Prosecutions in cases related to the Anti-Corruption Foundation

A year and a half after Alexei Navalny's death, repression against his associates and supporters continues. Today, four years after the organisations he founded were declared extremist, we present an overview of criminal cases related to Navalny's 'extremist community' and 'extremist organisations.' All data provided is current as of 30 July 2025¹.

Summary of the review:

- The Anti-Corruption Foundation (ACF), the Foundation for the Protection of Citizens' Rights, and Navalny Headquarters were recognised as extremist organisations on 4 August 2021. This decision, which we have been able to partially analyse, does not stand up to any criticism in particular, it is based on criminal cases against people who are in no way connected to Navalny and his organisations.
- Initially, in the summer and autumn of 2023, cases were brought against six people for participating in an extremist organisation, but in the end, most of them were reclassified as an extremist community. A total of at least 45 people have been and are being prosecuted under this article, some of them in absentia, while others have been released as a result of an exchange. Currently, 13 people are imprisoned under this article, including Navalny's lawyers and journalists who covered his activities. They have been sentenced to terms ranging from 3.5 to 12 years (in conjunction with other charges).
- At the same time, recognising ACF as an extremist organisation allowed the authorities to launch another repressive campaign the persecution of those accused of financing this structure. In total, we have information about 59 such cases where the names of the defendants are known. Most of those convicted were ultimately sentenced to fines (29 people) or suspended sentences (3 people), although some of them were detained during the investigation. Currently, seven people are imprisoned in cases related exclusively to the financing of the ACF. Six people were sentenced to actual imprisonment for terms ranging from 8 months to 4 years solely for donations to the ACF (another sentence was overturned and sent for

¹ In the statistics provided, we do not take into account individuals whose names are unknown, nor do we attempt to track all criminal cases involving individuals who are not located in Russia. At the same time, information about prosecutions within the country is likely incomplete, as reports about them often arrive with significant delays.

- retrial), and five people were sentenced to terms ranging from 5 years in conjunction with other articles. This number includes Alexei Navalny himself.
- The severity of preventive measures and sentences in cases involving the financing of the ACF does not depend on the size of the donation, but rather on the region: most of the sentences in which the defendants were deprived of their liberty were handed down in Moscow. For example, in Pskov, the fine for donations of 7,000 roubles was 350,000 roubles, in Nizhny Novgorod, donations totalling 700 roubles resulted in a fine of 400,000 roubles, and in Moscow, Dmitry Marsov, a father of five, was sentenced to three years' imprisonment for donations amounting to 1,500 roubles.
- Repression for participation in extremist communities, and especially for financing the ACF, is gaining momentum. In December 2022, the first sentence was handed down to a person who had subscribed to a donation, in 2023 there were two, but in 2024 there were already 14, and in just seven months of 2025, 23 sentences were handed down, with at least nine more people awaiting court decisions.

FULL REVIEW

Four years ago, on 4 August 2021, a court ruling came into force recognising the Anti-Corruption Foundation (ACF), the Foundation for the Protection of Citizens' Rights and the Navalny Headquarters as extremist organisations. This decision was neither the starting point nor the culmination of the persecution of structures and politicians associated with Alexei Navalny, but it was and remains significant for the scale of the unfolding repression.

Our Project has been monitoring the persecution of Alexei Navalny, his associates and their supporters for a number of years. We have examined in detail the charges brought in the 2014 <u>'Postal Case'</u> and the 2021 <u>'Palace Case'</u> — these trials are now history.

The situation is different with charges related to participation in <u>an extremist</u> <u>community of Navalny supporters</u> (Article 282.1 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation) and in <u>extremist organisations of Navalny supporters</u> (Article 282.2 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation). It is easy to get confused by the specifics

of these charges, especially since, at the initial stage of the prosecutions, the security forces themselves did so, periodically reclassifying the charges from one article to another. Thus, after the ACF and the Navalny Headquarters were recognised as extremist, criminal cases were brought against some employees of these organisations under Article 282.2 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation — participation in an extremist organisation — but they were subsequently reclassified under Article 282.1 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, concerning extremist communities.

