

# NOT SILENT BEFORE THE STORM

**STATUS OF RUSSIA'S FOREIGN AGENT LAWS AND  
IMPLICATIONS FOR ENVIRONMENTALISTS IN 2021**



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Naturvernforbundet  
Mariboegate 8  
0183 Oslo  
Telefon: +47 23 10 96 10  
E-post: naturvern@naturvernforbundet.no

[www.naturvernforbundet.no](http://www.naturvernforbundet.no)

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## STATUS OF RUSSIA'S FOREIGN AGENT LAWS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR ENVIRONMENTALISTS IN 2021

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Written by Kjersti Album, David Aarvik Nese, Vitaly Servetnik and Andrey Talevlin  
Language editing by Aled-Dilwyn Fisher  
Design by Ketill Berger, Film & Form

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**Front page picture:** People's gathering in Baymak in support of the eco-activist Ildar Yumagulov, April 25. Over 500 rallied to support Ildar after he was beaten up by a group of unknown individuals.  
Source: <https://rusecounion.ru/ru/ehrd-apr2021>

# PREFACE

Naturvernforbundet/ Friends of the Earth Norway has had projects in Ukraine for many years and has partners and a large network in the Ukrainian environmental movement that has now had its lives turned upside down, like all other Ukrainians. Our project partners in Ukraine are now working on the acute humanitarian and environmental challenges arising from the ongoing hostilities.

Our Russian partner organisations have also been affected by the war. They, like us, are shaken by the invasion of Ukraine and demand the immediate cessation of all acts of war. Freedom of association and expression have suddenly been further tightened. Naturvernforbundet/ Friends of the Earth Norway has collaborated with Russian environmental organisations for more than 30 years and under increasingly difficult conditions. In recent years, the Russian state has actively worked to silence civil society, through among other things the agent laws.

Nevertheless, both the environmental movement and other civil society actors have continued to work, despite risks of high fines and long prison sentences. They have found a way around restrictions, they have reorganised and continued their important efforts. This would not have been possible without outside support.

The sanctions adopted against Russia are massive, and Naturvernforbundet/ Friends of the Earth Norway wholeheartedly supports them, as a means to end the war. Naturvernforbundet nevertheless believes it is even more important to support Russian civil society in the time ahead. Russia's civil society works for democratic participation, openness, international cooperation, and sustainable development. Although the potential for direct influence is now smaller and the organisation has less contact with the authorities, the remaining Russian civil society has an increasingly important function.



# SUMMARY

This report presents the developments in 2021 for environmental activists. 2021 was the worst year ever since the foreign agent law was introduced with a record breaking 120 new “foreign agents” declared by the state. Of these were one environmental journalist and one environmental activist, in line with the overarching trend that 65 out of 120 were journalists. Further, 19 new “undesirable organisations” were declared in 2021, none of which were environmental actors. This makes 2021 the year with the most new foreign agents and undesirable organisations altogether. It is not unlikely that numbers will rise even more with the amendment of 2020, enabling individuals to be declared “foreign agents” as well. Following an overview of the general trends regarding the foreign agent law and undesirable organisations, we then move on to present the major legal developments of 2021. All amendments move in the same direction, limiting space for civil society and free speech even more.

Moreover, the report also presents government repression based on monthly reports by Russian Social-Ecological Union (RSEU) illustrating that all sorts of environmental activists were met with both violent and suppressive measures. The overall trend was thus that all types of opposition with government policy

were dangerous, no matter what you fight for. Furthermore, we present the story of 11 eco-prisoners locked away in Russia. Their stories show how regular people are met when threatening the regime’s status quo.

We hope through this report to illustrate and remind readers that despite harsh and dangerous circumstances, 2021 was also a year with victories both for the environment and environmental defenders. After almost two years Chelyabinsk Regional Court has ruled in favour of 255 people and declared the seizure of 4.5 hectares of the Chelyabinsk city forest (natural monument) illegal. Several people received compensations for illegal prosecution: in Bashkortostan, Arkhangelsk and Chelyabinsk regions. In the Sakhalin region, the dismissed head of the local newspaper was reinstated after the entire staff of the newspaper resigned in protest.

We know that the spirit of Russian civil society activism will live on, but we also know that 2022 will be a watershed both in terms of the international situation making cooperation increasingly challenging from a practical point of view, but also that the domestic circumstances by all accounts will be even harsher and more repressive as Putin’s Russia becomes a thoroughly autocratic regime.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

In this report, we show how civil society space in general, and the space for environmental groups and activists in particular has been further narrowed in 2021. Of course, much has happened in 2022, especially the horrifying and illegitimate Russian attack on the sovereign state of Ukraine. It is easy to think that as a result of this, 2021 is “old news”, and somewhat irrelevant. We would on the contrary argue that to understand the current situation, it is crucial to understand the backdrop and see how domestic Russian politics has built up to the current situation. Putin’s war on Ukraine would not have been possible without his attacks against freedom of speech over the last 10-20 years.

Much of this report was written before the Russian attack and describes a situation where the law on foreign agents, undesirable organisations, and the general autocratic tendencies are based on a delusional regime narrative that regime critical civil society is a western puppet that is an existential threat to the regime and “Russian” values. Understanding how 2021 was another extremely repressive and harsh year to be an environmental activist (and any other civil society activist) hopefully sheds new light on the Ukrainian invasion and illustrates how this is merely a culmination of a democratic backsliding process over several years.

That said, our focus with this report is the situation within Russia. The report presents the legal

changes, as well as episodes of pressure towards environmental groups and activists. Sadly, the development in 2021 has been in line with the previous year, making it increasingly hard to be an activist. The trend is not special for 2021, nor special for Russia. With gradually more countries leaning towards authoritarianism, the Covid pandemic has been an opportunity for many authoritarian leaders to justify measures to limit the space for civil society.<sup>1</sup> In line with this, environmental human rights defenders face troubles in several countries. Violence against environmental activists has increased, according to Global Witness,<sup>2</sup> and indigenous people are most at risk.

This is certainly the case in Russia where civil society gradually has faced more barriers in the last 20 years. The fact that Dmitry Andreyevich Muratov won the Nobel peace prize for his persistent work to defend freedom of speech through *Novaya Gazeta* (*Новая Газета*) tells the tale of a country in a grave political situation where working against the government is both dangerous and extremely challenging.<sup>3</sup> Inceas-

1. <https://freedomhouse.org/explore-the-map?type=fofn&year=2021&mapview=trend> og <https://www.idea.int/news-media/news/democracy-faces-perfect-storm-world-becomes-more-authoritarian>
2. <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/last-line-defence/>
3. <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/2021/press-release/>

ingly repressive laws, harassment, and criminal prosecution make it more difficult to voice your opinion and fight for change, also for those who do not directly speak for a change in power, but trying to protect their local forest, ensure clean air and water in their local community, or increase nuclear safety.

In this report, we try to highlight these people; activists, and civil society working to protect their local environment and how they were met by the government in 2021. Understanding the key events in 2021 is therefore crucial so that the events, stories and organisations we present here are understood against the larger context in 2021.

The campaign period of the parliamentary election in 2021 showed authorities' willingness to hinder opposition. Several independent media and journalists were declared foreign agents in an attempt to prevent reporting of the widespread election fraud and shutting down of critical investigative journalism towards the regime. Nevertheless, all indications suggest that election fraud reached a record high level, potentially due to the new online voting tool or ballot stuffing.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, it is no surprise that Putin's party Yedynaya Rossiya (United Russia) again still stands as the biggest party and maintains its grip on the constitutional majority, although receiving fewer votes than in 2016. Still, the biggest oppositional party, the Kommunističeskaja Partija Rossijskoj Federatsii (Communist Party), nearly doubled their support, much due to the "smart vote" strategy that suggested people vote for candidates that had a chance to win over a United Russia candidate. Another notable result of the election is a fifth party in the parliament – Novyye lyudi (New People). Although the party is associated with the Kremlin, optimists hope that an additional party to the long-term four can increase debate.

In terms of environmental activists running for office, several candidates arguing to stop

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4. <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2021/09/21/statisticians-claim-half-of-pro-kremlin-votes-in-duma-elections-were-false-a75102> and <https://meduza.io/en/feature/2021/09/20/electronic-voting-must-die> and <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-58614227>

the Shies landfill ran for seats at the federal and local levels (Arkhangelsk/Komi). In Komi Oleg Mikhailov, running from the Communist Party, won a seat in the state Duma and is now working against the Shies landfill in the national parliament.<sup>5</sup>

Declarations of foreign agents did not stop after the elections either: for several months, every Friday, multiple new foreign agents were announced. There was a short break after Dmitry Muratov, the chief editor of Novaya Gazeta and the 2021 Nobel Prize Winner, asked Vladimir Putin about the issue, but such declarations later returned. Moreover, with the invasion of Ukraine and domestic protest, it has become clear that the regime has tightened the space for civil society even more.

This report is structured as follows: firstly, section 2 is a background chapter presenting the recent general democratic development in Russia and the two key laws, the foreign agent law and the undesirable organisations-law, to suppress activism are explained. For the experienced readers, we advise going to chapter 3, where the new legal developments are laid forward and accounted for. Further, section 4 presents the development in 2021 in terms of which new environmental actors are labelled as foreign agents or undesirable organisations. Section 5 then lay forward the overall trend in terms of suppressing events of environmental activists in 2021 outside of foreign agent/undesirable organisation law. Section 5 is based on RSEUs monthly monitoring reports that keep track of all types of suppression, violence and criminal prosecution towards environmental activists, organisations and protests. Section 6 then presents the stories of the 11 eco-prisoners and shows how the regime utilises different tactics to shut down protesters. After this, section 7 lay forward how one can support the Russian civil society, and why this is important when looking at what has been achieved. Finally, section 8 summarises the report and gives some concluding remarks.

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5. <https://www.severreal.org/a/v-komi-oppozitsionnyy-politik-oleg-mihaylov-pobedil-na-vyborah-v-gosdumu/31468646.html>

## 2. BACKGROUND

A brief background is necessary to assess the recent development of Russian civil society in 2021. Thus, this chapter will give a short description of the democratic development in Russia in terms of the two most relevant judicial frameworks that seriously impede civil society activity. Firstly, a general assessment of the Russian development is presented, before the *Foreign Agent Law* is laid forward. Then, this section will explain how the *Law on undesirable organisations* influences civil society. Finally, this section points to how Covid-19 measures have been used as an argument to suppress protests and create disproportionately challenging procedures for participation in public hearings. Experienced readers may well go on to read about the 2021 legal developments in the next section.

### 2.1 GENERAL TREND

2000 marks a shift in Russia's democratic history.<sup>6</sup> A peaceful democratic transition of power took place for the first time when Vladimir Putin won the election following the former Boris Yeltsin. Sadly, Putin also marks a landmark for democratic regression with the gradual development towards authoritarianism. The recent years have pushed us to where we are today with the depletion of political opposition, a subserv-

ing judiciary, a controlled media sector, complete control over the legislature, and excessive corruption.

In tandem with democratic backsliding, civil society has been a target for deliberate oppression ever since the 2000s. From 2006, Russia imposed increased reporting requirements on NGOs, especially foreign funding, and it also provided for planned, annual inspections of the organisations from the authorities and unannounced inspections. Following this, several NGOs were inspected in 2007-2008, but most environmental organisations continued their work as before.

In 2012 the situation severely deteriorated with the implementation of the Foreign Agent law. The law intended to restrict foreign funding for electoral monitoring NGOs after the massive protest movement that followed the irregularities in the 2011 and 2012 parliamentary and presidential elections. After most NGOs refused to register as Foreign Agents, the Ministry of Justice was given the authority to label NGOs as foreign agents. The Foreign Agent law marks a clear step in the wrong direction as the repression on civil society became systemic through regular inspections, labelling, fines, and courts. Hence, NGOs needed to start more systemic monitoring and documentation.

Naturvernforbundet/ Friends of the Earth Norway has followed the situation closely and

6. See for instance Freedom House: <https://freedomhouse.org/country/russia/freedom-world/2021>



made annual reports since 2013, presenting the conditions and recent developments for environmental NGOs and activists in Russia. The trend is that every year, the situation for civil society is becoming worse. Existing legislation becomes stricter, and the authorities impose further limitations. Even if a new bill does not become law, it can still serve the function of spreading fear of the restrictive state, which might limit people's willingness to protest or even speak their opinion.

## 2.2 THE LAW ON FOREIGN AGENTS

The law on Foreign Agents aims to marginalise, and shut down critical voices. The authorities can label any organisation a Foreign Agent if it has received foreign funding while engaging in “political activity”. What constitutes “political activity” is vague and covers any regular advocacy work in practice. Activities like information work and arranging meetings can also be considered “political” and lead to being labelled as foreign agents, which means no organisation is safe.

Consequences for registered NGOs are enormous, and, in practice, it has proven challenging to continue the activity of several organisations. Thus, many groups have decided to close down. The forced registration also led to court cases and hefty fines for not registering voluntarily. Since 2012, the law on foreign agents has led to the liquidation of 22 out of the 32 environmental NGOs declared as foreign agents. The authorities claim that the foreign agent law was not discriminatory. However, following the situation where several amendments have become law, NGOs labelled as foreign agents have lost several rights. Even the President's human rights council has raised this issue several times and informed the President about the selective implementation of the law.

NGOs labelled as foreign agents must provide all information on their activities in advance, in addition to annual reporting. The grounds for a ban are not specified; any action can be banned. The law on foreign agents has served as one of the Russian authorities' main tools to repress Russian civil society. The law hinders Russian organisations from working efficiently: restrict-

ing foreign funds, marginalising “political” and almost any other NGO's activity, spreading distrust to non-governmental actors among society, and introducing self-censorship among NGOs.

In addition, the various aspects and processes of the law, like inspections, increased reporting, huge fines, and court cases, draw time and resources from NGOs. A change in the law from 2014 gave the Ministry of Justice the right to add organisations to the register themselves without a court ruling. This change had an apparent effect: in 2015, the number of environmental NGOs added to the register increased tenfold (see Table 1).

*Table 1: Environmental NGOs labelled as Foreign agents*

Year	Number
2014	2
2015	20
2016	4
2017	5
2018	0
2019	1
2020	0
2021	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>

After 2015, the number of environmental organisations labelled foreign agents remained relatively stable and low over the years. However, one should not assume that the problem has become smaller. The important work of the environmental organisations that were previously listed and then closed is still highly impacted. Those who changed into consulting companies spend more time and money, and those that operate without registration face practical issues. In addition, all environmentalists struggle with the status as alleged betrayers and foreign agents against Russian values.

In 2019, the law on foreign agents was changed and opened the possibility of punishing media outlets and individual journalists for any kind of information publishing. The law “*On recognition of individuals as media acting as Foreign Agents*” was initiated as a bill at the

end of 2017, and the first reading took place in January 2018. After being abandoned for almost two years, the bill was handled very quickly at the end of 2019. This amendment has had direct effects on limiting free speech and creates further incentives to self-censoring.

