

Monitoring of Violations of Professional Rights and Persecution of Lawyers in 2024

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Introduction

This monitoring aims to collect, systematize, and analyze information on various forms of professional rights violations and the persecution of lawyers in 2024.

Amid the ongoing tightening of legislative restrictions and prohibitions in various spheres of public life in Russia and the general repressive trend in state policy, it is crucial to assess the current state of the legal profession, evaluate existing risks and threats, and understand their scale. We believe that monitoring plays a pivotal role in identifying and analyzing the pressing challenges the legal community faces. This effort is not limited to documenting instances of persecution and violations of professional rights; instead, it serves as the foundation for analysis and the development of recommendations on how both the legal profession as a whole and individual lawyers can influence reality, improve their working conditions, and enhance their legal protections. In turn, these efforts contribute to preserving the independence of the Russian legal profession in the current challenging and, in many ways, unfavourable conditions.

It is also essential to recognize that lawyers' professional rights violations are not merely a corporate issue. Obstructing legal practice inevitably has negative consequences for clients, infringing upon their legal interests—at the very least, by making it more complex and, in some cases, entirely preventing the exercise of the constitutional right to qualified legal assistance.

This study will analyze the collected data, examine key trends, causes, and consequences of identified violations, and highlight the most significant cases of lawyer persecution in Russia in 2024.

Methodology

Unlike previous years' studies, this time, we aimed to collect information from various available sources on all known cases of criminal prosecution of lawyers, searches conducted against them, and summonses for interrogations.

In many cases, due to limited information on the details of the charges and the grounds for investigative actions, it is impossible to objectively assess these events as violations of a lawyer's professional rights. Such cases are highlighted in red in the [table](#). However, the very fact of a lawyer being criminally prosecuted or subjected to investigative and operational search activities is an exceptional event that reflects the current state of the legal profession and its relationship with the state.

When the available information was sufficient to assess the legitimacy of a given form of persecution, we—just as in previous studies—identified indications of professional rights violations and categorized such cases accordingly (see "Classification of Violations"). When verifying an event as a violation, we applied the presumption of the lawyer's good faith.

Another innovation in the 2024 monitoring is the inclusion of several cases of criminal prosecution and unlawful violent actions (including physical attacks) against legal professionals in connection with their human rights activities (not only attorneys). We believe it is essential to account for such extreme forms of pressure on representatives of the legal profession.

Data Collection

The data collection process was conducted both automatically and manually. The sources of information included:

- Websites of various media outlets (news portals, specialized legal publications, etc.);
- Telegram channels covering legal topics;
- Social media platforms;
- Websites and Telegram channels of bar associations;
- Legal reference systems (court rulings related to lawyers published therein);
- Websites of courts of general jurisdiction and Telegram channels of court press services;
- Websites of law enforcement agencies and ministries.

References to the information source for each case are provided in the table.

Automated data collection involves using specialized software tools to monitor and aggregate information from the listed sources automatically. Manual data collection involved analyzing publications, messages, and comments on social media and media outlets.

Data Systematization

Categories

In this study, we **expanded the number of categories** of persecution and violations of professional rights, primarily based on the problematic situations that attorneys most frequently encounter in their daily practice. As a result, we identified the following 18 categories:

1. Criminal prosecution of a lawyer
2. Administrative liability imposed on an attorney due to professional activities
3. Summoning an attorney as a witness in a case involving their client
4. Searches and seizures conducted against an attorney
5. Inspection and confiscation of personal belongings from an attorney
6. Criminal acts committed against a lawyer in connection with their professional activities
7. Violations related to the payment of court-appointed legal fees
8. Denial of access to a client during initial investigative actions or in court proceedings
9. Denial of access to pre-trial detention centers (SIZO) and other penitentiary institutions
10. Disciplinary liability imposed on an attorney due to professional activities
11. Inclusion of an attorney in the registry of foreign agents
12. Violation of an attorney's right to obtain information through legal requests
13. Violation of an attorney's right to access case materials in court, police departments, or during the investigative stage
14. Violation of an attorney's right to access a client held in a medical institution due to health conditions
15. Violation of an attorney's right to confidential communication with a client in pre-trial detention (SIZO), law enforcement institutions, or during court proceedings
16. Unjustified issuance of special court rulings against an attorney

17. Unjustified disqualification of an attorney

18. Other unlawful actions against attorneys

All identified cases were recorded in a customized table and systematically categorized. In addition to classification by category, the table included the following parameters:

- Name of the lawyer whose rights were violated (if known) and their gender;
- Region and city where the violation occurred;
- Date of the violation;
- Date of publication of the news about the violation;
- Source link;
- Comments providing known details of the incident.