However, the most widespread prosecutions are related to accusations of <u>financing</u> the extremist activities of the Anti-Corruption Foundation (Article 282.3 of the Russian Criminal Code). Dozens of people are already being prosecuted for donating to the ACF, and it seems that this is only the beginning.

Why are these organisations considered 'extremist'?

As already mentioned, on 9 June 2021, the Moscow City Court recognised the ACF, the Foundation for the Protection of Citizens' Rights and Navalny Headquarters as 'extremist organisations' and ordered these structures to be liquidated. On 4 August 2021, the court's decision came into force. Most of the case materials are classified and remain inaccessible. After reviewing the publicly available materials, we have concluded that there is no evidence of extremist activity by Navalny's organisations.

The prosecutors only attached screenshots of websites and YouTube videos to the case file. There are no expert reports explaining what exactly is extremist about them. Moreover, until 2020, the Ministry of Justice regularly inspected the ACF and found no signs of extremism, although it paid constant attention to their funding from abroad (which in fact did not exist — the insignificant transfers found were signs of provocation).

A significant part of the case consists of criminal stories involving completely unrelated individuals whose connection to Navalny and his supporters is either

unproven or far-fetched. For example, the case includes the conviction of Pskov journalist Svetlana Prokopyeva for justifying terrorism, although her prosecution is not related to Navalny's activities at all, not to mention the fact that the prosecution of the journalist itself has no basis (Svetlana Prokopyeva was recognised as a political prisoner by our Project). The same case also includes the case of Tatarstan resident Muhammad El-Ayubi, who was convicted under the article on the rehabilitation of Nazism for uploading a photo of Hitler to the Immortal Regiment website; there is no information about his connection to Navalny's structures. Another example is the case of I. G. Sadykov, a resident of Novosibirsk, convicted for inciting terrorism and mass riots: Sadykov's connection with Navalny is that he criticised the 'Navalny Headquarters' for the overly peaceful nature of their rallies. Illegal politically motivated sentences handed down to the leadership of the ACF under articles on the creation of a non-profit organisation that infringes on the rights of citizens, on malicious non-compliance with a court decision, or on violation of sanitary rules were also taken into account.

Illegal politically motivated sentences handed down to ACF leaders under articles on the creation of a non-profit organisation infringing on citizens' rights, malicious failure to comply with a court decision, or violation of sanitary rules were also taken into account.

We came to the conclusion that the court's decision was political, grossly violating the basic rights and freedoms of citizens, and had no legal basis even from the point of view of Russian legislation.

About two years after ACF was recognised as an extremist organisation — in the summer and autumn of 2023 — the first criminal cases on charges of participation in it became known. However, the charges against Sergei Strekniv, Ivan Trofimov, Alina Olekhnovich, Artemiy Perevozchikov, and Alexander Malyarevsky were subsequently reclassified under the article on participation in an extremist community.

Is the 'extremist community' article more convenient for the prosecution?

At the end of July 2025, only one person, Mikhail Sharygin from Nizhny Novgorod, had been sentenced to imprisonment under Part 2 of Article 282.2 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation – "participation in an extremist organisation" – in connection with the ACF. On 13 February 2025, he was sentenced to three years in a general regime colony. Two other defendants in cases involving extremist organisations are outside Russia, and one received a suspended sentence.

At the same time, at least 45 people have been or are being prosecuted in cases involving the 'extremist community' of Navalny's supporters. It is this article that is used to prosecute the leaders and employees of the ACF and Headquarters, Navalny's lawyers, as well as journalists who covered the actions and trials related to the ACF.