Moreover, December 2020 saw another expansion of the foreign agent law allowing any politically active, foreign-funded *individual* or organisation to be labelled a foreign agent. Thus, the scope of those recognized as foreign agents in Russia can be NGOs, media outlets, journalists, unregistered groups, or individuals. Further, in December 2020, President Putin signed two supporting laws criminalising violations of the foreign agent law, implying that an offence, i.e., not registering voluntarily, can be met with fines or prison sentences. Moreover, the same month as the foreign agent law was expanded, five individuals were labelled foreign agents. Three journalists accused of “*performing the functions of a foreign agent*,” the St. Petersburg-based artist and activist Daria Apakhonchich and veteran human rights activist Lev Ponomaryov. Not only does this show that the regime actively employs these laws to suppress free speech and fundamental human rights, but also the propensity to apply laws selectively against those that the regime sees as a potential threat.

## 2.3 UNDESIRABLE ORGANISATIONS

In 2015 the *Undesirable Organisations Law*<sup>7</sup> was introduced, targeting international and foreign organisations that operate in Russia. With this piece of legislation, the authorities have a legal basis to target both Russian organisations and individuals (through the Foreign agent law) and foreign/international organisations that the regime sees as a threat to Russian state security. The scope for the Undesirable Organisations law is even more ambiguous than the foreign agent law, and both laws rely on the same kind of vagueness and unclear writing that benefits the authorities and creates fear and uncertainty within NGOs. Therefore, the law is intended to

shut down foreign organisations that the regime sees as threatening and intimidate Russians to cooperate with said organisation. Anyone working for or collaborating with an “undesirable” organisation — including an unofficial official capacity — faces fines. The criminal proceeding has been the case against repeated offenders, and the punishments can be even harsher, with fines and prison sentences ranging from two to six years.

Regarding the register of undesirable organisations,<sup>8</sup> most of those registered are US-based foundations or connected to these and provide financial support for Russian NGOs. Two of four listed in 2017 were institutions of Mikhail Khodorkovsky, an ex-oligarch who fled Russia after being pardoned and released from prison. Four organisations listed in 2018 included two focusing on elections monitoring, one German fund, and one environmental US-based NGO. In 2019, four organisations were also listed, including two US-based organisations, one Canadian and one from the Czech Republic. 2020 saw an increase in 12 new organisations labelled undesired. Eight of these were US-based, one from the United Kingdom, one from Belgium, one from France, and one from the Czech Republic.

Undesirable organisations are shown in table 2. At this point, the undesirable organisation’s law has not been actively applied towards any environmental NGOs, and the main target has been various religious communities, human rights organisations, and cultural exchange organisations. One might question why we have included this as the law is not directly relevant towards environmental civil society, but this is done due to two reasons. Firstly, as table 2 illustrates there is a clear trend where gradually more and more organisations get included which illustrate that it is not only the environmental civil society that is under pressure in Russia today. All forms of civil society are under pressure. Secondly, with this increase in undesirable organisations, it is not unlikely that this instrument will be utilised towards the environmental civil society in the future potential in tandem with the foreign agent law enabling a syner-

7. called “unwanted” by the Ministry of Justice, we use the more understandable and internationally used term “undesirable”.

8. At the time of writing this, the full list was available at: <https://minjust.gov.ru/ru/documents/7756/> . After the war broke out, several sites have disappeared.

gistic effect here both domestic actors (foreign agent law) and international actors (undesirable organisations law) can be prosecuted and suppressed.

*Table 2: undesirable organisations*

Year	Number
2015	4
2016	3
2017	4
2018	4
2019	4
2020	12
2021	18

## 2.4 COVID-19 PREVENTION

There is no doubt that Russia was and still is, hit hard by the Covid-19 pandemic, with almost 30´000 daily cases at its worst in 2020. Like in so many other countries, dramatic prevention measures have been introduced, but it is clear that such prevention measures have been also used as an instrument to arrest and fine protesters in Russia.<sup>9</sup>

Further, the divergent practice in the regions and municipalities of

arranging public hearings. Several Russian environmental groups have complained that public hearings were cancelled or done with limited public participation.

As public hearings are the responsibility of municipal authorities, several regions and municipalities adopted new procedures for con-

9. <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/russia/>



A fine is being drawn up against Yevgeny Korsak for a single picket against oil spills in Komi.

from: <https://rusecounion.ru/ru/ehrd-may2021>

ducting these discussions. Both measures and procedures have been vastly different across regions. For instance, in Chelyabinsk, discussions were held in absentia, meaning that comments were sent in before the discussion but could not participate in any way, not even digitally. Or, as in the Leningrad region, only a handpicked construction company was allowed to participate, while local groups and indigenous people organisations deliberately were kept out due to covid-19 prevention. Some regions held public hearings via the internet where the procedure for selecting participants was unclear, and some activists could not register for discussions. Other regions even dropped hearings altogether and replaced them with polls, creating uncertainty as to whether opinions were considered and unclear whether dissent was included in the final protocol or not.

Overall, we have seen vastly different practices of covid-19 measures and several examples of contradicting rules and efforts at the local level, where laws are cherry-picked to undermine potential opposition and criticism.

## 3. NEW LEGAL DEVELOPMENTS

Almost every year, we have seen new suggestions to limit the space for civil society, both in terms of limiting the activities for organisations, but also gradually targeting the individual activists wanting to protect their local environment. Sadly, 2021 was no exception. The following section is divided into two parts. Firstly, the new legal changes of 2021 are presented, before 3 new suggestions amending the foreign agent law is presented.

### 3.1 LEGAL CHANGES IN 2021

In 2021 a number of major changes concerning the government control of persons performing the functions of foreign agents went into effect.

We have previously written about several amendments that were introduced in late 2020, some of which became law in 2020 and some in 2021. One of the most prominent changes was the expansion of the foreign agent law to also include unregistered groups and any individual.<sup>10</sup>

The Federal Law No. 481-FZ dated 30. December 2020 introduced amendments to five federal laws, presented below.

10. Please see our previous report "Protest and pressure in a pandemic. Status of Russia's foreign agent laws and implications for environmentalists in 2020", section 3, summed up in table 2 (page 12). The report is available at [naturvernforbundet.no/civilsocietyreports](http://naturvernforbundet.no/civilsocietyreports)

We want to point out that even experienced lawyers in Russia cannot understand all the amendments and additions to the law on foreign agents. However, the tendency is that the government means to tighten the legislation on foreign agents. Also, it would seem that even the Russian Ministry of Justice is confused, and plans to make a unified register of foreign agents. Thus, we can expect new changes to the legislation on foreign agents.

1. Amendments to the Law 'On Mass Media' prohibit any mass media to disseminate information about organisations or natural persons listed in all registers of foreign agents without a special note that such organisations or natural persons are foreign agents. Now the absence of such a note can lead to administrative charges against any mass media.

In fact, this is nothing else than an infringement of the freedom of speech enshrined in the Russian Constitution. Article 29 grants freedom of thought and speech to anyone. This provision also states that no one can be coerced into expressing one's views and convictions or renouncing them.

2- Changes were also made to the Federal Law 'On Nongovernmental Associations'. This law

(Art. 29.1) now sets out a procedure for entering/removing unregistered nongovernmental associations in/from the register of foreign agents.

Following this, the Russian Ministry of Justice issued a decree under this law on 1. June 2021, establishing a procedure for keeping such a register.

In order to be excluded from the register of foreign agents, the tax inspectorate and the Ministry of Justice conduct an audit of the NGO. If within one year the NGO does not receive money from abroad, it may be excluded from the register of foreign agents.

3. The Law ‘On State Secrets’ was amended. It now states that among the grounds on which an official or an individual can be denied access to a state secret is now the inclusion of such an official/individual in the register of foreign agents.

Several changes were made to the Law ‘On Nonprofit Organisations. Firstly, the very notion of a ‘nonprofit organisation performing the functions of a foreign agent’ became even vaguer. Basically any kind of work can be regarded as ‘political’ and any kind of support can be considered ‘finance from abroad’.

And as presented in the background section, also unregistered groups can be labelled a foreign agent.

Moreover, the law requires NGOs that are labelled as foreign agents to apply the label of a foreign agent not only in all materials spread through mass media or the Internet (every post or comment), but also in official requests and applications to state and local government authorities.

Further, a new amendment to the Federal Law “On Nonprofit-organisations” was decided.<sup>11</sup> NGOs are now obliged to report their activities, events held, income and expenditure to the Ministry of Justice on an annual basis. Changes also affected the way such organisations get registered from a legal point of view: they cannot be registered in living quarters. The list of funding sources that can qualify an organisation as a foreign agent was also extended.

In view of these changes to the law, the Rus-

sian Ministry of Justice approved amendments to the procedure for keeping a register of NGOs performing the functions of a foreign agent (Decree No. 107 dated 28.06.2021) and changes to the procedure for submission of information by NGOs performing the functions of a foreign agent.

4. Another addition was made to the Federal Law ‘On Measures Directed at Individuals Involved in the Violation of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms of the Citizens of the Russian Federation’.<sup>12</sup>

This one is the most disputable change, which concerns most Russian people. From now on (Art. 2.1) there is an extra option to label natural persons (meaning individuals) foreign agents if such a citizen carries out political activities in favour of a foreign state, its public authorities, an international or a foreign organisation, foreign citizens, or stateless persons. In fact, a foreign agent can be any Russian citizen who has an active stance or collects information related to military and technical activities.

So far, the Russian Ministry of Justice has not developed a procedure for keeping a register of such natural persons.

These legislative changes violate the rights granted by the European Convention on Human Rights, namely freedom of assembly and association (Art. 11), freedom of expression (Art. 10) and prohibition of discrimination (Art. 14); by adopting this law, Russian authorities abused limitations on use of restrictions on rights (Art. 18).

Regrettably, the European Court of Human Rights has not so far reviewed complaints filed by Russian NGOs against the foreign agent law. Now that Russia was suspended from the European Court of Human Rights in February, this process remains uncertain.

The Constitutional Court, the highest court in the Russian Federation, made a full review of the foreign agent law only in 2014 when it was in a ‘softer’ revision. At that time, the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation ruled that the foreign agent law was not in conflict with the Constitution. The court held that the law was

11. Federal Law under No. 75-FZ dated 5. April 2021, under the name: ‘On Making Amendments to the Federal Law “On Nonprofit Organisations”’

12. Federal law No. 272-FZ dated 28 December 2012

focused on providing all concerned parties with information about the financial support of an organisation. The legal concept of a ‘foreign agent’ did not imply a negative connotation, while the negative meanings deriving from Soviet times had no constitutional or legal interpretation.

Many human rights activists and one member of the Constitutional Court itself disagreed with the conclusions of the highest court.

### 3.2 NEW PROPOSALS FOR CHANGES IN THE FOREIGN AGENT LAW

In 2021, 3 legislative initiatives to change the Foreign agent law have been laid forward.<sup>13</sup> All want to ease the legislation, or at least make it clearer, thereby softening it by making it less arbitrary.

Two of the proposals come from political parties and are brought forward through the formal process. The third initiative is brought forward by a public initiative, including the delivery of 260 00 signatures.

#### **1st proposal, from *Spravedlivaya Rossiya* (Just Russia) political party:**

The first proposal has been submitted by the *Spravedlivaya Rossiya* (Just Russia) faction, almost all deputies from this party, including Olga Epifanova, who is also a former United Russia deputy.

These are amendments to the law on mass media. They relate only to that part of the law on foreign agents that relate to the media and, accordingly, to individuals performing the functions of media-foreign agents. The amendment proposes assignment of this status by the court, and not by the decision of the Ministry of Justice. It proposes to identify the repeated receipt of funds and a significant amount of funds. What is a “significant amount” is left to the decision of the court.

The other part of this legislation, the initial

13. Information from radio Echo Moscow program with Ekaterina Shulman (political scientist, expert on problems of law-making) <https://echo.msk.ru/programs/status/2951084-echo/> Link to the OVD-info proposal: <https://inoteka.io/ino/explanatory-note-en#2-3>

which concerns NGOs, is not touched by *Spravedlivaya Rossiya*.

#### **2nd proposal, from *Novyye Lyudi* (New people) political party:**

This is a more general bill on amending certain legislative acts in terms of clarifying the procedure for recognizing individuals and legal entities as foreign agents. They also apply to NGOs, the media and individuals who are media.

The bill says that if there is a concept of an agent, then there must be a concept in the legislation of a “principal”. So, in order to recognize a legal entity or individual as a foreign agent, the Ministry of Justice will have to prove in court the connection between the principal, that is, the customer, the one who gives the funds and those who give the order and this very agent.

The burden of proof lies with the Ministry of Justice. Funding for principals should be at least 30% of the working capital of a legal entity. First, a warning, three months for possible corrections, after which the Ministry of Justice is already filing a lawsuit. Such a procedure.

In addition, the list of what is a political activity for which, in fact, you are recognized as a foreign agent is limited. Let me remind you that two circumstances must be present, two signs are foreign funding and political activity.

#### **3rd proposal:**

The third bill is more radical in nature, as it proposes to cancel all the Foreign agent law. OVD-info, together with legal experts, prepared a draft law to repeal all the legislative acts on foreign agents.<sup>14</sup> They have put a lot of work into the proposal, including a financial and economic justification, a list of cancelled acts, an explanatory note – all in high quality. Naturally, public organisations do not have the right to initiate legislation, so this is a public initiative. But this public initiative can be discussed publicly and, apparently, will be discussed at the working group, which will include, among other things, the President’s Human Rights Council as well.

14. Link to the OVD-info proposal: <https://inoteka.io/ino/explanatory-note-en#2-3>

## 4. NEW FOREIGN AGENTS AND UNDESIRABLE ORGANISATIONS IN 2021

As the Foreign agent law and the law on undesirable organisations stand as the most prominent pieces of legislation to suppress Russian civil society, this chapter will present what happened in 2021, and more specifically in terms of environmental civil society.

In total 120 organisations and individuals were affected in 2021 by the Foreign agent legislation and legislation on undesirable organisations. This is the highest number ever recorded, even higher than the unprecedented 85 listing in 2015. There are 5 ‘sorts’ of Foreign agents: NGOs, media outlets, journalists, unregistered groups and individuals. All these can be prosecuted, and labelled foreign agents. Table

3 shows the number of newly added Foreign agents in 2021, and also shows the total number that currently are on the lists. The numbers illustrate that 2021 was a watershed in terms of newly added foreign agents, with over half of the list originating from 2021. Furthermore, when we include the undesirable organisations from 2021, we see the same trend. Here, 19 of 50 organisations are from 2021.

Despite this gloomy development, no individuals were labelled (only individual media persons), but with the gradually more autocratic tendencies in Russia, we sadly fear that it is a matter of time before also this autocratic tool will be utilised towards civil society.

*Table 3: changes in listings of Foreign agents and undesirable organisations*

	New in 2021	In the lists (old and new) per Jan 2022
<b>Foreign agents:</b>		
NGOs	11	74 (of which 2 environmental NGOs)
Media	20	36
Media persons	65 (of which 2 environmentalists)	70
Un-registered groups	5	5
Individuals	0	0
<b>Total Foreign agents:</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>185</b>
Undesirable:	19	50
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>235</b>

The table illustrates foreign agents and undesirable organisations. The first column shows the new foreign agents and undesirable organisations in 2021, while the second column shows the total number in the list after some are removed during the years. The rows illustrate what kind of actor the Foreign agent/undesirable organisation are. The official list is currently unavailable probably due to the war.

## 4.1 WHO ARE THE NEW AGENTS?

With so many new agents and organisations, it is necessary to briefly dissect the main trend in terms of the new actors. Firstly, we will present the main trend of the new foreign agents, before we discuss the new undesirable organisation.

