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Russia: Arbitrary detentions and forcible conscriptions of peaceful protesters

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22 September 2022. The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and Memorial Human Rights Defence Centre (HRDC Memorial) strongly condemn the crackdown following nationwide protests across Russia on 21 September to oppose “partial mobilisation” announced by Vladimir Putin. Mass arbitrary arrests of peaceful demonstrators, with some of the detainees directly conscripted into the military, are incompatible with respect for fundamental civil and political rights.

The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and Memorial Human Rights Defence Centre (HRDC Memorial) urge Russia to liberate all peaceful protesters detained in connection with the 21 September 2022 protests, drop all charges against them, and allow its citizens to freely exercise their fundamental rights, including freedom of assembly, expression, and the right not to be arbitrarily detained. The two organisations further call on the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) to adopt a resolution creating a mandate of UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation at the upcoming 51st session of the UN Human Rights Council.

The scale of repression in Russia matches that of the post-Stalinist USSR

Ilya Nuzov, Head of the FIDH’s Eastern Europe and Central Asia desk, comments: "Today, the scale of repression in Russia matches that of the post-Stalinist USSR. Protests against the announced mobilisation and the war in Ukraine are easily stifled by the use of violence and an array of criminal articles to prosecute the slightest dissent. That is why FIDH calls for a stronger international response to address the human rights crisis in Russia, which impacts international peace and security".

Aleksandr Cherkasov, head of HRDC Memorial, added: "Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, in an effort to control and repress society, the authorities have opened more than a hundred criminal cases, drafted tens of thousands of protocols under the "anti-war" and "mass assembly" articles of the Administrative Code. On September 21, Russia entered a new phase of escalation, not only of the war, but also of internal repression. Yesterday’s demonstrations reflect the feelings of a significant part of Russian society that does not approve of the war. They need support."

FIDH and HRDC Memorial are concerned about reports that **many detainees have been forced to sign mobilisation summonses**. If they fail to appear at the military enlistment office, Russians face administrative charges and up to two years of imprisonment under Article 328 of the Criminal Code of Russia. The two organisations recall that the right of everyone to conscientiously object to military service is a legitimate exercise of the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, as laid down in [article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#).

Background: Nationwide protests on 21 September 2022

On 21 September 2022, nationwide protests took place throughout Russia in response to the “partial mobilisation” announced by President Vladimir Putin. Many protesters shouted anti-war slogans, risking heavy fines, arrest and prosecution under new provisions of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation

prohibiting the discrediting of the armed forces. Despite the peaceful character of demonstrations, some detained protesters were charged with violations of the Administrative Code of Russia for breaching the rules governing mass assemblies.

Human rights project [OVD-info](#) reported numerous cases of beatings with truncheons, kicking and other instances of violence against peaceful protesters during detentions. The project further reports the illegal detention of nine journalists and 33 minors. Many of the detained men were handed orders to report to the military enlistment office. Despite the peaceful character of demonstrations, some detained protesters were charged with violations of the Administrative Code for breaching the rules governing mass assemblies in Russia.

Summonses handed out even without past military service

On the morning of September 21, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced a "partial mobilisation" in Russia. In his address to the Russians, Putin said that starting from September 21, "only citizens who are in the reserve" will be subject to mobilisation, primarily people who have done military service, have military registration specialities and combat experience. At the same time, Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu announced that the goal was to conscript 300,000 people. It is already known that this is not the case, and summonses are handed out to everyone the authorities can reach.

On September 20, one day before the mobilisation was announced, Duma deputies passed in the second and third readings new amendments to the Criminal Code, which toughen the punishment for refusal to fight. Under the new rules, desertion can result in up to 10 years in prison, while refusal to participate in the war can be punished with up to three years in prison, while voluntary surrender to the enemy is punished with up to 10 years' imprisonment. In addition, the Criminal Code was amended to add the concepts of "mobilisation" and "martial law" (while the new amendments do not introduce the mobilisation itself in Russia).

P.S.

“Memorial” Human Rights Defence Centre (HRDC Memorial)