Not only the aforementioned Streknev, Trofimov, Olekhnovich and Malyarevsky are in prison: there is also Daniel Kholodny, director of Navalny LIVE, who was convicted in the same trial as Alexei Navalny and must serve eight years in prison. These are Navalny's lawyers Vadim Kobzev (5.5 years in prison), Alexei Liptser (5 years), and Igor Sergunin (3.5 years). Journalists Antonina Favorskaya, Konstantin Gabov, Sergei Karelin and Artem Krieger were each sentenced to 5.5 years in prison under this article. Journalist Olga Komleva received a harsh sentence of 12 years in prison on charges of participating in an extremist community and spreading 'fake news' about the army.

Two individuals convicted in the case involving an extremist community have already been released after serving their sentences, while three others—Vadim Ostanin, Ksenia Fadeeva, and Lilia Chanysheva—were released as a result of a prisoner exchange on 1 August 2024.

Other defendants accused of participating in Navalny's extremist community are outside Russia, wanted by the authorities and arrested in absentia.

Why is the article on 'extremist communities' being used to prosecute Alexei Navalny's employees, his supporters, lawyers and independent journalists?

The peculiarity of this article is that a person only learns that they were a member of an 'extremist community' when they are charged. This practice violates people's rights even more than Article 282.2 of the Russian Criminal Code on the activities of 'extremist organisations', under which a person could at least voluntarily terminate their participation after the organisation was banned by a court. This applies in particular to Lilia Chanysheva: after the Navalny Headquarters were banned, she withdrew from politics, but was still convicted for participating in a political organisation that was not banned at the time of her participation. This also applies to a number of other defendants in the case.

We consider the criminal prosecution of Alexei Navalny's lawyers — Vadim Kobzev, Alexei Liptser and Igor Sergunin — as well as Olga Mikhailova and Alexander Fedulov, who have been declared wanted, to be particularly egregious. The prosecution considered their participation in an 'extremist community' to be the transfer of information from Alexei Navalny to his relatives and like-minded people.

No less cynical is the prosecution in this case of journalists who covered the protests and court hearings. For example, SotaVision journalist Antonina Favorskaya has covered all court hearings in Alexei Navalny's cases for the past two years. She travelled to hearings in the Vladimir region, then prepared a report from the village of Kharp, where the Polar Wolf special regime prison is located. She also reported from the Borisov cemetery, where Navalny was buried. This legal journalistic activity has been labelled as participation in 'gathering material, producing and editing videos and publications for the ACF'.

Thus, under the article on 'extremist communities,' a person can be charged without proof of actual participation in the organisation. Any connection is sufficient.

It is important to note that under both articles — for participation in an 'extremist organisation' and for participation in an 'extremist community' — people are not being tried for any specific actions, but simply because they were members of an association that the authorities have labelled as extremist. As a result, responsibility becomes collective: all members are responsible for the actions of any of them, even if they themselves did not participate in them.

The State Duma seeks to enshrine in law the approach to collective persecution of members of any association and simplification of the procedure for recognising them as extremist, which has been well developed in Navalny's structures. On 15 July 2025, a package of amendments simplifying the recognition of organisations as extremist was adopted in the second and third, final readings. In particular, they will allow the authorities to recognise any community as extremist if one of its organisers or participants has been convicted under the extremism article (282.1 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation).

According to experts, 'this will give law enforcement agencies virtually unlimited opportunities to expand the scope of persecution and prosecute an increasing number of people even for remote connections with so-called "extremists" (Marie Strasser, Amnesty International's Director for Eastern Europe and Central Asia).

However, the efforts of the prosecutor's office and the court to prepare a decision in 2021 to recognise the ACF and Navalny Headquarters as extremist organisations 'have not been in vain'. Although almost no one has been convicted for participating in an 'extremist organisation,' it is this illegal and unfounded decision that forms the basis for the prosecution of citizens under the article on 'financing an extremist organisation' for donations to the ACF.