Despite a record-breaking year, no environmental NGOs were added to the list in 2021. The 11 NGOs that were targeted by the regime, were related to the work of human rights activist Alexey Navalny, election-monitoring work, education, and gender issues.

An overarching trend of 2021 was to limit the space for media outlets and journalists. Potentially this can be explained by the fact that 2021 was an election year, and that Alexei Navalny received much focus and support. To shut this down, 20 media outlets and a total of 65 individuals as media-foreign agents. Amongst these included environmental journalist Elena Solovyeva and environmental activist Eugeny Simonov. The latter is an international coordinator of the coalition “Rivers without boundaries” and was writing about the problems with the Lake Baikal pollution, and the former was writing about Shies.<sup>15</sup>

2021, also saw the first unregistered group labelled as a foreign agent. The 5 unregistered groups were: Golos, OVD-info<sup>16</sup> initiative and 3 LGBTQ+ groups.

Despite this grim picture, there is some good news. One environmental NGO, i.e., Civil Initiative against environmental crime<sup>17</sup> from Krasnodar Krai, was removed from the foreign agent list in 2021. Initially, they were listed due to a donation from Greenpeace Russia in 2019 and have tried ever since to be removed. This means that they can once again continue to work on fighting forest fires and preservation of nature,

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15. It is worth noting that Simonov doesn't consider himself a journalist, but an activist. We mention him as a journalist as he was labelled as a journalist.

16. OVD-Info (Russian: ОВД-Инфо) is an independent human rights media project dedicated to political persecution in Russia. Among other work, they provide legal support to people and organisations that ended up on the registers of “foreign agents”. OVD-info is based in Moscow and their web site is <http://ovdinfo.org>

17. «Гражданская инициатива против экологической преступности», <https://ciaec.ru/>

without the suppression consequences of the foreign agent law.

This means that there are “only” two environmental NGOs still remaining in the foreign agent's register. These are Ecodefense from Kaliningrad and Silver Taiga from Komi republic.<sup>18</sup> So far, environmental NGOs have not been the primary targets for the regime, but this can quickly change. If environmental protests continue, along with the ongoing increased use of the foreign agent law, the number of environmental Foreign agents can increase. We have seen this already in 2022, when the regional national-cultural public organisation “Tuba kalyk” (Tubalary) working to defend cultural rights and an ancestral forest, was labelled.

A marquee event of 2021 was the closure of Memorial historical memory society and human rights centre due to alleged non-compliance with foreign agent legislation. This might seem somewhat irrelevant as this report has environmental activism as its focus, but the closure of Memorials, one of the biggest organisations in Russia working on human rights and disclosure of soviet repression was a signal that shook all of Russia's civil society. Over a long time, and in several courts Memorial has fought against the regime's attempts to close their activity. Due to the lack of labelling material “foreign agent”, and alleged justification of extremist and terrorist activities through the publication of lists of political prisoners, Memorial has been attempted closes over a long time. When the regime succeeded in forcing the liquidation in November 2021 through the legal system, the decision was appealed and the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has urged for a suspension of the closure, but little indicates that this will lead to anything. With the invasion of Ukraine and the autocratic state of the current regime, there is little hope that the Memorial will function anymore. The closure of one of the oldest human rights initiatives has a symbolic meaning for the whole civil society.

Finally, some might wonder why “only” 11 of total 75 NGOs were labelled in 2021 when we say that it has been a record-breaking year. We must remember that after the law on foreign agent

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18. Full list of environmental NGOs labelled as foreign agents <https://rusecounion.ru/ru/ecoagents>



law was implemented, Russian civil society has tried to adapt to continue their activity, and reorganised responding to new law amendments. However, the widening of the Foreign agent laws in 2020 means that reorganising is not a solution, there is no way to organise the work in a way to avoid getting into trouble. An illustrating case is the election-monitoring group Golos. The organisation was labelled a foreign agent and subsequently closed. Unable to continue as an organisation, they decided to continue their important work as an unregistered group. It could seem as though the election monitors had found a way to bypass the Foreign agent law. However, in 2021, the un-registered group was labelled Foreign agent, and also several individuals working with the group were labelled as individual media persons.

## 4.2. NEW UNDESIRABLE ORGANISATIONS

In terms of undesirable organisations, 19 organisations were labelled as undesirable in 2021. As the number of foreign agents, it has never been

labelled more undesirable organisations than in 2021.

It is easy to imagine that poor relations can lead to the labelling of undesirable organisations. After a crisis in the relationship with Germany, 3 German NGOs were labelled. Later on, educational institutions from the US, religious institutions from the US, Ukraine and Latvia, and NGOs related to election monitoring and Khodorkovsky. Regarding their geographical affiliation, 4 was related to the US, 3 to Germany, 2 to Ukraine, and one from each France, Belgium, Czech Republic, and Latvia. In addition, there was one European with no data on location.<sup>19</sup>

Before the election, Russian authorities chose to arrest a whole conference of oppositional politicians, gathered to discuss strategies for the coming parliament and local elections. The forum was considered to be organised by Otkrytaya Rossiya (Open Russia), which was listed as undesirable. In May 2021 the organisation announced to cease its operations in Russia.

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19. For more <https://ovdinfo.org/inoteka-en>

# 5. SUPPRESSION OF ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISTS IN 2021

The Foreign Agent law stands as quite possibly the most obvious and clear repressive measure from the governments towards Russian environmental civil society today. That said, the government has several other repressive tools in their toolbox to suppress civil society. This chapter, therefore, seeks to present some of the general trends in terms of the *other* repressive measures outside of the Foreign Agent law, both in terms of *who* the targets are, but also *what kind of* instruments are applied. This chapter is based on Russian Social-Ecological Union (RSEU) s monthly reporting and is centred around so-called “events”, i.e. recordings of cases against environmental activists.

## 5.1. WHO, WHAT AND WHERE?

All types of activists in all kinds of issue areas are targeted and suppressed, i.e., animal rights, anti-nuclear, waste-management, water-treatment, mining, construction, deforestation, and indigenous activists. Although some activists seem to be met with more rigid “sticks,” like in Shies and Mount Kushtau, the overall trend is that all types of activism against the government are met with severe repressive measures. These measures are everything from blunt vio-

lence, destruction of private property like tents in protest areas and cars, false/weak/non-existent allegations to drag individuals through the mud, or financial ruin. Further, prison sentences, probation, and movement restrictions are standard instruments for the regime, and in 2021 we have even recorded one homicide that illustrates that environmental activists in Russia risk their lives for the greater good.

When looking at the episodes in 2021, the overarching theme has been that it seems to be individuals who are the main suppressive target for the government. Although some organisations, like Civil Initiative against environmental crime (*Гражданская инициатива против экологической преступности*), have experienced vast fines for the lack of marking their own material as “foreign agent”, the primary trend from our recorded events in 2021 is directed at individuals.<sup>20</sup> That said, it is essential to note that simply altering focus doesn’t mean that NGOs are “off the hook,” but rather than targeting the

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20. This case also illustrates the shift as the leader, Dmitry Shevchenko received a fine of 100 000 rubles, while “Civil Initiative against environmental crime” (*Гражданская инициатива против экологической преступности*) got a fine of 300 000 rubles (approximately 3500 euro)



People's gathering in Baymak in support of the eco-activist Ildar Yumagulov, April 25. Over 500 rallied to support Ildar after he was beaten up by a group of unknown individuals.

Source: <https://rusecounion.ru/ru/ehrd-apr2021>

NGOs that activists work for, the activists that run the movement/NGO is the new target. Looking at 2021, and the “types” of individuals being targeted, a heuristic distinction is between individual *leaders* and *regular* participants. While it is too soon to say if this development will continue, and only give a very simple description it enables us to categorise the big data material and compare suppression trends in different regions.

The leaders are the most known activists, who know the most or potentially have a leading role in an organisation. In other words, they are some leaders of the social movement. Thus the “regular” participants are just the ordinary protester, supporting or taking part, but not a known name or responsible for organising events. Distinguishing between leaders/regular participants is helpful as measures against leaders and random participants have different rationales. When the regime targets leaders, it can be understood as stopping organising and planning events. In contrast, targeting participants signals the cost for the regular inhabitant to support the demonstration.

When we look at the pressure in 2021, it seems that the known activists and protest-

ers have experienced most of the incidents. For instance, in the STOP GOK movement in Chelyabinsk working to prevent the Tominsky mining plant, two leaders, i.e., Vasily Moskovtvs and Gamil Asatulin, were sentenced to 2,5 years and three years respectively of probation due to alleged hooliganism, later changed to attempted arson for 1,5 year. The STOP GOK movement has worked over several years to stop the Tominsky mining plant, which threatens air quality, the local forest, and water safety for residents. Thus, targeted suppressive measures against its leader can be interpreted as a new way to weaken the movement's momentum/development and support the interest of the Tominsky plant rather than the local community.

Mount Kusthau in Bashkortostan illustrates a case where both leaders and regular participants have been met with sanctions from the authorities. Here, protesters have worked to protect this valuable natural area with a mountain viewed as sacred by the local population, against a new mine over several years. Regular participants have been met with huge fines, damage to property, and been detained. Leaders have, on the other hand, have been beaten up by unknown individuals, received fines, experienced damage

of property, been arrested and razzias.

These examples illustrate how the regime attempted to strangle activism and protests against the government by targeting different kinds of individuals. By targeting and prosecuting leaders, further demonstrations are impacted and increasingly complex. Moreover, this creates a signalling effect by showing the consequences to those who continue to work against the regime's interest. Furthermore, targeting regular participants increases the cost for the regular protester. In 2021, the leaders have been the most common target, but it is not unlikely that this can change in the future if protests continue. Moreover, it is essential to note that in 2021 we have recorded similar events against leaders and participants in Moscow, Vologda, Petrozavodsk, Chelyabinsk, Novosibirsk, Arkhangelsk, Novorossiysk, Khimki, Altai Republic, Komi, Bashkortostan, Kemerovo Region, Yekaterinburg and Monchegorsk, Nizhny Novgorod, Khanty-Mansi, Krasnoyarsk, Stavropol Territory, Krasnodar and Omsk. Thus, suppressing and targeting individuals is a trend on the national stage.

Finally, it is essential to note that activity and activism prevail despite a vast array of suppressive measures and strategies from the government. Activists routinely protect civil rights through appeals and solidarity, e.g., fund-raising to pay fines and demonstrations/rallies to support individuals prosecuted or detained. Fur-

ther, we see the continuous work to fight for a better environment for humans living today and the next generation.

Nearly all of the recorded events in 2021 are related to protests or activism that environmental activists have worked on for several years. For instance, there has been nearly monthly news on different new suppressive measures to "strangle" activism and protests in Bashkortostan, but protests continue. Same in Shies (Arkhangelsk) where protests in 2021 have been given several fines. Moreover, parts of the protest camp have been forcibly removed, protesters detained, sentences hardened, and even labelling Elena Solovyova a foreign agent.<sup>21</sup> Although the Shies protest has taken place over several years and the regime's suppressive measures continue to be severe, protest is still going on and is still strong. It is therefore essential to end on this note. Although the regime continues to suppress, ordinary people trying to protect their local community and environment keep fighting.

Russian Social-Ecological Union (RSEU) monitors the situation on a regular basis and publishes this monthly on their website. We have included these reports translated into English in Appendix 2, for the benefit of readers who don't read Russian.

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21. a journalist writing about Shies (<https://7x7-journal.ru/news/2021/10/10/in-komi-activists-announce-a-fundraiser-for-journalist-elena-solovyova-labeled-as-a-foreign-agent>)

## 6. STORIES OF ECO-PRISONERS

As of January 2022, there are 11 eco-prisoners in Russia, that is 11 persons who are imprisoned for their environmental protection activities. These individuals have been detained, prosecuted and convicted for their prominent activism in some of the most pressing environmental cases in Russia as of today. Environmental activism is spread throughout Russia, illustrated by the eco-prisoners that work against mining in the mountains of Bashkortostan, against the landfill in Shies/Arkhangelsk and mining and enrichment in Chelyabinsk, to protect old and traditional parks in Moscow and Yekaterinburg. Thus, their stories show both their individual fight to protect the local environment, but also illustrate the larger trend. A national struggle to work for civil society and protect the local community and environment across Russia.

### **ANDREI BOROVIKOV, SHIES, ARKHANGELSK REGION**

Andrei Borovikov is an eco-activist, a member of the Pomorie – Not a Dump Movement.

During 2018-2020 Andrey repeatedly took part in rallies and other public events in defence of the Shies station, located in the Lensky district of the Arkhangelsk region, from plans to build a giant landfill from Moscow's and the Moscow region's waste. He also actively worked on other environmental problems of the region.

Despite a conviction in 2019 for repeated protests<sup>22</sup> sentencing him for 400 hours of com-



Andrey Borovikov and Daria Borovikova, his wife (personal photo)

pulsory labour, Andrei persistently worked to fight the Shies-landfill speaking out against the regime and working to stop one of the biggest landfills in history in the untouched forest of Arkhangelsk oblast.

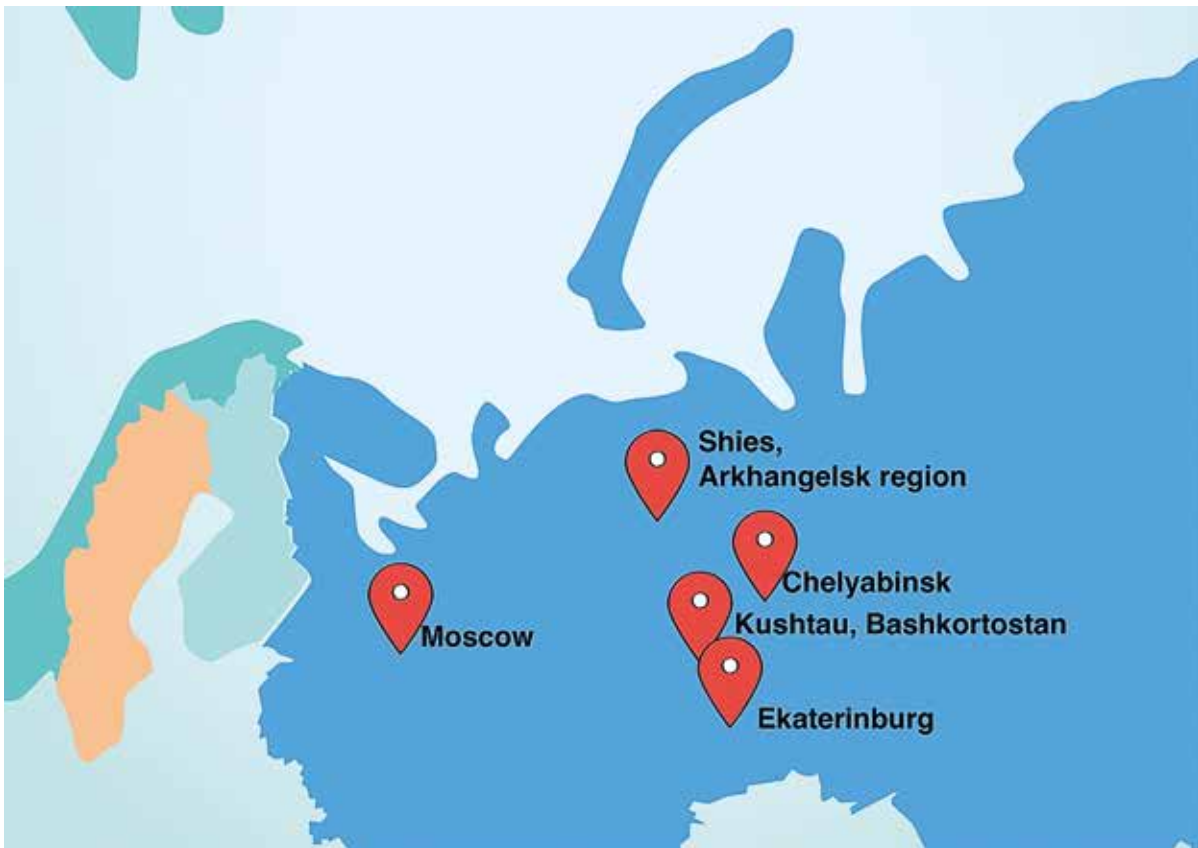
As a way of stopping Andrei and signal to other protesters working against Shies, the government prosecuted Andrei for the distribution of internet pornography. In April 2021, Andrei was sentenced to 2.5 years for sharing Rammstein's music video "Pussy" on Vkontakte.<sup>23</sup>

Andrey's case illustrates how the regime uses all efforts possible to spread fear and raise the costs of activism. In July 2021, Andrey had a son who will not see his father for the next 2 years as a result of his work to protect the forest in Arkhangelsk oblast

***We are one family, I'm always on his side. And I will wait for him whatever happens!***  
– Daria Borovikova, wife.

22. Convicted under Criminal Code art. 212.1

23. Prosecuted and convicted under Criminal Code art. 242.3b



Map design: Sergey Fedulov

### **ANDREY KHRISTOFOROV, SHIES, ARKHANGELSK REGION**

Andrey Khristoforov, often called “Drevarkh the Enlightened”, has been an engaged activist for the past 20 years. A part of his activism is wearing rags, wings behind his back and a green tattoo in the form of a tree crown on his face. The uncommon appearance is a way of challenging the anthropocentric thought that nature is an instrument and especially how the forest is undervalued, leading to decimation.