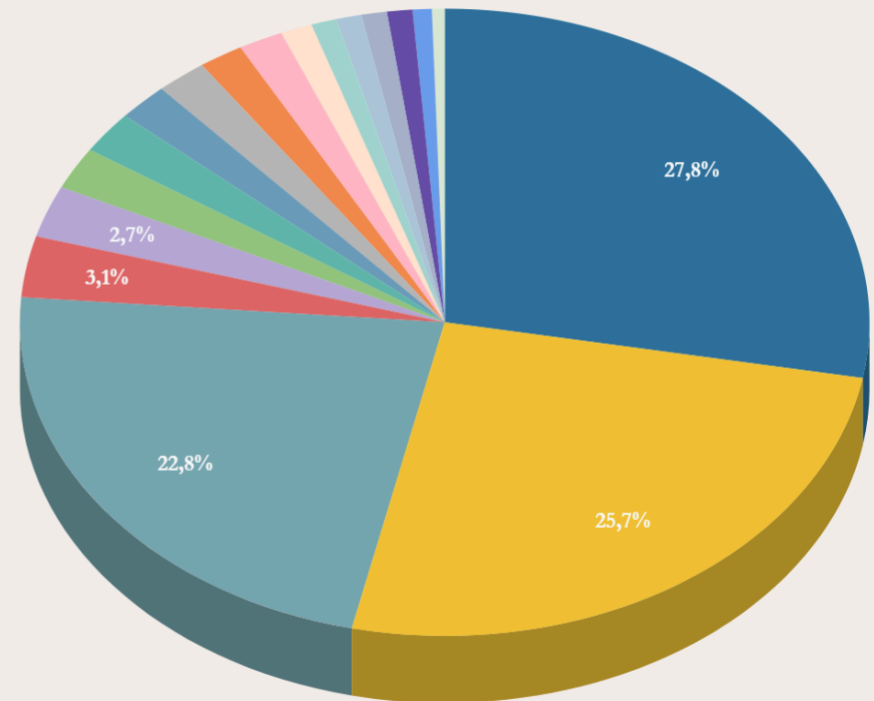
This systematic approach allowed for further analysis and reporting, ensuring a structured evaluation of violations against the legal profession.

Classification of Violations

After collecting the general dataset, each event was categorized accordingly. **Every case of violation was recorded as a separate event.** For example, if a criminal case was initiated against an attorney and a search was conducted at their office or residence, these actions were classified as distinct categories (1 – criminal prosecution, 4 – search/seizure). Similarly, each extension of pre-trial detention in an ongoing criminal case was recorded as a separate violation (e.g., in cases involving A. Liptser, V. Kobzev, I. Sergunin), as well as tighter pre-trial restrictions (as in the case of T. Idalov) or any other significant procedural action (filing of formal charges against a lawyer, referral of a criminal case to court, issuance of a verdict, consideration of the case in appellate or cassation courts). Such detailed classification allowed for a more precise assessment of the scale and nature of violations.

Violations of Professional Rights and Persecution of Lawyers in 2024 (%)

- Denial of access to a client during initial investigative actions or in court proceedings
- Criminal prosecution of a lawyer
- Searches and seizures conducted against an attorney
- Criminal acts committed against a lawyer in connection with their professional activities
- Denial of access to pre-trial detention centers (SIZO) and other penitentiary institutions
- Administrative liability imposed on an attorney due to professional activities
- Summoning an attorney as a witness in a case involving their client
- Disciplinary liability imposed on an attorney due to professional activities
- Violation of an attorney's right to access case materials in court, police departments, or during the investigative stage
- Unjustified issuance of special court rulings against an attorney
- Other unlawful actions against attorneys
- Violation of an attorney's right to access a client held in a medical institution due to health conditions
- Unjustified disqualification of an attorney
- Violations related to the payment of court-appointed legal fees
- Violation of an attorney's right to obtain information through legal requests
- Inspection and confiscation of personal belongings from an attorney
- Violation of an attorney's right to confidential communication with a client in pre-trial detention (SIZO), law enforcement institutions, or during court proceedings
- Inclusion of an attorney in the registry of foreign agents



