# Politically Motivated Abuse of Psychiatry in Russia
## (as of March 24, 2024)

International Federation Human Rights in Mental Health-FGIP and Andrei Sakharov Research Center for Democratic Development (Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania) conduct monitoring of political abuse of psychiatry in Russia, with the earliest case in our records dating back to 2015.

The monitoring is conducted using open sources; we do not have the ability to obtain information directly from within the country. According to our assumptions, the actual number of such cases may be significantly higher. However, as far as we can judge, our compilation is unique in its nature, as human rights organizations such as Memorial or OVD-Info, though providing information on such cases, do not maintain specific statistics on these abuses.

With these disclaimers in mind, we can say that what was known as punitive psychiatry during Soviet times has become one of the significant tools for suppressing dissent and opposition activity in the country since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.
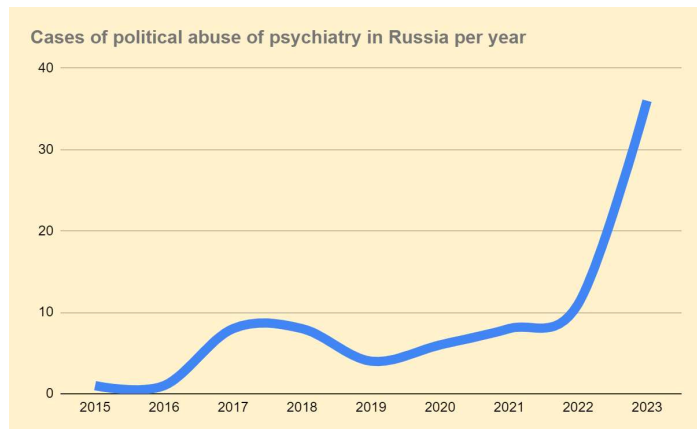
Consolidated table with a list of all abuses:
https://www.sakharovcenter-vdu.eu/research-and-publications/political-abuse-of-psychiatry-in-russia/#

Our latest report from August 2023 is available here: https://www.sakharovcenter-vdu.eu/assets/files/a5-report-political-abuse-2023-09-12.pdf

Please, find below our latest observations and statistics based on our monitoring.

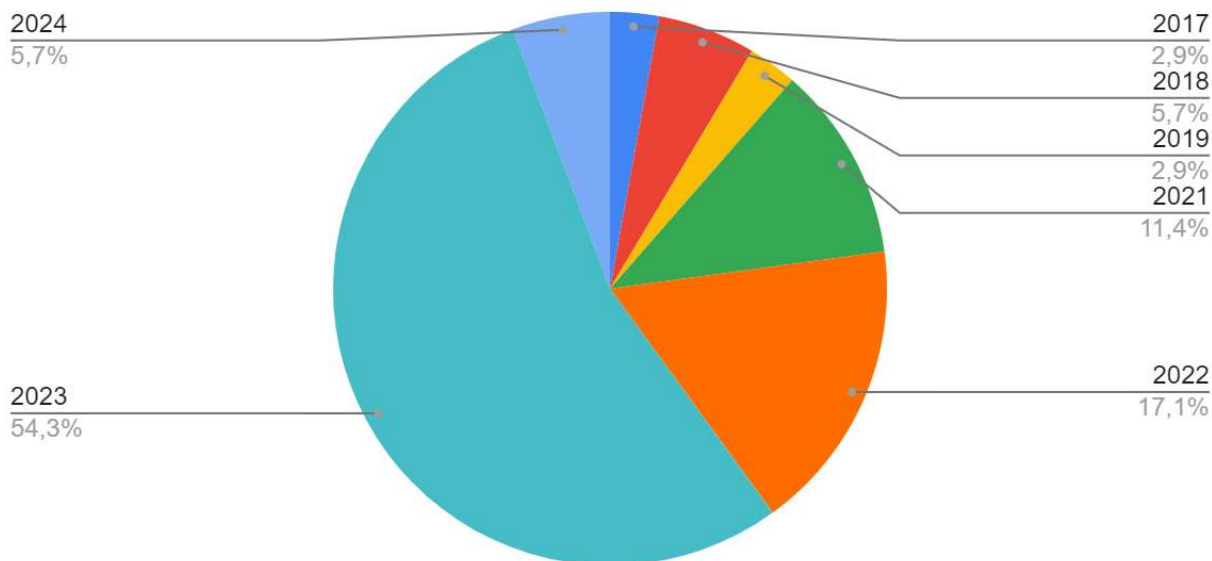**Cases of political abuse of psychiatry in Russia per year**



In our list, there are currently 86 cases of abuse involving 84 individuals. These cases involve instances where threats of coercive psychiatric measures or direct placement in psychiatric facilities are used to pressure individuals accused under political charges, as a means of suppressing civil activity (ranging from expressing opinions on social media to attempting to expose corruption in government institutions), and as actual punishment for government opponents.