When it became known about the plans of the Moscow Government to build a landfill at the Shies station in the Arkhangelsk region, Khristoforov joined the fight against this project. He participated in protest rallies and travelled to Shies. Both our partners and activists at the site highlighted Khristoforov’s importance during the protests playing an invaluable role.

On June 27, 2019, Drevarkh was detained for ripping off a stop valve near the Shies station from a train. At this point, the government had set forward a prohibition for individuals to be a sight as a



Andrey Khristoforov (personal photo)

way to end the ongoing protests. When arrested, Drevarkh was hit by a stun gun by a policeman. Simultaneously, the policeman was injured.

Following this, A criminal case was opened against Khristoforov for the use of violence against a police officer.<sup>24</sup> Drevakh left for Ukraine seeking political asylum there. In August 2021 he returned to Russia and was immediately detained and put under travel restrictions awaiting a court ruling in Arkhangelsk oblast.

***I considered that the place of power for me is my homeland.***

– Andrey “Drevarkh” Khristoforov.

24. Criminal Code Art 318 part 1

**ILNUR KINISAROV, RAIL ABKADIROV,  
RUSTAM AMANOV, MARAT  
SHARAFUTDINOV,<sup>25</sup> KUSHTAU,  
BASHKORTOSTAN:**

In 2019, the Bashkir Soda Company (BSC) received an exploration and mining licence in the Shikhan (mount of) Kushtau in the Bashkortostan region.

Shikhan Kushtau is one of the remaining three unique natural monuments (Bashkir Shikhans), located in the Ishimbaysky District. Kushtau is the remainder of an ancient coral reef, formed over 230 million years ago in the Tropical Sea (the Ural Ocean). The licence declares the Mount of Kushtau as a deposit and gives its holder permission to explore and extract raw stuff (limestone) from over there for baking soda and soda ash production. The mining would destroy the pristine mountain area, which is considered sacred to the local inhabitants. The Mount of Kushtau, the fourth of the Bashkir Shikhans, is already completely destroyed by extraction that started in the early 1950s. Today there is a giant open-pit instead of the beautiful Mount of Shakhtau and huge industrial waste storage.

As Mount Kushtau stands as a landmark in the region with both cultural and religious importance, the plans for exploration and mining sparked anger and despair in the local community. The residents protested in several ways, from the popular assembly to open clashes with the private security company and the police in 2020, which led to massive arrests.

In August 2020, there was a massive clash between the Shikhan's defenders on the one side and the security forces and security guards of the BSC on another. As a result, it was decided to stop development. In September 2020, Shikhan Kushtau received the status of a Specially Protected Natural Area, meaning it is protected from future activity. This is a huge victory for the local community and environmentalists protecting the mountain. .

Despite this, the violence was not over and on November 7 in 2020, in the village of Karmaskaly (Bashkortostan) what has later been described as revenge for the eco-activist victory took place. During a conflict among locals, a



Ilnur Kinisarov, Rail Abkadirov, Rostam Amanov, Marat Sharafutdinov (personal photos)

violent and mass detention took place, in which several eco-activists were dragged out of cars, windows were broken.

After this, Ilnur Kinisarov, Rail Abkadirov, Rustam Amanov, Marat Sharafutdinov, were prosecuted for hooliganism and illegal storage of ammunition. Previously, all 4 had played an active role in the protection of Mount Kushtau, and were once again active on November 7. Their investigation took 8 months, in which they all spent the entire time in custody. Participation in two protests was obviously seen as a threat to stability in the region, and the four was a clear signal to illustrate what happens to protesters. Now Kinisarov, Abkadirov and Amanov are under house arrest, and Sharafutdinov is under compulsory psychiatric treatment.

***The authorities purposely use the national factor to weight the ecoprotest.***

– Tagir Kagamanov, one of the movement leaders.

**YUNIR ABDULLIN, KUSHTAU, BASHKORTOSTAN**

Yunir Abdullin was also present at the clash between security forces and the defenders of mount Kushtau at 16. August 2020. Like many others, he worked to protect the Mountain against devastation and destruction but was prosecuted after the clash for the use of life-threatening violence against a government official.

25. Often referred to as the Karmaskalinsky four.

Olga Kuzmina  
(Photo Alec Sander / SOTA) –



Presumably, a criminal case was opened on the fact of hitting a police officer on the head with a shovel handle during the protests, which is why, according to the investigation, the police officer received an open fracture of the occipital bone with a minor contusion of the brain. As a result, Abdullin was sentenced to 1 year 6 months in prison.

***The young generation already woke up, they understood that we are being robbed. We are the defenders of Kushtay, simply without religion, nationality, party.***

– Abdrakhman “Babay” Validov, famous Kushtau defender.

#### **OLGA KUZMINA, MOSCOW PARK**

Olga Kuzmina, a defender of the urban environment, demanded to stop house construction as part of a renovation program in Moscow on Shushenskaya street. The house is being built on a green area wrongly named as an empty area. Besides the destruction of the old city park, the building would deprive the surrounding houses of daylight.

Despite support in the local community to fight against the construction, Olga was the only one willing to act. Out of despair, on August 9 2021, Olga tied herself to a tree at a height of 20 meters, to try to save the park, using civil disobedience. As She knew that police would come and it could be dangerous, she was carrying a defective crossbow, meaning it could do no harm, for self-defence. She spent 7 hours in the tree. The arriving police officers forcibly (was she removed by force, or by extensive force?) removed Kuzmina from the tree and took her to the Losinoostrovsky police station, where they left her overnight.

The next day, Olga Kuzmina’s mother was searched and all their equipment was seized. On



Olga Kuzmina (photo Alec Sander / SOTA)

August 11, a criminal case was initiated prosecuting Olga for alleged “Hooliganism” (with a maximum punishment of up to seven years in prison).<sup>26</sup>

Following this, Olga has been under house arrest since 17 August and in October, a decree was adopted on the compulsory placement of the eco-activist in a psychiatric hospital for an examination. Olga could be sent to the psychiatric hospital anytime the regime sees fit. Using psychiatric care as a means to shut down critical voices is not uncommon towards activists and echoes the sinister/gloomy Soviet practice and still stands as a real threat for civil society as of this day. Olga’s story tells the tale of the consequences of civil obedience, and grave human rights violations that follow when normal Russians try to save their local community.

***A person could be put under forced psycho treatment for three months just because they want to.***

– Roman Kiselyov, Moscow Helsinki Group.

#### **VLADIMIR KAZANTSEV, STOP GOK MOVEMENT, CHELYABINSK**

The former ex-director of the organisation “Environmental Consulting” and lawyer Vladimir

26. Criminal Code Art 213 part 2





Vladimir Kazantsev (personal photo)

Kazantsev attracted interest from the law enforcement all the way back to 2018. Here, Vladimir had an active role in the lawsuits against the Tominsky factory and the Chelyabinsk regional administration to preserve the Tominsky forest and Chelyabinsky urban pine forest.<sup>27</sup> He spearheaded the work to stop the Tominsky factory that would lead to massive deforestation and severe depletion of clean air and groundwater. On August 28 2020, on the eve of two important court hearings,<sup>28</sup> Kazantsev was arrested on suspicion of swindling.<sup>29</sup> The police claim that “the suspect in order to influence the course of the trial, received from the client 500 thousand rubles. To stop one of the major players in the protest movement, i.e. Vladimir, the regime has tried to raise questions about his personal motives and drag his name through the mud so that the regime-friendly business can continue their work.

***When all this will end, Vladimir will continue to work on nature protection. People asked him to do so, they believe in him.***

– Irina Kazantseva, Vladimir’s wife.

### **IVAN NOGOVITSYN, EKATERINBURG’S PARK DEFENDER**

In 2010, the local authorities in Ekaterinburg decided that a new Cathedral was to be built in the heart of the city. Following the lack of space,

27. For more information about this struggle and activities of “Stop GOK”, please refer to chapter 5. For those interested in more, please see our previous report “Protest and pressure in a pandemic. Status of Russia’s foreign agent law and implications for environmentalists in 2020”, page 20.

28. in the Chelyabinsk Arbitration Court against the Tominsky factory and in the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation for the Chelyabinsk City Bor

29. Criminal Code Art 159 part 3 and 4, and art. 30



Ivan Nogovitsyn (photo ndnews.ru)

it was decided that the Drama theatre park was to be removed for the new cathedral. Drama theatre park is one of the very few green lungs left in central Ekaterinburg proving crucial for the local community. The decision sparked controversy and demonstrations dividing the city. In May 2019, over 2000 demonstrated against the cathedral leading to mass arrests even making President Putin commented on the project.<sup>30</sup> Following several years of demonstration and active work to prevent the destruction of one of the very few green spaces left for recreational purposes for the local community a case against Ivan was initiated. He was prosecuted for his participation in the rally against the building project in May 2019.

Ivan was detained in November 2020 in Vladivostok and was found guilty of the violation of the protest procedure and imposed a fine of 10 thousand rubles.<sup>31</sup> Following this, Ivan’s case was re-opened to a criminal case prosecuting him for riot participation. Ivan was detained and spent several months in a detention centre in Ekaterinburg awaiting his new sentence.<sup>32</sup>

On November 21 2021 Verkh-Isetsy District Court of Yekaterinburg released Ivan from criminal liability and sent him for compulsory treatment to a general psychiatric hospital. Currently, the whereabouts of Ivan Nogovitsyn are unknown.

***The issue is already not in the church and not in the park. We were just fed up.***

– Vlad, one of the protesters.

30. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-48371921> (24. jan)

31. Sentenced under Administrative Code Art. 20.2 part 5 with a fine of 110 euros (10000 rubels)

32. Prosecuted under Criminal Code Article 212 part 2 and 3.



# 7. HOW TO IMPROVE THE SITUATION FOR RUSSIAN CIVIL SOCIETY?

In this chapter, we present some of the work that has been done to improve the situation, and also what can be done from abroad to help Russian civil society.

## 7.1 WHAT IS BEING DONE IN RUSSIA

In September 2021, Russian civil society and media came together to demand the abolition of the Foreign agent laws. In a very short time, 150 000 signatures were gathered. Organisations spread information about the laws in their channels, and also pictures where the concept of the foreign agent was changed into something more appropriate, like agents for nature protection.<sup>33</sup>

So we see that there is hope, solidarity, and willingness to fight: Those targeted by the foreign agent laws have come together in solidarity, supporting each other.

By January 2022, 260 000 signatures have been gathered, and 243 civil society organisations, media, educational projects and other initiatives have signed.<sup>34</sup> Environmental NGOs and groups actively participated in the promotion of the campaign.

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33. See for instance [https://rusecounion.ru/ru/agents\\_of\\_people](https://rusecounion.ru/ru/agents_of_people)

34. Petition in change.org, We demand the abolition of laws on foreign agents [https://www.change.org/agents\\_of\\_people](https://www.change.org/agents_of_people)

There are signs of increased awareness and concern for human rights, especially among young people, and according to a study from the Levada centre, 50% of Russian youth view the Foreign agent law as a governmental tool to suppress critical voices.<sup>35</sup>

As the personal stories of the eco-prisoners show, it has been possible to fight for nature and environmental protection.

## 7.2 WHAT CAN BE DONE FROM OUTSIDE RUSSIA

After Russia launched a full-scale attack on Ukraine in February 2022, the situation turned even grimmer. Obviously for Ukrainians, who came under fire and had to take up arms, hide in a shelter or flee their homes. But also for Russian civil society, who faces even more barriers than before.

Russian environmentalists, including our partner organisations, have also been affected by the war. They, like us, are shaken by the invasion of Ukraine and demand the immediate cessation of all acts of war. Freedom of association and expression have suddenly been further tightened.

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35. Scandinavian readers can find more in this thorough and knowledgeable report by Maria Hamberg <https://iost.nu/blogg/aria-hamberg/morkt-ar-for-den-ryska-demokratirorelsen/>

**ДАННОЕ СООБЩЕНИЕ (МАТЕРИАЛ)  
СОЗДАНО И (ИЛИ) РАСПРОСТРАНЕНО  
НЕКОММЕРЧЕСКИМИ  
ОРГАНИЗАЦИЯМИ И (ИЛИ)  
СРЕДСТВАМИ МАССОВОЙ  
ИНФОРМАЦИИ, ТРЕБУЮЩИМИ  
ПОЛНОЙ ОТМЕНЫ  
ЗАКОНОДАТЕЛЬСТВА  
ОБ ИНОСТРАННЫХ АГЕНТАХ.**

This message (material) was created and (or) distributed by NGOs and (or) media, demanding the complete abolition of the legislation on foreign agents. Source: [https://rusec-union.ru/sites/default/files/inline/images/cov-er\\_big\\_0.png](https://rusec-union.ru/sites/default/files/inline/images/cov-er_big_0.png)

Nevertheless, both the environmental movement and other civil society actors have continued to work, despite the risks of high fines and long prison sentences.

The sanctions adopted against Russia are massive, and Naturvernforbundet/ Friends of the Earth Norway wholeheartedly supports them, as a means to end the war. Naturvernforbundet nevertheless believes it is even more important to support Russian civil society in the time ahead. Russia's civil society works for democratic participation, openness, international cooperation, and sustainable development.