Disputed Cases

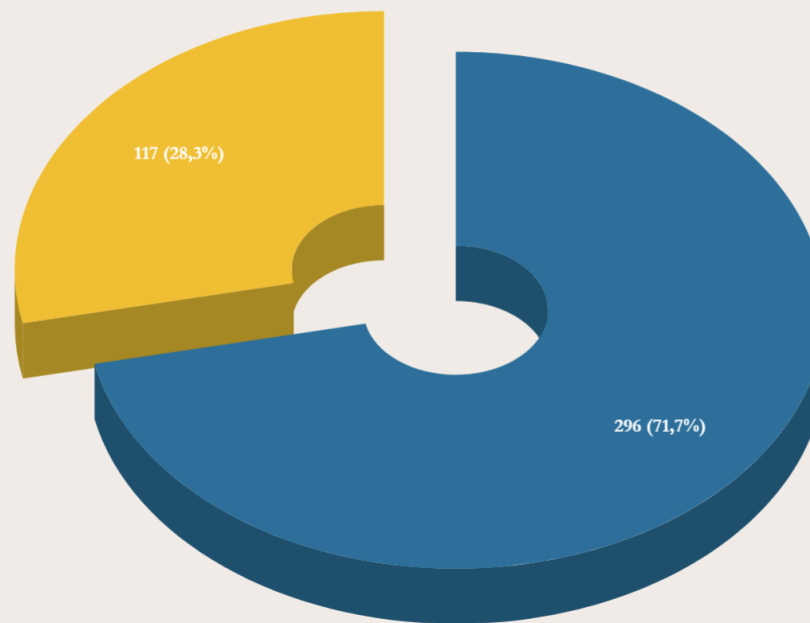
Some recorded incidents raised doubts about their classification as violations of professional rights. These cases are highlighted in red in the [table](#).

In particular, this applies to **117 cases**, including:

- Disciplinary sanctions
- Searches
- Criminal prosecution

Can we verify that a lawyer's professional rights have been violated?