It is the involuntary hospitalization in psychiatric facilities that constitutes the overwhelming majority of cases, specifically, at least 79 out of 86 cases involve hospitalization either as part of forensic psychiatric evaluations, as a preventive measure during detention, or effectively as a form of punishment for criminal offenses.

*Current Court-Ordered Hospitalizations*

## 35 people currently undergoing involuntary inpatient treatment
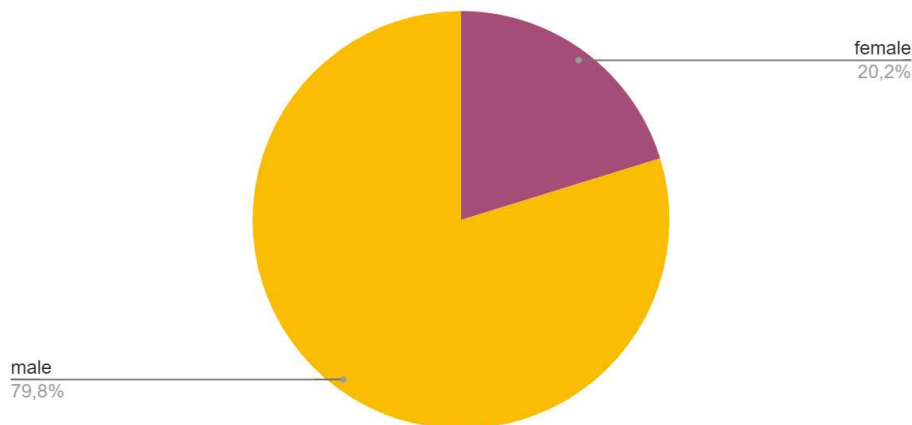
*Up to March, 24, 2024



Currently, as of March 24, 2024, a minimum of 35 individuals are undergoing involuntary 'treatment' in psychiatric clinics across Russia. As evident from the graph, over half of them were hospitalized in 2023, and the number of hospitalizations just for the first few months of 2024 has already matched that of the entire year of 2019. The longest stay in the hospital, since 2017, is that of the blogger from Nizhny Novgorod, Albert

Gyurdzhyan, who was prosecuted for inciting social hatred towards judges and was declared unaccountable. One of the recent cases involves the story of opposition activist Olga Nedvetskaya from Kaliningrad, who has been forcibly placed in a clinic by the court for the second time in two years. The first instance occurred due to an anti-war demonstration in 2022 (Olga was singing songs in Ukrainian on the main square of the city), and in March of this year, law enforcement officers took her to the hospital right from the presidential elections, where she was working as a member of the precinct election commission. It's clear that the primary objective of her hospitalization was to prevent her from witnessing the falsifications carried out in favor of Putin during the election.
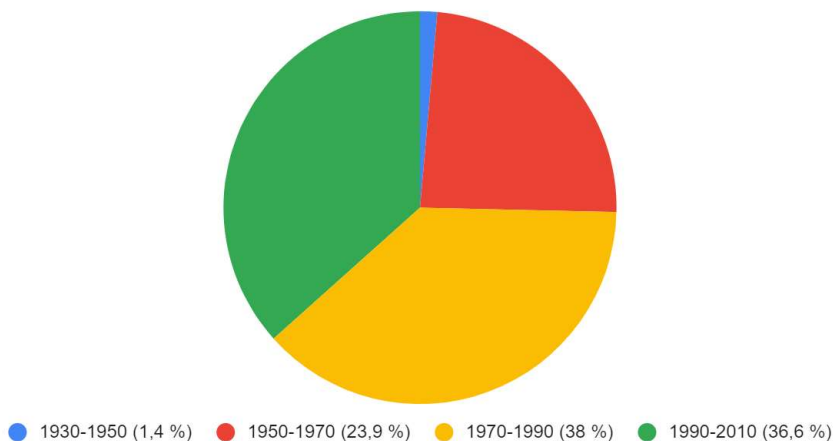
## Victims of politically motivated abuse of psychiatry by gender