Ending cooperation and support now will contribute to the end of the civil society, and will thus stifle independent opinion formation and discussion, as the authoritarian regime wants. It is difficult to predict what will happen in the future, how long the war will last and what the world will look like afterwards.

For readers wondering what can be done to help Russian environmental activists, a number of actions could be done individually or together in an environmental group, as well as with authorities and politicians.

We suggest the following:

1. Pressure: Sanctions towards Russia should, as much as possible, be directed towards the ruling and economic elite, not the general population and not civil society.

2. Inform: Paying attention to the situation in Russia, following and distributing information

about violations, and organising information events to spread awareness about the persecution environmental activists are facing. Remind people around you that this is Putin's war, and that also Russian civil society is a target for his fight against democracy.

3. Support: Supporting grassroots activists' work by organising solidarity events, if possible cooperating on common environmental issues, and help to make their voices heard by bringing forward their opinions and campaigns.

4. Help: Helping activists that need to flee Russia. In understanding the dangers that civil society activists face in today's Russia, it is necessary to help environmentalists and other human rights defenders, should they decide that fleeing from Russia is necessary.

5. Monitor and participate: If authorities decide to cooperate with Russian authorities on specific areas, such cooperation should be tied to civil society participation and possibilities for monitoring. This has been a demand from NGOs for a long time but is even more important now.

6. Cooperate: To maintain cooperation with Russian civil society, people-to-people cooperation is more important than ever. After successful international cooperation over several decades, it is crucial to continue even at uncertain, and times of trouble. Civil society cooperation should not need to start entirely from scratch when the situation in Russia improves.

## 8. CONCLUSION

This report has attempted to illustrate how the autocratic trend in Russia is still developing, making it increasingly hard to be an active part of civil society. This report has shown how this is also the case for environmental civil society, and despite some victories, the situation is still grim, looking even worse in the backdrop of the Ukraine war.

The report started with a brief background of Russian political and democratic development, coupled with the major findings of our previous reports. Following this, we presented the recent judicial development of the Foreign agent's legislation in 2021. Here, three amendments were presented from *Just Russia*, *New People* and a signatory campaign respectively, all of which was some sort of softening of the Foreign agent law by making it less arbitrary. It remains to be seen how these proposals will be considered by the Duma, but we should not expect much improvement. Even with adjustments, the Foreign agent law is in violation of human rights and decent society and should be abolished.

Section 3 then presented the 5 major legal developments relevant to environmental civil society. Unsurprisingly, all 5 limit free speech, and the room to operate for civil society.

The next section laid forward the new foreign agents and undesirable organisations of 2021. 2 environmentalists were labelled as individual media foreign agents among 65 journalists. Also,

there were 11 new NGOs foreign agents labelled in 2021, but no new environmental. Further, 19 new undesirable organisations were labelled in 2021, none of which were environmental actors. This makes 2021 the year with the most numerous new foreign agents and undesirable organisations altogether. It is not unlikely that numbers will rise even more with the amendment of 2020, enabling individuals to be labelled as well. Table 3 is a visual representation of the 5 types of foreign agents, i.e., NGOs, media outlets, journalists, individuals and un-registered groups. It's important to stress that when the environmental civil society hasn't been labelled to the same extent as other groups, this can be explained by the fact that most of the environmental actors already have been labelled, and thus reorganised their work in other forms. To illustrate this, we presented *Golos* as a case to show how civil society is always on the move to find a new way to organise themselves within the law and without criminal prosecution.

Section 5 presented how the government also utilises other kinds of repressive measures than the foreign agent law, and who the main targets were. Based on Russian Social-Ecological Unions monthly reports it was clear that all sorts of environmental activists were met with both violent and suppressive measures. Measures ranged from confiscated and destroyed property to one case of homicide. The overall trend was

thus that all types of opposition with government policy are dangerous, no matter what you fight for.

Section 6 was an attempt to illustrate this by telling the tales of 11 eco-prisoners locked away in Russia. Their stories show how regular people are met when threatening the regime's status quo. Finally, we tried to show that despite repression and violence, the Russian civil society keeps on fighting and shows why it matters.

Overall, this report illustrates that despite the fact that environmental organisations may not be seen as the main threat for the regime, individuals willing to take a stand and protest still risk a lot. Individuals protesting, whether that is for human rights, for free speech, against the regime or to protect the environment are still seen

as threats, and are therefore treated as such.

We wish we could say that the development is going the right way, but with the horrible attack on Ukraine in February 2022, nothing indicates that this is the case. Responding to the regime's violations of international law and attack on a brother-people, several thousands of brave Russians have taken to the street only to be met with harsh fines and prison. Currently a regular Russian can be sentenced to 15 years of prison if one is convicted of spreading "fake news" about the war.<sup>36</sup> Thus, 2022 seems to be even harsher for regular Russians and civil society.

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36. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russia-introduce-jail-terms-spreading-fake-information-about-army-2022-03-04/>



# APPENDIX 1: LIST OF ENVIRONMENTAL FOREIGN AGENTS

## FULL LIST OF ENVIRONMENTAL NGOS AND INDIVIDUALS REGISTERED AS FOREIGN AGENTS

Updated January 2022

Please note that 2018 and 2020 are not forgotten, they are not included as there were no entries of environmental NGOs in the register these years.

Red – shut down

Blue – left the register

Black – still in the register

#	# of all	Name	Region (oblast, republic etc)	Date written into register	Date for exiting the register	Reason to exit the register	Comments
<b>2014</b>							
1	10	Kaliningrad Regional Public Organization "Ecodefence! –Womens' Council"	Kaliningrad	21.07.2014			Keep denying following requirements for Foreign Agents and keep getting fines for not reporting as Foreign agents.
2	15	Association "Partnership for Development" (leader RSEU member)	Saratov	02.10.2014	06.11.2015	shut down	Main pressure has been streamed personally to the head of the NGO, Olga Pitsuova.
<b>2015</b>							
3	35	Jewish Regional Branch of the Russian Public Organisation "Municipal Academy"	Birobidzhan	26.01.2015	22.05.2015	shut down	One of the reasons for signing them in is that they organized an environmental seminar.
4	39	Interregional Charity Organisation "Siberian Environmental Center"	Novosibirsk	12.02.2015	27.12.2017	shut down	Their political activity is the petition to free Arctic-30 activists.
5	43	Chelyabinsk Ecological Social Movement "For nature" (leader RSEU member)	Chelyabinsk	06.03.2015	18.04.2017	Closed down by Supreme court because of Min-Justice lawsuit	Both were added at the same time, even though the movement didn't have any finances. But the Ministry of Justice decided that there is a connection because the two organizations had a common leader.
6	44	Chelyabinsk Regional Charitable Social Foundation "For nature" (leader RSEU member)	Chelyabinsk	06.03.2015	13.12.2016	Closed down by court because of Min-Justice lawsuit	
7	48	Murmansk Regional Public Environmental Organisation "Bellona-Murmansk"	Murmansk	19.03.2015	16.10.2015	shut down	
8	49	"Educational Center for Environment and Security"	Samara	20.03.2015	8.10.2015	Proved that they did not have foreign funding for a year	

#	# of all	Name	Region (oblast, republic etc)	Date written into register	Date for exiting the register	Reason to exit the register	Comments
9	51	Rostov City Public Organisation "E-co-Logic"	Rostov-on-Don	03.04.2015	30.03.2016	Proved that they did not have foreign funding for a year	
10	53	Ozerskaya Urban Socio-Environmental NGO Planet of hope	Chelyabinsk region	15.04.2015	27.09.2018	shut down	Leader Nadezhda Kutepova had to flee the country because of danger of state treason accusation.
11	65	Nizhny Novgorod Regional Public Organization "Ecological Center "Dront"" (RSEU member)	Nizhny Novgorod	22.05.2015	22.05.2015	shut down	Stopped receiving foreign funding almost a year before labelling. Only a small donation from Bellona-Murmansk, as well as a loan from another NGO that received foreign funds, and a grant from orthodox church affiliated foundation with money from offshore in Cyprus (see more in 2015 report)
12	75	Altai regional public organisation "Geblerovskoe Ecological Society"	Barnaul, Altay krai	23.06.2015	19.01.2017	shut down	
13	78	Interregional public organisation "The Northern Environmental Coalition"	the Republic of Karelia	8.07.2015	08.07.2016	shut down	Continue their work as newly registered regional NGO
14		Altaj ecological and cultural public foundation "Altaj 21st century"	Altai region	22.7.2015	28.03.2016	shut down	
15	83	Nizhny Novgorod ecological public non-profit organisation "Green World"	Nizhny Novgorod region	29.07.2015	28.10.2016	Proved that they did not have foreign funding for a year	
16	88	Interregional Social Ecological Foundation "ISAR-Siberia"	Novosibirsk	26.08.2015	19.12.2017	shut down	



#	# of all	Name	Region (oblast, republic etc)	Date written into register	Date for exiting the register	Reason to exit the register	Comments
17	93	Regional public organisation "Sakhalin Environment Watch"	Sakhalin region	18.09.2015	16.02.2017	Proved that they did not have foreign funding for a year	Even though the NGO returned the money to the donor (DiCaprio foundation), it wasn't removed from the register until February 2017.
18	95	Society for the Protection of Consumer Rights and the Environment «Printsip»	Moscow region	05.10.2015	05.10.2015	Proved that they did not have foreign funding for a year	
19	99	Krasnoyarsk regional public environmental organisation "Friends of Siberian forests" (RSEU member)	Krasnoyarsk krai	28.10.2015	28.11.2016	shut down	Was labelled even they didn't have any money since the Foreign Agent law came into force. So the law was implemented retrospective.
20	102	Irkutsk regional public organisation "Baikal environmental Wave" (RSEU member)	Irkutsk	10.11.2015	01.08.2016	shut down	Continue their work as a new RSEU regional branch.
21	106	Public charity environmental organisation "Green World" (leader RSEU member)	Sosnovy Bor, Leningrad region	02.12.2015	06.02.2017	shut down	Took decision to close down and continue work in another form
22	111	Baikal regional public institution "Public Environmental Center Dauria"	Chita, Chita region	30.12.2015	01.09.2016	shut down	

## 2016

23	125	Regional public environmental organisation of the Altai Republic "Arkhar"	Altai Republic, Gorno-Altai	05.04.2016	06.10.2016	shut down	
24	127	Regional public environmental-organization "Ecological soul's school "Tengri",	Altai Republic	17.05.2016	20.06.2017	shut down	

#	# of all	Name	Region (oblast, republic etc)	Date written into register	Date for exiting the register	Reason to exit the register	Comments
25	142	Inter-regional environmental and human rights public organisation "Environmental Watch on North Caucasus" (RSEU member)	Krasnodar region	13.09.2016	10.01.2018	Proved that they did not have foreign funding for a year	Members' participation in actions for nature protection considered as a "political activity" of the NGO. Receiving finances by members of the NGO was considered as NGO's "foreign funding".
26	147	Chapaevsk local public organisation "Association of medical workers of the Chapaevsk city"	Chapaevsk, Samara region.	21.10.2016	2019	Proved that they did not have foreign funding	Working with effects of pollution to human health

#### 2017

27	156	Environmental Human Rights Center Bellona	St.Petersburg	16.01.2017	08.06.2017	shut down	
28	157	Youth Public Organisation of Solonshensky District "Pro-Motion"	Altay kray	25.01.2017	19.02.2018	shut down	Foreign funding from 2014-2015. Formally stopped acting in the fall of 2016.
29	160	Murmansk Regional Public Organisation Kola Environmental Center (RSEU member)	Apatity, Murmansk region	20.04.2017	07.08.2017 – delisted 15.06.2018 – shut down	Proved that they did not have foreign funding for a year in 2017.	But decided to close down the NGO anyway, which happened in 2018
30	161	Fund for the Promotion of Sustainable Development "Silver Taiga"	Syktyvkar, Republic of Komi	14.06.2017			
31	164	Arkhangelsk regional youth environmental public organization "Aetas" (RSEU member)	Arkhangelsk region	01.09.2017	15.05.2018	Shut down	

#	# of all	Name	Region (oblast, republic etc)	Date written into register	Date for exiting the register	Reason to exit the register	Comments
<b>2019</b>							
32		Autonomous non-profit organization of information and legal services "Civil Initiative against Environmental Crime"	Krasnodar region	25.10.2019	27.12.2021	Proved that they did not have foreign funding	For the first time, funds from Greenpeace (International Non-Governmental Non-Profit Organization "Greenpeace Council") were considered foreign funding.
<b>2021</b>							
33	78	Simonov Evgeny Alexeyevich		08.10.2021			Register of individual media FA
34	80	Solovieva Elena Anatolievna	Komi Republic	08.10.2021			Register of individual media FA



## APPENDIX 2: OVERVIEW OF INCIDENTS IN 2021

Overview of incidents and pressure, by calendar month. Original version from RSEU.

### TERMINOLOGY

To be able to understand the distinctions layed forward in the monthly reports, a brief clarification is helpful. In all reports, two concepts are eagerly applied, i.e., *administrative cases* and *criminal cases*. Administrative cases are related to Code of Administrative Offences and consist of violations punished by fines and detantion up to 15 days, when Criminal cases are classified by Criminal Code consisting of crimes with heavier punishment.

### INTRODUCTION:

*These reports are ment as a tool to shed light on events and document the excessive cases of repression towards environmental activists.*

## JANUARY:

Source: <https://rusecounion.ru/ru/eh-rd-jan2021>

In January, 8 new administrative protocols were drawn up, 2 administrative cases were developed. One activist was sentenced to 10 days of administrative arrest. Two people received fines totalling 32 thousand rubles. 4 criminal cases against eco-activists were continued. Two activists went to court, defending their rights.

In January, **in the Krasnodar Territory**, the regional Investigation Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs suspended the investigation into the 2017 beating of the coordinator of the Environmental Watch for the North Caucasus, Andrei Rudomakha.

**In Yekaterinburg**, the consideration of a criminal case on the public justification of terrorism on the Internet, initiated against the Kurgan anti-nuclear activist Lyubov Kudryashova, continued.

**In Chelyabinsk**, closed-door proceedings are continuing in a criminal case against Vladimir Kazantsev, a lawyer for the Stop GOK movement, on large fraud. Also in Chelyabinsk, the proceedings in the criminal case against the Stop GOK activists Gamil Asatullin and Vasily Moskovets were accelerated: sessions were held on January 12, 18, 21, 22, and 26. The activists are accused of hooliganism by prior conspiracy.

**In Arkhangelsk**, a criminal case on the distribution of pornography on the Internet, initiated against an activist of Shies Andrey Borovikov, continued because he posted a video of the Rammstein group on his personal page on VKontakte. And on January 30, Andrey Borovikov was detained in a new administrative case on propaganda of Nazism, which was allegedly contained in a video posted on his personal page on VKontakte with a parody of the intro of the television series Friends.

New episodes of administrative pressure were recorded in St. Petersburg (1 episode) against 6 activists and in Moscow (1 episode) against 1 activist. Eco-activist Konstantin Fokin was detained **in Moscow** during a solo picket on the problem of climate change. A protocol was drawn up against the activist for violating the “self-isolation regime.”