ACF financing: Article 282.3 — a new 'people's' law?²

The day after the decision to liquidate Navalny's extremist organisations came into force, on 5 August 2021, the politician's team addressed his supporters with a statement. The video 'We are continuing, and we need your help' was posted on Alexei Navalny's YouTube channel, as well as on other social networks, and garnered 1.7 million views. Supporters were offered a new anonymous donation system, which was supposed to ensure the safety of donors from the Russian Federation. Navalny's team disabled the option to transfer donations to old accounts in advance, and the new anonymous donation collection was carried out through the American service Stripe.

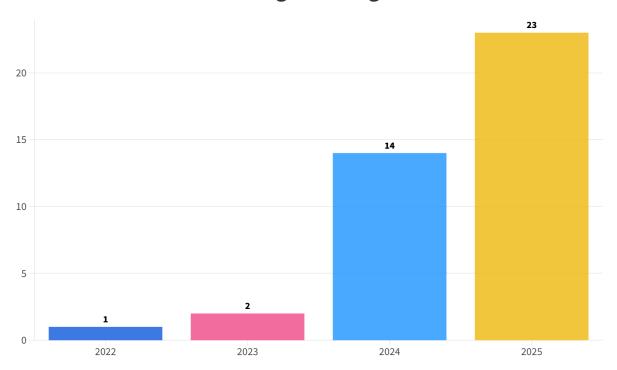
Unfortunately, despite efforts to ensure the safety of donors, donations made to the ACF from Russian cards became the basis for many criminal cases. Judging by all appearances, their number will only grow.

As of the end of July 2025, we have information about at least 59 cases of criminal proceedings under this article in which the names of those being prosecuted are known. We assume that some cases are not coming to our attention, as the names of those being prosecuted are increasingly being concealed on court websites, trials are being held in closed session, and information about the substance of the charges is fragmentary. For example, we have received reports from various regions about the prosecution of at least 11 more citizens, but we have no way of verifying this information. At the same time, statistics on sentences handed down show a trend toward explosive growth, which we believe will continue. Thus, a year and a half after the ACF was recognised as an extremist organisation, in December 2022, the first sentence was handed down against a supporter who had signed up for a donation, in 2023 there were two, but in 2024 there were already 14, and in just seven months of 2025, 23 sentences were handed down, with at least nine more

² In Russian culture "people's law" refers to the most used articles for mass unlawful persecution of citizens.

people awaiting court decisions, one of whom is Dmitry Dyba from Krasnodar, whose sentence was handed down and then overturned.

Cases involving financing of the ACF



During this time, a well-established system of 'proving' the guilt of the defendants has developed, repeated from one criminal case to another, with previous convictions often being used as evidence.

In the criminal case materials available to us, we observe two main methods by which, according to the investigation, the facts of transfers in favour of the ACF were revealed.

THANKS or V2NI29SJROMGYKY?

The first criminal cases were the result of a glitch in the donation acceptance system, which was recorded on the first day of accepting donations. In these isolated cases, Russian banks allegedly received information about the purpose of the payments, namely the following text fragments: 'THANKS, +13477252228',

'payment to PAYPAL*ANTICORRUPT Moscow RUS', 'Anti-Corruption Foundation Inc', 'donate@navalny.com', 'world.fbk.info', 'world.fbk.inf'. The investigation and the courts believe that these fragments indicate that the recipient of the payment is the extremist organisation ACF.

In some criminal cases, the investigation claims that if one transfer from the defendant's account was marked 'THANKS', then all subsequent monthly debits from his account for the same amount were made in favour of the ACF and constitute a subscription.

In other cases, investigators search bank statements for payment details such as merchant IDs and acquirer IDs. As of July 2025, the case materials available to us contain no evidence that it is possible to unequivocally identify the payee on the basis of these identifiers, which were issued by and belong to a foreign bank. As evidence, the prosecution uses statements from Russian banks and their employees that the combination of the merchant ID and acquirer ID allows for the unambiguous identification of the specific seller to whom an online payment belongs, with the latter identifying the banking organisation serving that seller.