- Yes
- No



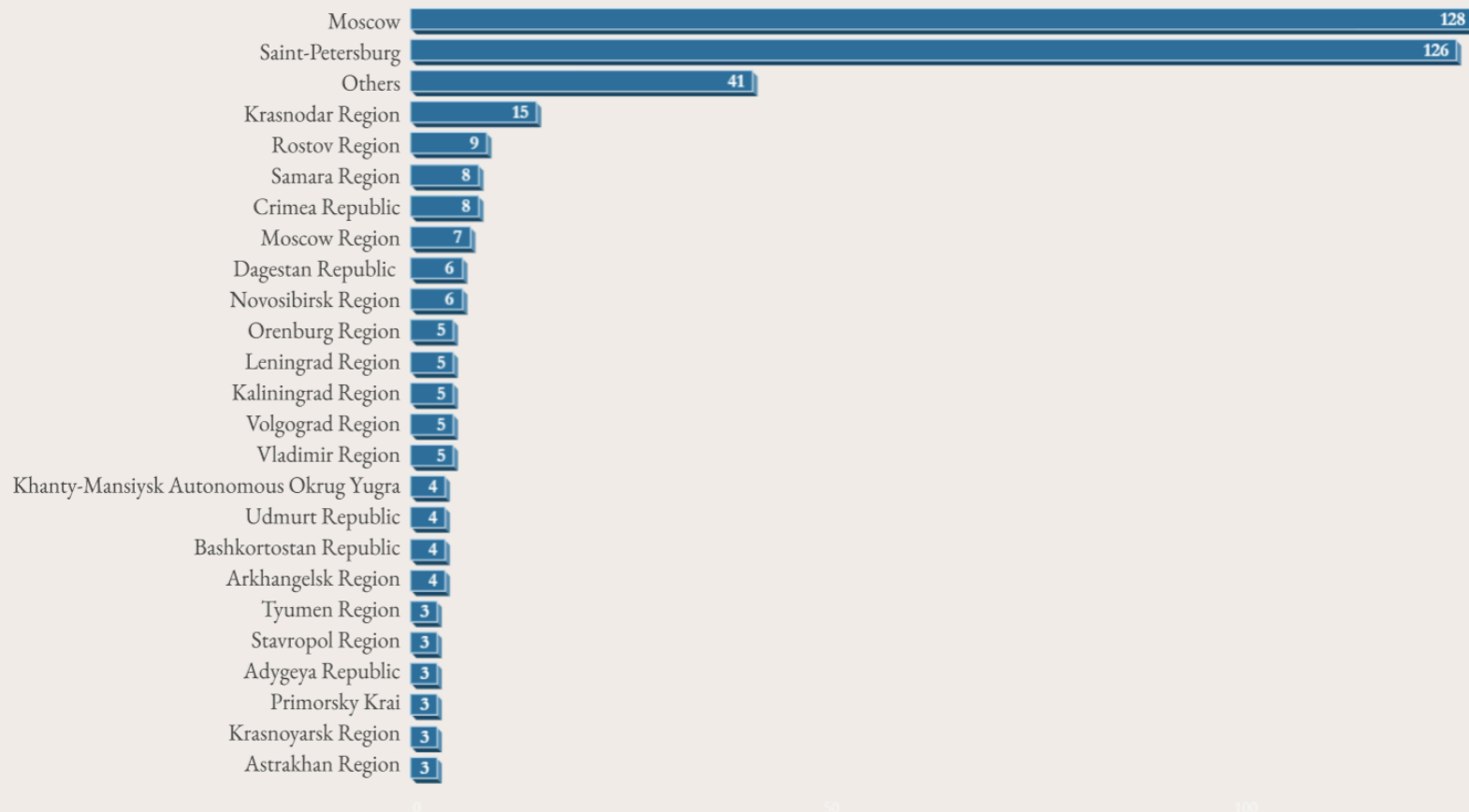
Factors Influencing the Study

It is important to emphasize that the collected **data is incomplete by nature**: the majority of violations remain undocumented, as many lawyers, for various reasons, choose not to make them public. This is particularly true for common violations such as delays in the payment of court-appointed defense fees, denial of access to a client, failure to provide information in response to an attorney's official request, obstruction or refusal to grant access to case materials, violations of confidentiality in communications with detained clients

Another significant factor affecting the availability of information on violations is the **level of engagement of regional bar associations in protecting lawyers' professional rights**. In regions where bar associations actively support attorneys and advocate for their rights, violations are more likely to be reported and documented. Partially for this reason, over 50% of recorded violations occurred in Moscow and St. Petersburg, cities where bar associations have established effective mechanisms for defending attorneys' professional rights.

Cases by Regions

The Others category includes all regions where fewer than three cases of persecution or violation of lawyers' rights were recorded in 2024.



Another notable aspect of this study is the almost twofold increase in the number of recorded cases of criminal prosecution of lawyers, rising from 13% in 2023 to 25.5% in 2024. Additionally, search and seizure cases have increased by more than three times, from 7% to 22.3%. As mentioned earlier, this trend is mainly due to changes in our approach to data collection for these categories.