**In St. Petersburg**, protocols were drawn up for the coordinator of the Green Petersburg movement Krasimir Vranski, activists Svetlana Utkina and Dmitry Prytkov, municipal deputies Natalia Barinova, Anna Shushpanova and Maria Voyutskaya because of a series of single pickets against amendments to the law of St. Petersburg common use”, which provide for the reduction of green areas, including the legalization of parking in parks and squares. Svetlana Utkina received 10 days of administrative arrest under the article on repeated violation of the rules for participation in a public event, Krasimir Vranski – 30 thousand rubles for organizing a public event without notice.

**In Bashkortostan**, the police came to a house in the village of Dubrava, Ufa district of **Bashkortostan**, to the defender of Mount Kushtau, Sergei Strannik, with a search. Only the mother of the eco-activist was at home. Half an hour after the start of the investigation, the 80-year-old pensioner became ill; she was taken away in an ambulance (1 episode). Police officers came to the participants of the flash mob against #Kryktyzhivi ore mining from the villages of Davletovo, Uzyanbash, Tashbulatovo, Ryskuzhino in Bashkortostan (1 episode). They threatened to prosecute them for participating in an uncoordinated action.

**In the Arkhangelsk region** at the station Shies, unidentified persons, accompanied by police officers, demanded that the activists dismantle the Leningrad camp “in connection with the reclamation of the landfill” (2 episodes).

## FEBRUARY:

Source: <https://rusecounion.ru/ru/eh-rd-feb2021>

The defeat of the camp of activists at the station Shies, an attack on an eco-journalist in Kuzbass, shelling of an eco-activist’s car in Nakhodka, new “foreign-agent” fines for eco-NGOs, continued 7 criminal cases against eco-activists. In Chelyabinsk, Vologda, and Petrozavodsk, eco-activists defended their rights.

The main reasons for the new episodes of pressure in February were the struggle for reclamation of the landfill at st. Shies in the Arkhangelsk region (2 episodes, 8 people), against coal

mining in the Kemerovo region, against the construction of a fertilizer plant in the Primorsky Territory, protection of Mount Kushtau in Bashkortostan, against the cutting of the Chernyaevsky forest in Perm, the construction of the Pshenitsa residential complex in Krasnoobsk, Novosibirsk region, clearing off a grove for the construction of a backup for the Kutuzov highway in Moscow and the activities of NGOs in the Krasnodar Territory.

February was marked by three cases of physical pressure on activists. In **Kiselyovsk, Kemerovo Region**, an attack was made on Natalia Zubkova, an environmental activist and editor-in-chief of the Novosti Kiselevsk newspaper. In **Nakhodka (Primorsky Territory)**, an unknown person fired several times into the car of Natalya Pezhemskaya, an activist of the For a Developing Nakhodka movement. At **the Shies station of the Arkhangelsk region**, unknown persons burned down the observation posts of activists. On the same day, police officers detained six activists.

Two new episodes of pressure were recorded in the framework of criminal cases: in both, eco-activists are witnesses. In **St. Petersburg**, Marina Parkina, an activist of the group “Against the construction of the port in Primorsk,” who was 26 weeks pregnant, was searched. In **Ufa**, the defender of Mount Kushtau, Fail Alsynov, was twice summoned to the regional FSB to testify because of his performance at a public gathering in 2019.

The consideration of three criminal cases against eco-activists continued. In **Yekaterinburg**, February 18 held a meeting on the criminal case against the Kurgan antinuclear activist Lubov Kudrjashovoj accused of public justification of terrorism with the use of the Internet. In **Chelyabinsk**, a criminal case on setting fire to piles of wood at the construction site of the Russian Copper Company against activists of the Stop GOK movement Gamil Asatullin and Vasily Moskovtvs, accused of hooliganism by prior conspiracy, is nearing its final stage. The sittings were held on February 4, 8, 9, and 25, and a verdict may be pronounced on March 29. In **Arkhangelsk** a criminal case against Shies’ activist Andrei Borovikov on the “distribution of pornography” due to the posting of a clip of the

Rammstein group in videos on his personal page on VKontakte, the judge ordered the forcible delivery of two prosecution witnesses.

Pressure on public organizations continues. In **the Krasnodar region**, Goryacheklyuchevskoy City Court fined the organization “Civil Initiative against environmental crime” and its leader Dmitry Shevchenko 300 thousand and 100 thousand, respectively, for the lack of labeling “foreign agent” on materials organization hosted on an external web resource. In **Kaliningrad**, the Leningradsky District Court denied the organization “Ekozashchita!” in satisfying the complaint about the unlawful initiation of criminal cases against the head of the organization, Alexandra Koroleva.

At the same time, in February, in three cases, activists managed to defend their rights. In **Chelyabinsk**, the regional court collected 7 thousand rubles from the regional Ministry of Internal Affairs at the suit of the leader of the public movement “Stop GOK” Vasily Moskovtvs. In **Petrozavodsk**, the Karelian Arbitration Court rejected the Segezha company’s claim to protect business reputation brought against activist Natalya Pastushenko and the administrator of the Reflection. Karelia “in the social network” VKontakte “Tatiana Smirnova. In **Vologda**, the police canceled the decision to initiate a criminal case against the journalist and leader of the “Together” movement Yevgeny Domozhirov under the article on insulting the authorities because of a YouTube video about protecting the park on Yaroslavskaya Street.

## **MARCH:**

Source: <https://rusecounion.ru/ru/eh-rd-march2021>

The death of an activist in Moscow, an attack on an activist in Nakhodka, the destruction of the camp of activists at the Shies station, a criminal case against an inspector of the reserve. Activists of the STOP GOK movement in Chelyabinsk received suspended sentences. Eco-activists in Moscow and St. Petersburg have achieved the abolition of fines.

The main reasons for new episodes of pressure in March were the struggle for reclamation of the landfill at st. Shies in the Arkhangelsk

region, the protection of Mount Kushtau in Bashkortostan, the fight against the construction of a mineral fertilizer plant in the Primorsky Territory, the development of a park in Severodvinsk, the felling of a grove for the construction of a backup for the Kutuzov highway in Moscow, the development of the lands of the Timiryazev Academy in Moscow, as well as against air pollution and shooting homeless animals.

On March 11, it became known about the death of Associate Professor Zakhid Urazbakh-tin, who opposed the development of the lands of the Timiryazev Academy. The scientist was found dead in his own home in **Moscow**. The cause of death was a gunshot wound to the head, the body was discovered by the scientist's son.

In **Nakhodka (Primorsky Territory)** on March 29, unknown persons beat Vladimir Belyaev, who opposed the construction of a mineral fertilizer plant. Doctors diagnosed the activist with a skull injury and performed trepanation. He lay unconscious for a week in the intensive care unit of the Nakhodka city hospital, came to on April 2.

A case of property damage was recorded – at **the Shies station of the Arkhangelsk region, the** police dismantled and removed the Koster post in two trucks.

In **Buryatia**, investigators opened a case of abuse of power against the inspector of the Baikalsky Nature Reserve, Sergei Krasikov, who detained five poachers red-handed and suffered from a collision with their car. A criminal case was initiated on charges of abuse of office with the use of violence. The inspector faces from 3 to 10 years in prison.

In the **Chelyabinsk Region, the** Sosnovskiy District Court sentenced Vasily Moskovts, the leader of the public movement STOP GOK, to two and a half years conditionally, and activist Gamil Asatullin, to three years conditionally. Activists oppose the construction of the Tomin-sky mining and processing plant, as the planned mining method threatens to pollute the drinking water source for Chelyabinsk.

Consideration of criminal cases against eco-activists continued. In **Bashkiria, the** arrest of the defenders of Kushtau – Ilnur Kin-nisarov and Rustam Ammanov – was extended for 2 months. In **Yekaterinburg, the** Leninsky

District Court extended the measure of restraint for Ivan Nogovitsyn, accused of riots in connection with the actions for the preservation of the city square in 2019. The court decided to extend the term of the imprisoned eco-activist in custody until June 14, 2021. Also, in **St. Petersburg, the** police again came to the pregnant eco-activist Marina Parkina to question her in a criminal case unknown to her.

New episodes of administrative pressure were recorded in Arkhangelsk (2 episodes), Severodvinsk (1 episode, 2 activists), Kostroma, Orenburg, Chita, Novosibirsk, and Maykop (1 episode, 2 activists). In **Severodvinsk, Arkhangelsk Region,** Maria Kreitor and Oleg Mandrykin were detained for participating in the action on February 28 to protect the park from development, the court sentenced them to a fine of 10 thousand rubles. In **Orenburg, a** court fined Daria Nikiforova 10 thousand rubles for allegedly organizing an uncoordinated action against air pollution in the city by emissions from an oil and oil refinery. In **Maykop, the** city court-appointed 30 hours of compulsory work for animal rights activists Irina Adeschenko and Andrey Timchenko for a single protest against the shooting of homeless animals.

At the same time, in March, activists managed to defend their rights in two cases. In **St. Petersburg, the** city court overturned the decision of the Kirovsky District Court, which in January 2021 found Krasimir Vranski, an activist of “Beautiful Petersburg” and correspondent of “Aktivatika”, guilty under Part 2 of Art. 20.2 of the Administrative Code of the Russian Federation and imposed a fine on him in the amount of 30 thousand rubles. In **Moscow, the** Moscow City Court has overturned a 1,000-ruble fine imposed by the Kuntsevo District Court on eco-activist Alexei Sobolev, who is fighting the clearing of a park on Ivan Franko Street in the Kuntsevo metropolitan area.

#### **APRIL:**

Source: <https://rusecounion.ru/ru/eh-rd-apr2021>

Attacks on activists in Bashkortostan, Vologda, and Novorossiysk, detentions, and fines for protecting parks and squares. The criminal

case against the reserve inspector has dropped thanks to a public campaign. Shies' eco-activists continue to seek justice.

The main reasons for new episodes of pressure in April were protests against industrial developments in Bashkortostan, the development of squares and parks in Vologda, Novorossiysk, Novosibirsk, Khimki, the construction of a battery recycling plant in Vorotynsk, against the Tominsky mining and processing plant, as well as climate activism.

For two weeks in the Republic of **Bashkortostan**, two cases of attacks on eco-activists were recorded. On April 18, unidentified persons attacked the local eco-activist Ildar Yumagulov. He was diagnosed with fractures of both legs and numerous bruises. Ildar Yumagulov took an active part in protests against uncontrolled gold mining, in popular gatherings in defense of the Kyrktytau ridge in the Abzelilovsky district of Bashkortostan, and in defense of the Shikhan Kushtau. On April 25, more than 500 people attended a rally (popular gathering) supporting the eco-activist. On April 30, in Ufa, unidentified person defeated car of environmental activist and public figure Ruslan Gabbasov, who took part in the rally. According to Gabbasov, "mass terror against activists" is currently taking place in the republic.

In **Novorossiysk**, an activist defending the Pioneer Grove was beaten by construction workers while making a video. In **Vologda**, on the infill development in the park on the street. Yaroslavskaya builders broke the nose of the park defender and lawyer Alexander Chauzov. In the Vologda Regional Clinical Hospital, Chauzov was diagnosed with a fracture of the bones of the nose and contusion of the tissues of the face.

In **Buryatia**, a criminal case on abuse of power, initiated against the inspector of the Baikalsky Nature Reserve, Sergei Krasikov, under the article on abuse of power with violence, was terminated. In defence of Krasikov, a large-scale public campaign # Ya / MyKrasikov was launched, in which employees of other Russian PAs, eco-activists, scientists, etc., took part.

In **Ufa**, security forces searched the house of the mother of the local eco-aktivist Sergei Strannik in a criminal case under the article on the decline, recruitment or other person in-

involved in the riots, now Wanderer is accused of this article. Presumably, the case was opened in the wake of protests for the preservation of the Shihan Kushtau.

New episodes of administrative pressure were recorded in Novosibirsk, Krasnoyarsk, Kaluga, Moscow (2 episodes against one activist), Khimki. On April 16, an activist of the international movement Extinction Rebellion, Konstantin Fokin, was detained in **Moscow** during an environmental action on Red Square; later, he was sentenced to 10 days of administrative arrest for another environmental action that took place on December 11, 2020.

In **Yarensk, Arkhangelsk Region, the** Magistrates 'Court No. 2 of the Vilegodsky Judicial District found Shies' activist Anna Shekalova guilty of beating a security guard at a construction site and ordered a fine of 5 thousand rubles.

One administrative case was dropped – in **Krasnoyarsk**, a court acquitted activist Natalya Mamedyarova, who symbolically "buried the environment" by rolling a black coffin on wheels to the building of the regional administration.

#### **MAY:**

Source: <https://rusecounion.ru/ru/eh-rd-may2021>

In Bashkortostan, an eco-activist obtained compensation for the car set on fire. In Moscow, the defenders of the park were beaten, in Chechnya – the staff of the reserve. An activist of the Kurgan-Antiuran movement, Lyubov Kudryashova, was sentenced to a fine of 300 thousand rubles, but she has already collected the entire amount. In the Arkhangelsk Region, the Altai Republic, the Moscow Region, Bashkortostan, and the Kemerovo Region, activists received fines (new cases) for their activities totaling 34,000 rubles.

The main reasons for new episodes of pressure in May were protests against the development of natural areas in Altai, industrial developments in Bashkortostan, oil spills in the Komi Republic, and the development of squares and parks in Moscow, Khimki, Kemerovo.

In **Moscow, the** builders of the Ulan Bator shopping center beat up three local residents who were trying to save the linden trees from being cut down. In **Chechnya**, unknown armed



men beat the inspectors of the Ingush Erzi nature reserve and a local resident, burned their car, and forced them to swim across the Fortanga River, which separates the border of the two republics. Two inspectors were injured – Abdulkherim Baysangurov (he was diagnosed with a concussion) and Tamerlan Guliyev. In **Bilimbay, Sverdlovsk region**, unknown persons set fire to a private animal shelter, more than 30 dogs were killed.

In **Yekaterinburg**, the trial of an extremism case brought against an activist of the Kurgan-Antiuran movement Lyubov Kudryashova has come to an end. The Central District Military Court sentenced her to a fine of 300 thousand rubles. The activist faced up to 12 years in prison. The amount of the fine has already been collected by Kudryashova's supporters.

In **Chelyabinsk**, court hearings are continuing in the case of Vladimir Kazantsev, a lawyer who actively participated in litigations against Tominsky GOK for the preservation of Tominsky forests, Chelyabinsk urban pine forest. Kazantsev is charged with fraud and attempted fraud.

New episodes of administrative pressure were recorded in the Altai Republic, Arkhangelsk, Moscow Region, Bashkortostan, Kemerovo Region. In **Khimki**, a court fined Municipal Deputy Antonina Stetsenko 15,000 rubles for collecting signatures in support of Dubki Park. In **Kemerovo**, several protesters were detained for cutting down trees for the main road. One of the detainees, Konstantin Puzyrev, was fined 2,000 rubles by the court on the same day. In the **village of Ust-Koksa, Altai Republic**, the police detained activist Aruna Arunova for distributing leaflets. She was fined 2,000 rubles. In **Baymak (Bashkortostan)**, the district court fined local activist Ural Sagitov for 8 thousand rubles for "organising an unauthorised rally" in support of environmental activist Ildar Yumagulov, beaten by unknown persons. In **Arkhangelsk**, the police drew up a protocol against Evgeny Balashov (Korsak) for a solo picket against oil spills in Komi.