In a number of criminal cases, it is claimed that the merchant ID V2NI29SJROMGYKY belongs to ACF. There is no confirmation of this information in the form of a statement from the bank where this merchant ID is registered, a service agreement, or confirmation from any other official body that has such information by virtue of its competence in the available case materials and verdicts. However, the investigation makes such claims based on the confessions of individual defendants in cases involving the financing of the ACF. The courts also accept as evidence of the defendants' guilt the convictions of other courts, which claim that the 'merchant ID' V2NI29SJROMGYKY belongs to the ACF.

According to Mediazona, Stripe's terms of service state that it does not create a new merchant account for each customer — they all use a shared account: "Our users

do not need to open a merchant account themselves, so they are not assigned a Merchant ID number. <...> Since Stripe provides commercial account functionality, users have a common account ID that corresponds to their account, but no separate merchant ID."

In response to our request, Stripe indicated that the internal merchant ID assigned to its customers by the Stripe service is not reflected in bank statements of transactions, as they believe. 'If you see a merchant ID on your bank statement for transactions processed through Stripe, it is most likely an ID associated with a specific transaction or merchant you interacted with, rather than the internal merchant ID used by Stripe to identify organisations.'

Based on this, it can be concluded that in some cases, the statements indicate the Stripe identifier itself, set by Wells Fargo Bank (USA) for this client and common to all users of the system. Thus, anyone who transferred money through this payment system to any organisation can be accused of financing the ACF.

Despite the fact that the prosecution's claim that the 'merchant ID' V2NI29SJROMGYKY belongs to ACF is an assumption, the courts are widely accepting it as a proven fact based on information from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Federal Security Service. Thus, the system of evidence sufficient to convict the defendants in these cases has already been established, and we can expect a further increase in the number of cases and convictions.

What amount of money can be used as justification for prosecution?

Most of the defendants are being prosecuted for signing up for donations, with only a few cases involving one-off payments. This was the case, for example, with Ukrainian Lyudmila Gonchar: the only transfer of 1,000 roubles made from her phone was detected by border guards. Vladimir Skvortsov, who was detained for distributing leaflets for the Legion Freedom of Russia and also accused of financing the ACF, was sentenced to three years in prison for each of four separate transfers

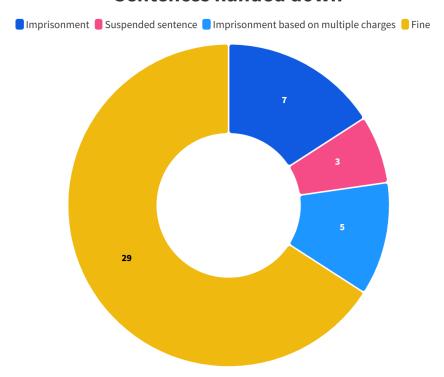
totalling 1,100 roubles (in total, together with the charge of involvement in a terrorist organisation, Skvortsov must spend 12 years in prison). The smallest payment identified — 200 roubles — was made by Ravil Iskaliev, who was sentenced to a fine of 150,000 roubles for both financing extremism and discrediting the army.

However, these are rather exceptions; as a rule, the convicted are accused of making seven monthly transfers, since most of the subscriptions were made on 5 and 6 August 2021 and were valid until Russian cards were disconnected from international payment systems in February 2022. The maximum incriminated amount is 7,000 roubles, which is seven transfers of 1,000 roubles each, and the minimum subscription is seven transfers of 100 roubles each.

Who is at risk of imprisonment?

Interestingly, it is impossible to establish a link between the amount charged and the severity of the punishment imposed. For example, a court in the Nizhny Novgorod region imposed a fine of 400,000 roubles for donations totalling 700 roubles (Ivan Egorushkin), while a court in Pskov imposed a fine of 350,000 roubles for an amount 10 times greater (Mikhail Rodikhin). Although most of the 40 sentences handed down do not involve imprisonment, since December 2024, courts have increasingly been sending convicts to penal colonies.