*According to available information, other genders were not specified

female
20,2%

male
79,8%

## Victims by the year of birth

With the oldest being a woman born in 1935 and the youngest a boy born in 2008

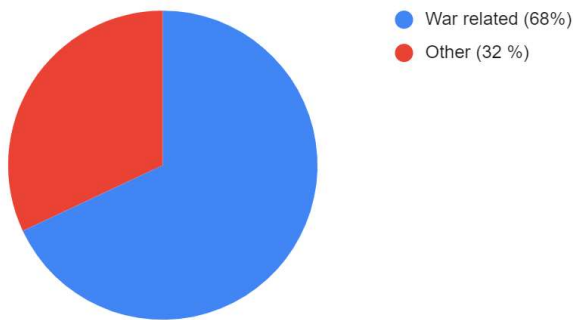● 1930-1950 (1,4 %) ● 1950-1970 (23,9 %) ● 1970-1990 (38 %) ● 1990-2010 (36,6 %)

The gender and age composition of abuse victims is predictable: men and middle-aged individuals are most frequently targeted. This likely reflects a broader trend still prevalent in Russia, where women, elderly individuals, and children are pursued less extensively and harshly. The oldest individual in our list is Olga Churikova, born in 1935, from the Moscow region. In 2017, she spent several days in a psychiatric hospital simply for participating with her fellow villagers in advocating for the closure of a massive garbage dump. The youngest is a schoolboy born in 2008 from the Tyumen region, who was declared unaccountable and placed under compulsory treatment in 2023. He was tried under the article related to an attempted terrorist act: allegedly, he planned to throw a Molotov cocktail at the military enlistment office.

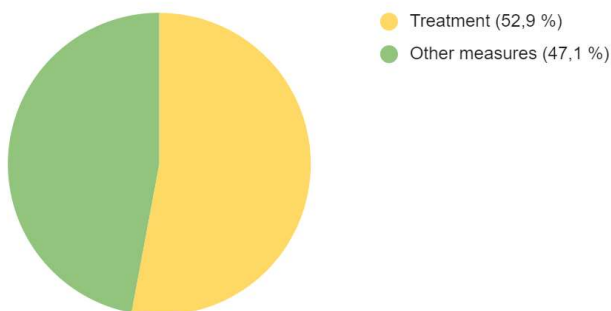## War related cases of politically motivated abuse of psychiatry in 2022-2024

*Up to March, 24, 2024

- War related (68%)
- Other (32 %)

Since the start of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, there has been an overall increase in repression in Russia, including the political abuse of psychiatry against citizens for anti-war and pro-Ukrainian expressions and actions. This accounts for 68% of all instances of psychiatric abuse documented by us since the beginning of 2022. The political abuse of psychiatry in cases related to anti-war statements on social media or other protest actions is most commonly committed during the persecution of citizens under articles concerning the dissemination of "fake news" about the Russian army (Article 207.3 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation) and the discrediting of the Russian army (Article 280.3 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation).

## Anti-war activists currently undergoing involuntary inpatient treatment

*Up to March, 24, 2024

- Treatment (52,9 %)
- Other measures (47,1 %)

It is alarming that more than a half of the cases of psychiatric abuse against anti-war activists have resulted in court decisions for involuntary hospitalization. Hospitalization occurs either as a preventive measure for those not yet convicted or after they have been declared mentally unfit and exempted from criminal responsibility, essentially serving as punishment under criminal statutes.

*In the context of the war in Ukraine, it is also important to pay attention to cases of psychiatric abuse in Russia against Ukrainian citizens.*
- Vyacheslav Koshelev, who holds two citizenships (Russian and Ukrainian), resides in the Volgograd region. In 2022, he was declared insane and hospitalized after wearing a T-shirt with the inscription "30 years of Ukrainian independence" and a cap with the emblem of Ukraine.
- Yunus Masharipov, a Crimean Tatar residing in Yalta and a human rights defender, was convicted in 2017 on charges of possession and production of explosives. He confessed under torture and was subsequently declared unaccountable and hospitalized.
- A group of Crimean Tatars, accused in 2017 of inciting separatism and membership in the banned organization Hizb ut-Tahrir in Russia, underwent stationary forensic psychiatric evaluation, with conditions in the hospital described as torturous. Among them were Ilmi Umerov (one of the leaders of the Crimean Tatars), Seyran Saliev, Server Mustafayev, Server Zekiryayev, and Nariman Memedeminov. All of them were found to be mentally accountable.