In the **Arkhangelsk region**, two more administrative cases have been completed against Shies' activist Anna Shekalova. In one of the cases, a ruling was made to terminate the proceedings. In another case, the court imposed an

administrative fine on Shekalova in the amount of 7 thousand rubles for beatings (allegedly two blows with her right hand) to an employee of a private security company.

In **Bashkortostan**, an activist and defender of Kushtau Ruslan Nurtdinov managed to obtain compensation in the amount of 821 thousand rubles for a car that was burned on the night of March 2 to 3, 2020, in the village of Chekmagush. The court also sentenced Timur Bikchurin, a resident of the Baymaksy district, to two years of suspended imprisonment, accused of setting fire to a car.

## JUNE:

Source: <https://rusecounion.ru/ru/eh-rd-june2021>

In Bashkortostan, pressure on the defenders of Kushtau continues: one person was detained in a criminal case, two in administrative cases. In Chelyabinsk, two activists were detained, the third was handed a summons for drawing attention to the facts of mercury getting into a well with drinking water. In Moscow, 4 people were detained for various reasons.

The main reasons for the new episodes of pressure in June were protests against industrial developments in Bashkortostan, the activities of the Tominsky GOK in the Chelyabinsk region, deforestation of urban forests and the development of squares and parks in Moscow and Izhevsk, unauthorised dumps in Moscow and Samara, pollution of urban water bodies in Penza.

In June, there were 5 cases of assault and damage to property. In **Samara**, unidentified persons burned the car of a local eco-activist who opposes a dump in the Kirovsky district.

In **Penza**, two eco-activists were attacked, and their posters were torn: at Lyudmila Kovlyagina, who came out with a single picket to the office of the Damate group of agro-industrial holdings, which, according to activists, organised unauthorised dumps of bird droppings, and Maxim Shirolapov, who was holding a single "picket" near a paper mill Lighthouse," which pollutes the Sura river bed. In **Izhevsk**, unknown people spoiled the door of the apartment of activist Dmitry Morozov, who is protecting

the pine forest growing on 40 Let Pobeda Street from felling. **In the village of Chekmagush (Bashkortostan)**, unidentified persons burned a car in the courtyard of the former house of Kushtau defender Ruslan Nurtdinov.

One criminal case was opened in June: **in Ishimbay (Bashkortostan)**, the police detained a participant in action in defense of Shikhan Kushtau. He is accused of using life-threatening violence against a government official.

Eco-activists continue to defend their rights. **In Udmurtia**, eco-activist Tagir Kagarmanov managed to obtain compensation for illegal detention in November 2020: the Neftekamsk city court partially satisfied Kagarmanov's claim and ordered to recover 20 thousand rubles from the Neftekamsk department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in favour of the activist.

New episodes of pressure on administrative charges were recorded in Bashkortostan, Moscow and Chelyabinsk. **In Chelyabinsk**, Alexei Nogin and Valery Yakovenko were detained because of a series of single pickets at the regional Legislative Assembly, connected with the ingress of mercury into a well with drinking water in the village of Shumaki, Korkinsky district. Because of these pickets, the police also came to the home of the activist, pensioner Galina Gorina-Zabavina.

**In Bashkortostan**, a report was drawn up against the defender of Kushtau Farit Rakhatullov on an administrative offense due to gathering tea at the Shikhan Kushtau on May 29, and against Ilgam Yanberdin, a participant in the people's gathering on April 25, a report was drawn up under the article on repeated violation of the legislation on public events. Ilgam Yanberdin's trial was held on the day of his arrest, the activist was released from the court.

**In Moscow**, they detained and drew up protocols against eco-activists Savely Rozhkov and Zoya Eliseeva, who oppose the demolition of a house and the development of a public garden in the Kuntsevo area. During a meeting of the defenders of the Otradnoye park, Ilya Kiselev, an assistant to State Duma deputy Denis Parfenov, was detained. Activist Konstantin Altukhov (Parkman) was detained because of the action of animal rights activists near the building of the

Ministry of Agriculture of the Russian Federation on May 17.

## **JULY:**

Source: <https://rusecounion.ru/ru/ehrd-july2021>

In the Volgograd region, two activists were fined a total of 170 thousand rubles for participating in a gathering in defense of the Volga-Akhtubinskaya floodplain. In Moscow, St. Petersburg, and the Tambov region, activists reported attacks and threats. In Bashkortostan, pressure continues on the defenders of Kushtau. In the Arkhangelsk region, Buryatia, and Tatarstan, activists continue to defend their rights.

The main reasons for new episodes of pressure in July were protests against the construction of a road in the Volga-Akhtubinskaya floodplain, against the development of green zones in St. shikhanov in Bashkortostan and the fight against coal mines.

In July, there were 3 incidents of assault and damage to property. In the town of **Primorsk, Leningrad Region**, workers of "Fort" LLC blocked the car of activists who were filming illegal deforestation near the 59th km of Primorskoye Highway with special equipment. In **St. Petersburg**, construction workers beat up a local resident who asked them a question about cutting down trees. In the **village of Berezovka, Tambov Region**, an attack was made on activist Roman Gerasimov, who prepared an appeal to the Direct Line with Vladimir Putin calling to prevent the organisation of a large landfill in the Sosnovsky District of the Tambov Region.

One criminal case continues to be considered: the **Chelyabinsk** Regional Court changed the sentences to the leader of the Stop GOK movement Vasily Moskovets and activist Gamil Asatullin. The cases of both activists under the article on hooliganism (part 2 of article 213 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation) were terminated, clauses on attempted arson were retained in the sentences (part 2 of article 167 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation with the application of part 3 of article 30 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation)

from Asatullin and incitement to arson (part 2 of article 167 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation with the application of part 4 of article 33 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation) from Moskovts. Now Asatullin and Moskovts were sentenced to one and a half years probation.

*Eco-activists continue to defend their rights.*

In the **Arkhangelsk region**, activist Vladimir Kogut, who was injured in the destruction of the trailer of Shies' defenders, was awarded compensation for moral damage in the amount of 100 thousand rubles; in addition, a fine of 20 thousand rubles was cancelled. The case of the attack by poachers on the inspector of the **Baikal Nature Reserve (Buryatia)** Sergei Krasikov has been submitted to the court. Also, the **European Court of Human Rights** registered the complaint of the Kazan eco-activist Irina Nikiforova, who was prosecuted in 2020 for a series of single pickets against the construction of an incineration plant near Kazan.

*New episodes of pressure on administrative charges* were recorded in Bashkortostan and the Volgograd region.

**In the Volgograd region**, activists Galina Tikhenko and Tatyana Dmitrieva were fined 150 and 20 thousand rubles, respectively, over protests against cutting down oaks in the Volga-Akhtubinskaya floodplain.

**In Bashkortostan**, Grigory Gorovoy, defender of the shikhan of Kushtau, was arrested for 5 days, and Farit Rakhmatullof was fined 20 thousand rubles for organizing a tea party on Mount Kushtau.

*Continuing episodes of pressure on administrative charges* were recorded in St. Petersburg and Chelyabinsk.

**In St. Petersburg**, the city court upheld the ruling of the Kirovsky District Court, which fined Krasimir Vranski, an eco-activist and Aktivatika correspondent, 25,000 rubles for single pickets in defense of green areas.

**In Chelyabinsk**, Central District Court has appointed an activist of the movement "Stop GOK" Alexei Nogin fine of 20 thousand rubles.

*Other episodes of pressure* were recorded in Moscow, Yakutia, Sakhalin, and Volgograd regions.

**In Moscow**, an expert of the RSEU BezRAO program, engineer-physicist Andrei Ozharovsky, announced the persecution; activist Alexei Medvedev reported threats; firearms were fired at the windows of the last two apartment owners in building 22, building 1 on Ivan Franko Street; The police detained a candidate for the State Duma from the Green Party Samson Sholademi.

**In Yakutia**, police phoned bloggers and demanded that they come to a conversation about calls to participate in unsanctioned rallies. Liza Gazizova reported this on Instagram .

**In Ulegorsk, Sakhalin Oblast**, on July 14, the mayor of the city dismissed the head of the newspaper Ulegorskije Novosti, Zinaida Makarova, on the eve of the publication of an article about the activities of the Eastern Mining Company (VGK). On July 30, she was offered to return to her post.

**In Volgograd**, the deputy of the Volgograd Regional Duma, Alexander Osipov, took part in protests against the construction of a highway across the Volga-Akhtubinskaya floodplain, was expelled from the United Russia faction.

**AUGUST:**

Source: <https://rusecounion.ru/ru/eh-rd-aug2021>

In Moscow, against the activist Olga Kuzmina, who opposes the cutting down of trees for construction under the renovation program, they immediately opened a criminal and administrative case. In the Volgograd region, the police dispersed the camp of the defenders of the Volga-Akhtubinskaya floodplain. In the Arkhangelsk region, Shies' defenders continue to challenge criminal sentences. New episodes of pressure on administrative charges were recorded in Moscow, Yekaterinburg, and Monchegorsk.

The main reasons for new episodes of pressure in August were protests against construction in green areas in Moscow and the Nizhny Novgorod region, the struggle of Sami activists against platinum mining in the tundra, the protection of the Volga-Akhtuba floodplain, protests against garbage facilities.

In August, there were 2 cases of assault and damage to property. In the **Volgograd**

**region, the** camp of the defenders of the Volga-Akhtuba floodplain was dispersed by police, and about 20 tents were confiscated from the activists, who were considered “instruments of crime.” In the **town of Bor, Nizhny Novgorod Region, the** house of environmental activist Nikolai Myazin, who is fighting for the preservation of the Tea Lake, was set on fire .

A new criminal case has been opened in Moscow against the activist Olga Kuzmina. She is charged with hooliganism. Earlier this month, she was detained for tying herself to a tree at the height of 20 meters in Babushkinsky Park in protest against the construction site under the renovation program and was arrested for six days.

The consideration of criminal cases continues: an activist from **Arkhangelsk**, Drevarch the Enlightened (Andrey Khristoforov), was transported from Ukraine to Russia, where a criminal case was opened against him. In addition, the Third Cassation Court of General Jurisdiction (St. Petersburg) considered the complaint of the **Arkhangelsk Region** Prosecutor’s Office against the verdict against Shies’ defenders in the “case of excavator Kozlov”: the acquittal against Valery Dzyuba and Vyacheslav Grigoryants was left unchanged, and the conviction against Andrey Starkovsky and Denis Drobinin was canceled and sent for new consideration.

New episodes of pressure on administrative charges were recorded in Moscow, Yekaterinburg, and Monchegorsk in the Murmansk region.

**In Moscow, a** report was drawn up against the municipal deputy Sergei Vlasov on the dissemination of inaccurate information due to a video about the construction of factories for processing sewage sludge. **In Yekaterinburg,** police detained Boris Pavlov, a participant in a rally in defense of Lake Shartash. The Sami activist Andrei Danilov, one of the participants in the confrontation between the Sami activists and the Fedorovo Resources company, was detained in **Monchegorsk** at a mass celebration.

Continuing episodes of pressure on administrative charges were recorded in Moscow and Perm.

**In Moscow, the** Kuntsevsky District Court of Moscow fined Zoya Eliseeva, who protested against the demolition of a house on Ivan Franko Street, 2,000 rubles under an article of disobedience to a police officer’s request.

**In Perm, the** court doubled the fine for Kirill Imashev from 20 to 40 thousand rubles, allegedly in connection with the evasion of punishment.

Other episodes of pressure were recorded in Chelyabinsk, Voronezh, Kazan, Bashkortostan, Krasnoyarsk Territory, Kaluga, and Nizhny Novgorod regions. **In Chelyabinsk,** Ecosystema LLC filed a lawsuit against Elena Vakhtina, Yulia Kudashova, and the Pravda Ural Federal District publication. The company demanded to remove and refute information expressing concern that during the disposal of soil, disposal waste may enter the soil and air. **In Voronezh, the** fence at the Dora animal shelter was cut down, and a few days later, a tree was piled on the restored fence. **In Bashkortostan, the** management of the Uchaly Mining and Processing Plant submitted to the regional department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs an application against the independent ecologist Elvira Galyamova, for allegedly defaming their reputation material, which Elvira posted on her page in Vkontakte. **In the Krasnoyarsk Territory,** hunting inspectors Alexander Belyaev are forced to resign. **In the Kaluga region,** the organization of a regional referendum on the construction of landfills was disrupted, and Village Day was banned for fear of protests against the landfill. In the **Nizhny Novgorod region,** activists of the Dront eco-center reported that an hour after the publication of a post on Vkontakte about Switzerland park, a massive internet bots attack was carried out on a web-page.

## SEPTEMBER:

Source: <https://rusecounion.ru/ru/eh-rd-sept2021>

RSEU experts recorded 5 new episodes of pressure against at least 5 eco-activists in 5 regions of Russia. With regard to 10 activists in 4 regions, the situation developed in 7 episodes.

Forest defenders are threatened in the Volgoda Oblast. In Volgograd, the city administration

confiscates a land plot from an activist who organised a separate waste collection point in the city.

The consideration of criminal cases against the eco-activist Drevarkh (Andrei Khristoforov), the defenders of Shies Denis Drobinin and Andrei Starkovsky, four defenders of Kushtau, and the Moscow eco-activist Olga Kuzmina continues.

The main reasons for new episodes of pressure in September were the protection of Lake Imlor in the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug from oil development, protests against deforestation in the Vologda Oblast, and participation in protests against the organisation of a landfill at Shies station in the Arkhangelsk Oblast in 2018-2020.

In September, *1 case of assault and damage to property was recorded*. In the **Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug**, they beat up Sergey Kechimov, an eco-activist, and Khanty shaman who for many years has been protecting the sacred Imlor Lake from the Surgutneftegaz oil company. The activist went to the police, but the police opened a criminal case against Kechimov himself.

*The consideration of criminal cases continues: in Arkhangelsk*, the investigation approved the indictment against Shies' activist Andrei Khristoforov, known as Drevarkh the Enlightened. He will be judged under Part 1 of Art. 318 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation.

The Arkhangelsk Regional Court also considered the appeals of environmental activists Denis Drobinin and Andrey Starkovsky, as well as the prosecutor's appeal against the verdict of the Vilegodsky District Court, and upheld the verdict of the district court.

The Ordzhonikidze District Court of **Ufa** released three Kushtau activists from the pre-trial detention center under house arrest: Ilnur Kinarsov, Rustam Amanov, and Rail Abkadirov. The fourth arrested person, Marat Sharafutdinov, whose case was separated into separate proceedings due to illness, is currently undergoing treatment at the Republican Psychoneurological Dispensary.

**In Moscow**, the Moscow City Court left in

force house arrest Olga Kuzmina, who protested against the renovation of the square and cutting a tree with a crossbow in his hands.

*A new case of pressure within the framework of civil legal mechanisms was recorded:* in September it also became known about a lawsuit against an expert of the Wildlife Conservation Center Igor Shkradyuk regarding the organisation of a public environmental review for the project of Svyatogor JSC (a subsidiary of the Ural Mining and Metallurgical Company (UMMC)), which is actively blasting operations at the Volkovskoye open pit in the **Sverdlovsk region**. The court ordered the expert to return 300 thousand rubles spent on the examination. Appeal filed.

*Continuing episodes of pressure on administrative charges* were recorded in Moscow and Volgograd.