Sentences handed down



At the same time, the average amount charged for those convicted and sentenced to a fine is 2,116 roubles, while those who were imprisoned for similar offences transferred an average of 2,422 roubles. The maximum amount for which Moscow cardiac surgeon Ivan Tishchenko must serve four years in prison is the equivalent of 5,308 roubles, while the minimum is 1,000 roubles, for which the aforementioned Lyudmila Gonchar was sentenced to three years' imprisonment.

It is also impossible to establish a clear link between the severity of the punishment and the defendant's admission or denial of guilt. We respect the right of defendants to choose their own defence strategy in court, but we note that those who admit their guilt often receive real prison terms, while those who do not admit their guilt 'get off' with a fine. In some cases, those who receive fines are fully or partially exempt from paying them, as they were under arrest prior to sentencing. Needless to say, there have been no acquittals on charges of financing the ACF to date — the percentage of such verdicts in Russian courts is essentially zero.

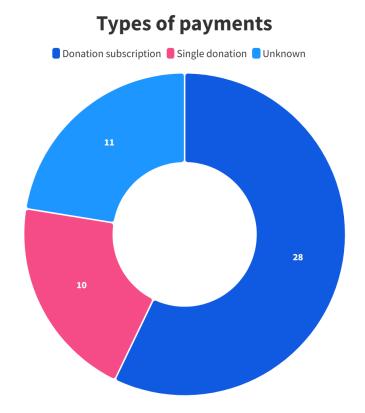
However, the regional factor in determining sentences is obvious. Of the six sentences of actual imprisonment handed down exclusively for donations to the ACF, five were handed down in Moscow. Ivan Tishchenko, sentenced to four years, and Lyudmila Gonchar, sentenced to three years, have already been mentioned. Viktor Levakov, a volunteer with Nemtsov Bridge, is to serve three and a half years in prison. Dmitry Marsov, a father of five, was sentenced to three years for a donation of 1,500 roubles. Anton Grishin, a former municipal deputy from Zyuzino, was sentenced by the court of first instance to a fine of 350,000 rubles, but the appeal court increased the punishment and sentenced him to 3.5 years in prison.

Another Muscovite, Timur Magomedov, is awaiting his sentence in a Moscow detention center. The question of where Alexei Kuznetsov from Kirov will be tried for donations totalling 2,100 roubles has not yet been resolved — he made these transfers while temporarily staying in the capital. The defendant is asking for the hearings to be moved to his native Kirov. Given the tendency of Moscow courts to be particularly harsh, this request is quite understandable.

However, the most severe preventive measure was applied on 25 July 2025 by a court in the northern capital, which sent well-known businessman Grigory Kunis to a detention centre in St. Petersburg for transferring 3,500 roubles.

What are they searching for and where?

After reviewing the available criminal case materials, press releases from law enforcement agencies, and information from courtrooms, we can conclude that employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Federal Security Service are checking transfers from citizens' accounts made on 5 or 6 August 2021, as well as regular monthly payments on those dates, which may be 'subscriptions.'



It is likely that law enforcement agencies are primarily targeting individuals whose data was obtained after the hacking of Navalny's supporters' database. We are aware that Sberbank and Tinkoff Bank are providing law enforcement agencies with statements from their clients' accounts containing the markers V2NI29SJROMGYKY, THANKS, world.fbk.inf, and others. Other banks are likely to be doing the same, but these two are mentioned in the available criminal case materials.

It is also worth noting that at least three of those being prosecuted were detained immediately after returning to Russia from abroad.

We recognise all those imprisoned and accused solely in connection with the financing of the ACF as political prisoners, and those sentenced to punishment not involving deprivation of liberty as illegally persecuted on political grounds. We also recognise as illegally persecuted for political reasons those who were abroad at the time the criminal case was initiated or who managed to leave the Russian

Federation. Konstantin Kotov and Kirill Dolzhikov escaped from house arrest, and Nadezhda Mikhailova left the country before a preventive measure was chosen.