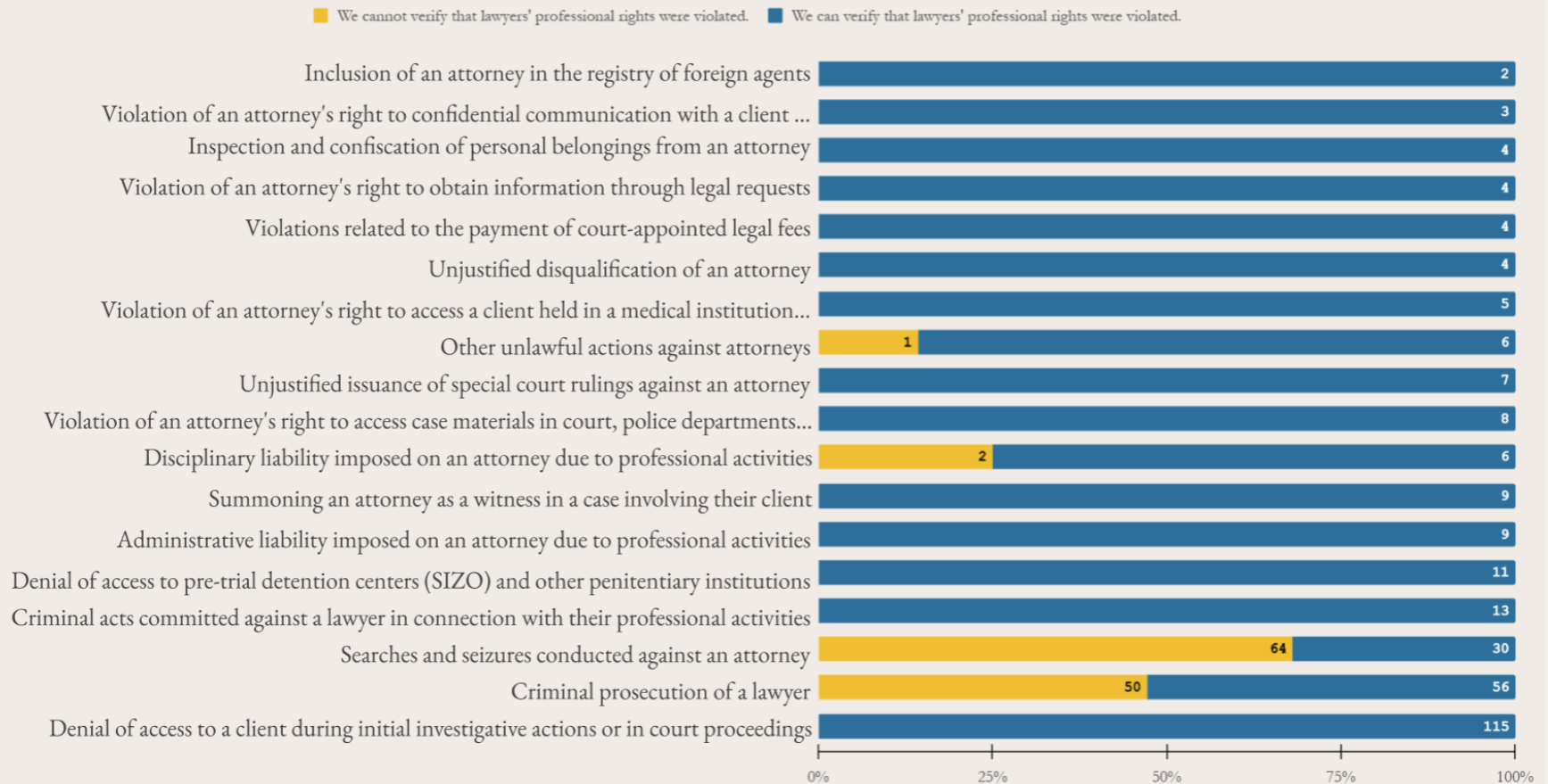
Furthermore, in some instances, Moscow courts of general jurisdiction published information on granted motions authorizing searches or seizures involving attorneys. However, these publications did not disclose the attorneys' identity or the full text of the court ruling. It remains unknown whether the investigative actions were subsequently carried out and, if so, when exactly. Nevertheless, we included this information in the corresponding category in our dataset.

In cases where the exact date of an event was not provided in the source and could not be determined, we recorded the case based on the publication date in the corresponding month. For example, if a media report mentioned an attorney's detention or the imposition of a preventive measure without specifying when these actions occurred, the case was logged according to the publication date.