**In Moscow**, the municipal deputy Sergei Vlasov was summoned to the Internal Affairs Directorate for the Southern Administrative District to give explanations on the Green Puddle case.

**The Volgograd** Regional Court upheld the decision on a fine of 150 thousand rubles for Galina Tikhenko, a participant in the actions in defence of the Volga-Akhtubinskaya floodplain.

*Other episodes of pressure* were recorded in Volgograd, the Arkhangelsk region, and Moscow.

Three new cases: the **Volgograd** administration decided to confiscate a land plot from the family of Roman Sebekin, who was organising a separate waste collection. The leadership of the Communist Party of the **Arkhangelsk Region** removed from the district elections Anna Stepanova, a participant of the protests on Shies, because of uncomfortable questions to Nadezhda Vinogradova, a candidate for the State Duma in the 72nd constituency from the Communist Party of the Russian Federation. Forest defenders in the **Vologda Oblast** receive anonymous threats. After the situation with felling in Verkhovazhsky district received wide public response, the activists began to receive obscene messages with threats on their phones.

And one is continuing: **in Moscow**, the eco-activist Konstantin Fokin was blocked from

leaving Russia due to an unpaid fine of 200 thousand rubles.

#### **OKTOBER:**

Source: <https://rusecounion.ru/ru/eh-rd-oct2021>

RSEU experts recorded 13 new episodes of pressure on environmental defenders in 11 regions of Russia in October 2021. In 5 regions, the situation developed in 6 episodes.

#### **Short.**

*In October, two “environmental” media-foreign agents appeared at once, and there was a surge of pressure on animal rights activists. In the Krasnoyarsk Territory, they are trying to “strangle” the NGO opposing Rosatom with fines, and the newspaper that has collaborated with the activists is “bought” by state orders. The total amount of fines imposed, including for continuing episodes of pressure, amounted to more than 46,500 rubles. But there is also positive news – Shies’s defender defended compensation of 250 thousand rubles for illegal criminal prosecution.*

Pressure continued in connection with the garbage crisis: the Moscow region eco-activist Vyacheslav Yegorov was sentenced to 1 year and 3 months in a general regime colony under the “Dada” article, the sentence was toughened for Shies’ defenders. The pressure on the defenders of green zones continues: the arrest of the Moscow eco-activist Olga Kuzmina was extended, and they intend to be placed in a psychiatric hospital; eco-activists received administrative fines in the Stavropol Territory, Yekaterinburg, and Omsk.

#### **More details.**

Activists continue to defend their rights. Shies’ defender Valery Dzyuba defended in the Arkhangelsk Regional Court compensation in the amount of 250 thousand rubles, recovered for illegal criminal prosecution from the Ministry of Finance of the Russian Federation, the Vilegodsky District Court of the Arkhangelsk Region.

For the first time, nature defenders were included in the register of foreign media agents:

the coordinator of the Rivers without Borders environmental coalition Evgeny Simonov, who defended Lake Baikal for decades, and the environmental journalist Elena Solovyova, who wrote a lot about Shies.

Cases of pressure on animal activists were recorded in four regions at once. **In Voronezh**, at the Dora dog shelter, unknown persons shot and killed 18 dogs at night. **In Plesetsk, the KhvostolapoV zoological hotel burned down. In Sevastopol**, at a shelter for homeless animals, bailiffs are trying to confiscate 14 hectares of land. **In St. Petersburg, the** police thwarted the hug-dog street party dedicated to pets.

In 6 regions, new episodes of pressure on eco-activists were recorded, who oppose the felling of trees and the development of natural areas. Olga Kuzmina, the protector of the square from cutting down for renovation in **Moscow, was** extended the arrest until November 9 and issued a decree on involuntary hospitalization in a psychiatric hospital for a forensic psychiatric examination. Eco-activist Andrei Fokin was arrested for two days and fined 1,000 rubles as a result of a domestic conflict that arose between him and an unknown citizen when Fokin was on his way to check the report on illegal tree felling in the Beshtaugorsky wildlife sanctuary in the **Stavropol Territory**. Defender of the **Moscow Region** Selyatinsky forest Tatyana Pavlova was detained and fined 20 thousand rubles for allegedly organising an uncoordinated meeting. Boris Pavlov, a participant in a rally in defense of Lake Shartash in **Yekaterinburg, was** fined 15 thousand rubles. Eco-activists opposed to cutting down trees in the park named after the 30th anniversary of the Young Communist League in **Omsk**, were detained twice, four eco-activists assigned penalties from 2 to 4 thousand rubles, two eco-activists released without a protocol. Elderly women who came out to defend the park in **Miass, Chelyabinsk region, were** dispersed by police.

Pressure continues on eco-activists dealing with waste issues. In **Kolomna, an** environmental activist near Moscow, Vyacheslav Yegorov, who opposed the landfill, was sentenced to 1 year and 3 months in a general regime colony under the “Dada” article. In **Arkhangelsk, a** court toughened the sentence in a criminal

case against Shies activists Denis Drobinin and Andrei Starkovsky: they were given 6 months probation. In **Polazna (Perm Territory)**, a local resident was beaten, who recorded the fact of filling with soil with garbage, which had been dumped into the Kama reservoir for some time. In **Moscow**, the municipal deputy Sergei Vlasov again faced charges under Article 13.15 of the Code of Administrative Offences of the Russian Federation “Abuse of Freedom of the Mass Information” for posting on the Internet a video about the construction of plants for processing sludge of sewage in Pechatniki and Nekrasovka (the court returned the previous protocol to the police, pointing out violations in its preparation).

Activists who oppose industrial pollution of the environment were detained in two regions. In **Serpukhov**, three participants in a meeting to discuss the situation with emissions from the Keramzit plant were detained. In the village of **Apanas, Kemerovo Region**, they detained activist Vladimir Gorenkov, one of the leaders of the fight against coal mines.

In the **Krasnoyarsk Territory**, two episodes at once are associated with pressure on the anti-nuclear activist Fyodor Maryasov. Federal State Unitary Enterprise “Mining and Chemical Combine” (Rosatom) contracted “Today’s newspaper-26”, which is a platform opposing the construction of a federal repository of radioactive waste, for “preparation of a series of articles” in the publication. At the same time, the Arbitration Court of Krasnoyarsk Territory filed a lawsuit against the regional public ecological organizations “Priroda Sibiry” (Nature of Siberia) on the termination of the office lease agreement and the collection of 576 thousand rubles from the organization as “unjust enrichment” resulting from an unexpected increase in rent by the city authorities by 20 times.

## NOVEMBER:

Source: <https://rusecounion.ru/ru/ehrd-nov2021>

In November 2021, RSEU experts recorded 8 new episodes of pressure on environmental defenders in 5 regions of Russia. In 6 regions in 6 episodes, the situation developed.

## Short

In two regions, cases of harm to health and property were recorded: in the Kemerovo region, an activist opposed to coal mines was beaten; in St. Petersburg, a car opposed to cutting down trees was burned. Animal rights activist from Rostov-on-Don Valeria Studenikina was sentenced to 8.5 years in prison on trumped-up charges of drug trafficking. In Yekaterinburg, the court sent for compulsory psychiatric treatment the defender of the square, Ivan Nogovitsyn, who is accused in a criminal case. In Moscow, climate activist Konstantin Fokin was sentenced to 7 days of administrative arrest.

## More

In three regions, 4 episodes of pressure on environmental activists who oppose the cutting down of trees and the development of natural areas were recorded

In Strelna (St. Petersburg), unknown people burned the car of Gleb Lukyanov. The activist is fighting against the cutting down of trees, which is carried out by the Dental-med clinic.

The Verkh-Isetsky District Court of Yekaterinburg sent for compulsory psychiatric treatment Ivan Nogovitsyn, a defendant in a criminal case on mass riots in Yekaterinburg, where residents protested against the construction of a church on the site of a public garden.

The defender of the square from cutting down for renovation in Moscow Olga Kuzmina extended house arrest.

In the Losinoostrovsky district of Moscow, eco-activist Lyudmila Kuzmina was detained for a rally that took place almost a year ago. On November 20, 2020, a woman chained herself to a concrete block, protesting against the cutting down of trees on Shushenskaya Street (Babushkinsky Park).

## Cases of pressure on animal rights activists recorded in two regions

The Zheleznodorozhny District Court of Rostov-on-Don sentenced animal rights activist Valeria Studenikina to 8.5 years in prison for selling drugs. Studenikina was engaged in fundraising to help homeless animals.

In Voronezh, a search was carried out at the house of the owner of the Dora shelter, Yuri

Shamarin, where 18 dogs were shot dead in October 2021. The police searched Shamarin himself for a weapon to kill dogs, although the owner of the shelter is the victim.

### **Pressure continues on the defenders of the Volga-Akhtuba floodplain**

Natalya Lopantseva, director of the Volga-Akhtuba floodplain natural park, was fired, activists believe that this is a consequence of Lopantseva's position against the development of a specially protected natural area.

The Volgograd Regional Court upheld an administrative fine of 20 thousand rubles to the defender of the Volga-Akhtuba floodplain Tatiana Dmitrieva.

The defender of the Volga-Akhtuba floodplain, Ksenia Serafimova, was summoned to the department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs for the Sredneakhtubinsky district of the Volgograd region to draw up a protocol under an administrative article.

A protester against coal mines near the village of Apanas, Novokuznetsk district of the Kemerovo region, Sergei Sheremetyev, reported a beating.

Climate activist Konstantin Fokin was detained twice in Moscow. He held actions on a tree and on Red Square, trying to draw attention to the problem of climate change. For the rally on Red Square, the Tverskoy District Court of Moscow sentenced Konstantin Fokin to 7 days of administrative arrest.

Pressure continues on activists dealing with the problems of "garbage" landfills. In Naro-Fominsk, Moscow Region, during public hearings on the construction project of a waste incineration plant, local environmental activist Olga Melnik was detained.

The Krasnodar regional court once again denied the defense of environmentalist Andrei Rudomakha a complaint about the inaction of investigators in the investigation of the beating of Rudomakha and three of his comrades.

An eco-activist from Moscow managed to achieve a positive court decision in an administrative case. The Second Court of Cassation of General Jurisdiction overturned the decision to impose a fine on the opponent of the construc-

tion of the South-Eastern Expressway in Moscow, Sergei Vlasov.

## **DECEMBER**

Source: <https://rusecounion.ru/ru/eh-rd-dec2021>

In December 2021, RSEU experts recorded 7 new episodes of pressure on 34 environmental defenders in 4 regions of Russia. In 2 regions, the situation developed in 3 episodes.

### **Short**

In the Republic of Komi, court hearings were held on a criminal case initiated against the defender of Shies Drevarkh. In Moscow, 9 eco-activists were detained who were defending the boulevard on Dmitry Ulyanov Street from cutting down, four of them received administrative arrests from 8 to 11 days, two were fined. In Nizhny Novgorod, a developer filed lawsuits against 21 environmental activists.

### **More**

*3 regions recorded episodes of pressure on environmental activists who oppose the cutting down of trees and the development of green areas*

- In **Moscow**, on December 14, 2021, 8 activists were detained who were defending a boulevard on Dmitry Ulyanov Street from cutting down. Yevgeny Ezerov and Alexander Patyukov were arrested for 10 days, Gleb Gorshkov – for 11 days, Gennady Osorgin – for 8 days. Two more activists were fined 15,000 rubles each. Earlier, on December 8, 2021, Grigory Tolkahev, a municipal deputy of the Gagarinsky district, was detained for the same reason.
- LLC "Food Business" – a developer hired by "McDonald's" – in **Nizhny Novgorod** – demanded to recover legal costs from 21 local residents – 42 thousand rubles each. Earlier, the townspeople did not agree with the cutting down of trees for the construction of a restaurant and filed a class action lawsuit, but lost the court.
- Olga Kuzmina, the defender of the square from being cut down for renovation in **Moscow**, was placed under house arrest until February 9, 2022. The Department of Environmental Con-



trol for the North-East Administrative District of **Moscow** fined Olga Kuzmina 3,500 rubles, accusing her of breaking five branches of the tree Kuzmina was attacked in August climbed in protest.

■ At the Timiryazev Agricultural Academy in **Moscow**, the police detained one of the picketers who opposed the construction of the academy's experimental fields with housing. The activist was released from the police station without a protocol being drawn up.

■ Oksana Knysh, an eco-activist from the **Solnechnogorsk district of the Moscow region**, said that unknown people tried to break into her plot in the village of Alabushevo and damaged the fence. Oksana Knysh is known as one of the defenders of the forest, located next to the Dedeshino microdistrict, from deforestation.

#### Pressure on environmental activists against landfills recorded in 2 regions

■ In the Ust-Vymsky District Court of the **Komi Republic**, court hearings were held in a criminal case initiated against the defender Shies Drevarch (Andrey Khristoforov), under the

article on the use of violence against a representative of the authorities.

■ In **Vologda**, activist Sergei Gorodishenin was charged with an administrative offense under the article on non-compliance with the rules of conduct during the introduction of a high alert regime – for organizing a subbotnik – an action against the construction of a landfill in the Veliky Ustyug district of the Vologda region.

#### Pressure continues on opponents of the construction of the section of the South-Eastern Expressway in Moscow

■ The Moscow City Court upheld the decision against Sergei Vlasov in the Zelenaya Puddle case (when Antichord activists were backdated with protocols for disobedience to the police – because in July 2020, environmental activists called the Ministry of Emergency Situations to the place where radioactive waste was dumped). Earlier, in November 2021, the Second Cassation Court of General Jurisdiction overturned the decision to impose a fine on Sergei Vlasov for disobedience to police officers and sent the case back for a new trial.





■ Founded in 1914, Naturvernforbundet/Friends of the Earth Norway is Norway's oldest environmental and nature conservation organisation. Naturvernforbundet is membership-based and democratic and consists of over 31,000 members divided between approximately 100 local groups across the country, working to solve environmental issues both locally and globally.

Naturvernforbundet/Friends of the Earth Norway has over many years worked closely with Russian environmental organisations. The cooperation has been helpful for both sides on a wide range of environmental topics. The work has always faced challenges from regulations on the Russian side, but the situation deteriorated significantly with the foreign agent NGO laws that were approved in the Russian parliament and by the president in 2012. Especially since 2015 and onwards, the time and resources spent to cope with constantly growing demands and pressure from the authorities have increased in our partner organisations.

For several years, Naturvernforbundet and its Russian partners have published status reports on the conditions for civil society in general and how it affects environmental organisations. All reports and updates are available at [www.naturvernforbundet.no/civilsocietyreports](http://www.naturvernforbundet.no/civilsocietyreports).

Our Russian sister organisation Russian Social-Ecological Union (RSEU)/Friends of the Earth Russia is a non-governmental, non-profit, and member-based democratic organisation, established in 1992. RSEU brings together public organisations and active citizens from all regions of Russia. All RSEU activities – programs and projects, actions and campaigns – are aimed at nature conservation and protection of health and the wellbeing of people in Russia and around the world. RSEU members act together for nature conservation, for sustainable and just development of Russia and the planet. In 2014, RSEU became a Russian member of Friends of the Earth.

In Russia, activists, groups, and organisations fighting for the environment and human rights often face severe consequences for their work. Persecution and pressure come in different forms from the state, from private businesses, and from individuals. Supporting activists, groups, and organisations have therefore a prominent place in RSEU's work.



**Naturvernforbundet**  
Friends of the Earth Norway