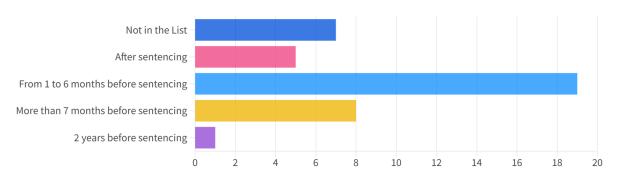
In addition to the penalties imposed by the court in the form of imprisonment or large fines, virtually all those persecuted are included in the Russian Financial Monitoring agency List of Terrorists and Extremists.

List of Terrorists and Extremists — civil punishment?

Inclusion in the List of Terrorists and Extremists occurs without trial. According to the Russian Government Resolution of 6 August 2015, the Prosecutor General's Office and the prosecutor's offices of the Russian Federation's constituent entities, the Investigative Committee, the Ministry of Justice, the Federal Security Service and the Ministry of Internal Affairs may inform Russian Financial Monitoring agency that they have grounds for including certain individuals or organisations on the list.

Often, a citizen is included in this list long before their guilt is 'proven' in court.

Terms of inclusion in the List of Terrorists and Extremists



At the same time, inclusion in the List entails significant restrictions on rights: all accounts in banks and investment companies are blocked, and those on the list are allowed to spend only 10,000 roubles per month on themselves and the same amount on each family member who does not have their own source of income.

The absolute record holder for the length of time on the List prior to the court's verdict was Alexei Abramov, a corresponding member of the Russian Academy of Sciences and developer of supercomputers. He was subject to extrajudicial sanctions for 746 days prior to his sentence. On 11 July 2025, Abramov was sentenced to pay a fine of 150,000 roubles and remains on the list.

This is how the scientist describes his life under sanctions for the <u>T-invariant</u> publication:

"For more than two years, I have been on Rosfinmonitoring's register of extremists and terrorists. All this time, I have not only been deprived of my rights, but also subjected to regular humiliation. How is my everyday life organised? Not only are all my accounts and assets frozen (Sberbank, Tinkoff Investments, BCS Investments and even money in my personal Ozon account), but Sberbank Online is also not working. I cannot use my funds, including those I accumulated from my pension from March 2017 to 26 June 2023... Do you know how I can get this money from Sberbank? First, I go to the nearest Sberbank branch, which is 25 kilometres away for me, and fill out a form requesting that my monthly pension and salary be paid out from my frozen accounts. Then I wait a day or two for a call confirming that my request has been approved. Then I go back to the branch, take a ticket, wait to be seen by a teller who has become available, and after 10 minutes they say: 'The request to unblock the release of funds has been sent, take a seat, I will call you when the funds are unblocked.' I sit down on a bench and wait to be called by the teller. Usually, I wait for 1-1.5-2 hours, but several times it has been like this: I sit for 3-4 hours, and they simply tell me that the unblocking was unsuccessful and I need to come back another day. That's how it is - only offline, only on foot, only cash, I can't do anything online. I have been living like this for over two years. I have been putting up with this abuse for two years.

Of all those convicted, only five individuals were added to the List after a court had ruled them guilty. We disagree with these rulings, but we find the extrajudicial restrictions on rights even more egregious.

Several defendants and convicts, mainly those who have recently been sentenced or are awaiting trial, are not yet on the List.

Two convicted persons managed to get themselves removed from this restrictive list. Sergei Shiryayev, the first person convicted of financing the ACF and fined 500,000 roubles, spent 567 days under sanctions. Vyacheslav Hertzberg, who paid a fine of 300,000 roubles, was on the List for 596 days.

We believe that the inclusion of persons accused of financing the ACF in Rosfinmonitoring's List of Terrorists and Extremists has no legal basis, is aimed at intimidating civil society, and is a form of political repression.

We will continue to monitor the repression against Navalny's supporters and help people facing political persecution. If you have any information about such cases, please write to us. This is important.