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Methodology for calculating the number of detentions for an anti-war stance

Русская версия

OVD-Info has been publishing estimates of the number of people detained for taking an anti-war stance since February 24. Here we describe how we assess the data.

The assessment is based on information obtained by OVD-Info (Russian human rights media project) or collected from mass and social media. Not every change in the total number is related to recent detentions, as sometimes we learn about cases after some time. In addition, there is a possibility that we are not aware of all the detentions.

The data is relevant as of February 12, 2024.

WHAT WE TAKE INTO ACCOUNT

We estimate the number of detentions, not detainees: one person may be detained several times.

The majority of detentions due to anti-war speeches and statements occur during street rallies. The boundaries of what is considered a rally are not clearly defined: in addition to pickets and mass protests, we also include other actions that are aimed at actively spreading the anti-war stance in public spaces. For example, writing anti-war inscriptions or distributing leaflets. On the days of mass protests, the police often detain people who did not participate in the rally, but merely happened to be nearby — such cases are also taken into account.

The total number also includes:

- detentions after rallies (this problem is described in more detail in our [report](#) on the use of facial recognition technology);
- detentions related to the publication of anti-war posts;
- detentions for what is perceived as anti-war symbolics: pacifics, pins, anti-war inscriptions, yellow-blue or green ribbons on clothes and accessories, stickers on cars or on house windows.

The reasons for the detentions and the differences between them are rather arbitrary. For example, on the days of mass rallies, detentions for anti-war symbols on the streets can be attributed to the number associated with participation in the rally. Having clarified the data, we can exclude the detention from the general statistics if we understand that it happened outside the context of anti-war protests.

We interpret the concept of «anti-war speech» quite broadly: it encompasses direct statements against the war («No war», «Forgive us, Ukraine»), expressions of support for Ukraine («Glory to Ukraine», the colors of the Ukrainian flag), protests against the restrictions on the dissemination of information about the war (for example, against military censorship or against the use of new articles about «fakes» about the

army and discrediting the armed forces of the Russian Federation), and protests against Z-symbols.

WHAT WE DO NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT

Detentions can also occur within the framework of criminal cases initiated because of anti-war protests — such cases are not included in the total number. Detailed information about such criminal cases can be found in the [OVD-Info guide](#).

We emphasize that the number of people detained for expressing an anti-war position reflects only one aspect of the state's pressure on those who oppose the war. In other cases, people may face significant pressure: police visits, seizure of posters and symbols, as well as administrative responsibility — without being detained. We record such instances, but do not include it in the total number.

In April we updated our March report «[No to war. How the Russian authorities are suppressing anti-war protests.](#)»

Since June 24, we have been publishing monthly summaries on various types of persecution in the context of war — [Anti-Military Events Report](#).

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