July 2025, at least 8 new criminal cases were initiated against journalists on extremism charges, with 12 journalists convicted in the same period.^{[398](#)} In April 2025, four journalists were sentenced to five and a half years in prison (each) in a closed-door trial on extremism charges, related to their alleged collaboration with the ACF.^{[399](#)} In July 2025, a journalist from Ufa, the capital of Bashkortostan, who had covered regional protests and volunteered with the local ACF branch before it was banned in 2021, was sentenced to 12 years in prison in a closed-door trial for involvement in an extremist organisation and ‘spreading false information’ about the Russian army,^{[400](#)} including through cooperation with the ACF.^{[401](#)}

There have also been instances when journalists faced prosecution on national security charges.^{[402](#)} In November 2024, an RFE/RL journalist in Chita in the Russian Far East was sentenced to four years in prison under charges of ‘confidential cooperation with a foreign organisation’ (Article 275.1 of the Criminal Code), after a regional FBS branch accused her of being paid by a foreign media outlet ‘to prepare inaccurate materials discrediting the Russian army and state authorities.’^{[403](#)} This was the first case in which a journalist was convicted under these charges,^{[404](#)} which carry a maximum sentence of eight years in prison.^{[405](#)} In July 2025, the FSB initiated a criminal case against two journalists for illegal border crossing while reporting from Sudzha in August 2024 when it was under Ukrainian occupation.^{[406](#)} As reported by the UN Special Rapporteur, an RFE/RL journalist, released in June 2024 after serving over four years in prison on charges of ‘espionage’ and ‘possession of explosives’, stated in court that he had been subjected to torture ‘to extract a confession.’^{[407](#)}

The UN Special Rapporteur noted that at least 65 journalists have faced criminal charges in absentia.^{[408](#)} According to CPJ, many journalists and media professionals in exile faced criminal prosecution for non-compliance with the ‘foreign agent’ legislation.^{[409](#)} Other charges include charges for spreading ‘false’ information,^{[410](#)} discreditation of the Russian army and government,^{[411](#)} organisation of activities of an ‘undesirable organisation’,^{[412](#)} justification of terrorism,^{[413](#)} and involvement in an extremist organisation.^{[414](#)}

- [385](#)

CPJ, Russia's repression record, 21 October 2025, [url](#)

- [386](#)

UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Mariana Katzarova [A/HRC/60/59], 15 September 2025, [url](#), para. 24

- [387](#)

UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Mariana Katzarova, 15 September 2025, [url](#), para. 25

- [388](#)

UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Mariana Katsarova [A/HRC/60/59], 15 September 2025, [url](#), para. 25

- [389](#)

CPJ, Russia's repression record, 31 October 2025, [url](#)

- [390](#)

RSF, Russia, n.d., [url](#)

- [391](#)

Mediazona, When journalism is “undesirable”. Russia’s crackdown on independent media results in 81 fines for those “associated” with independent media, 10 January 2025, [url](#)

- [392](#)

UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Mariana Katzarova, 15 September 2025, [url](#), para. 34

- [393](#)

UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Mariana Katzarova, 15 September 2025, [url](#), para. 40

- [394](#)

Moscow Times (The), FSB Arrests Anti-War Yakutian Journalist on Terrorism Charges – Reports, 21 March 2025, [url](#)

- [395](#)

CPJ, Russia's repression record, 31 October 2025, [url](#)

- [396](#)

Moscow Times (The), FSB Arrests Anti-War Yakutian Journalist on Terrorism Charges – Reports, 21 March 2025, [url](#)

- [397](#)

Indigenous Russia, From the Republics: The Arrest of Sasha Alexandrova, 1 April 2025, [url](#)

- [398](#)

UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Mariana

Katzarova,15 September 2025, [url](#), para. 38

- [399](#)

AP, Four journalists who were accused of working for Kremlin foe Navalny are convicted of extremism, 16 April 2025, [url](#)

- [400](#)

AP, Russian journalist sentenced to 12 years over ties to opposition group, 29 July 2025, [url](#)

- [401](#)

CPJ, Russia's repression record, 21 October 2025, [url](#)

- [402](#)

UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Mariana Katzarova,15 September 2025, [url](#), para. 42

- [403](#)

CPJ, Russian journalist Nika Novak sentenced to 4 years in prison, 26 November 2024, [url](#)

- [404](#)

UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Mariana Katzarova,15 September 2025, [url](#), para. 42

- [405](#)

CPJ, Russian journalist Nika Novak sentenced to 4 years in prison, 26 November 2024, [url](#)

- [406](#)

Meduza, Russia opens criminal case against two journalist for reporting from Kursk region under Ukrainian occupation, 10 July 2025, [url](#)

- [407](#)

UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Mariana Katzarova,15 September 2025, [url](#), para. 42

- [408](#)

UN Human Rights Council, Situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Mariana Katzarova 15 September 2025, [url](#), para. 33

- [409](#)

CPJ, Russia's repression record, 21 October 2025, [url](#)

- [410](#)

IStories, The Court Sentenced in Absentia the Publisher of IStories Roman Anin and Journalist Ekaterina Fomina to 8.5 Years in Prison in the Case of Military “Fakes”, 31 March 2025, [url](#)

- [411](#)

Groza, Telegram, 25 March 2025, [url](#)

- [412](#)

IFJ, Russia: IFJ and EFJ condemn the escalation of cross-border pressure and intimidation of Russian journalists in exile, 23 May 2025, [url](#); Novaya Gazeta Europe, Novaya Gazeta Europe’s editor-in-chief sentenced in absentia to 6 years in prison for running ‘undesirable organisation’, 22 April 2025, [url](#); Meduza, Russia opens felony case against Meduza journalist Dmitry Kuznets, 14 July 2025, [url](#)

- [413](#)

Moscow Times (The), Ex-State TV Anchor Jailed 8 Years in Absentia for ‘War Fakes’ and ‘Justifying Terrorism’, 18 July 2025, [url](#)

- [414](#)

OC Media, Russian authorities open criminal case against Circassian journalist Larisa Tuptsokova, 25 September 2025, [url](#)