Overall Conclusions

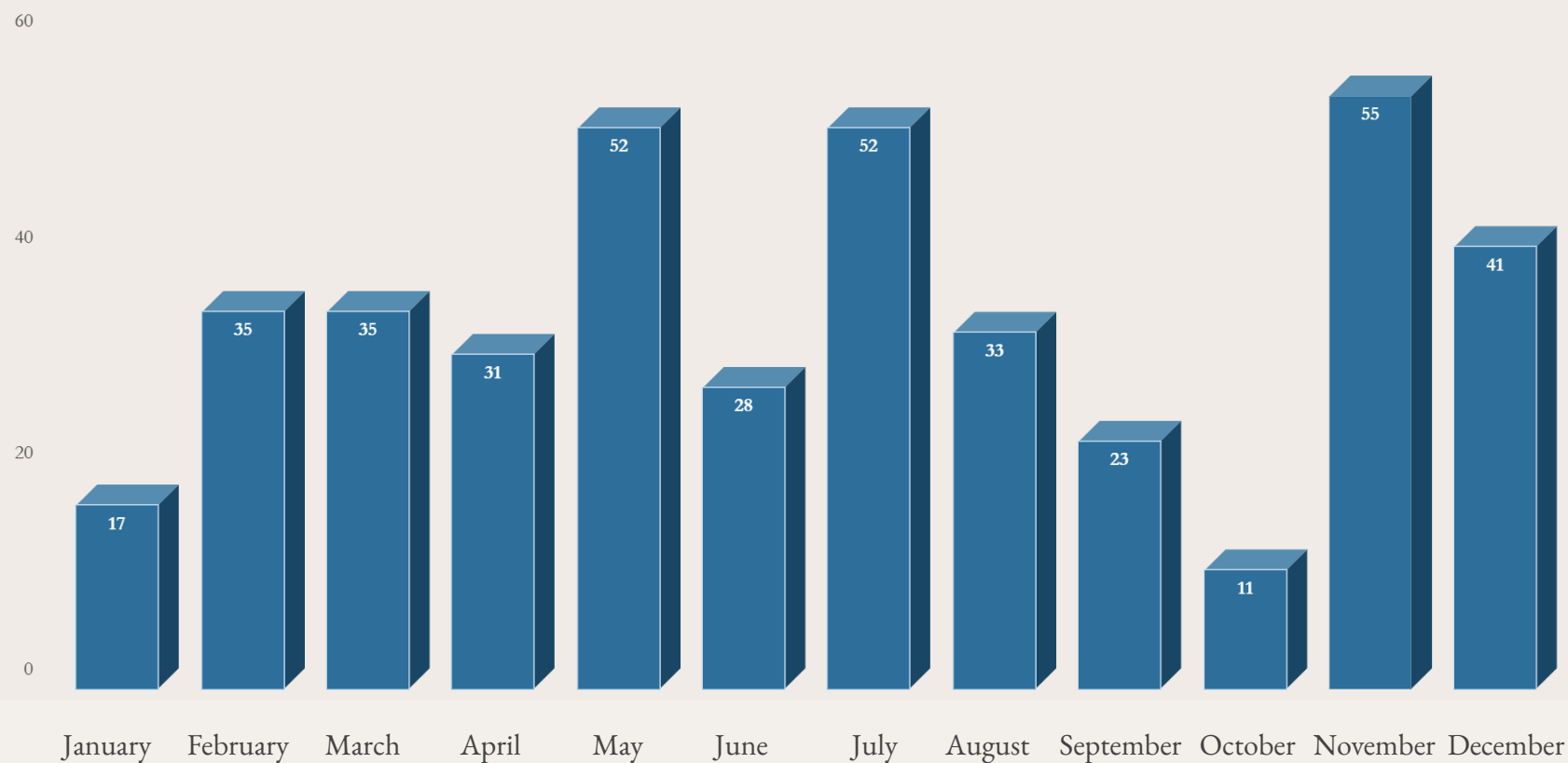
In 2024, **413 cases of persecution** were recorded, **296 of which exhibited signs of violations of professional rights.**

In how many cases can we verify that lawyers' professional rights were violated?



The highest number of cases was recorded in Moscow (127) and St. Petersburg (126), with Krasnodar Region(15) ranking third. The peak month for recorded incidents was November (55 cases), followed by May and July (52 cases each).

Cases by Months

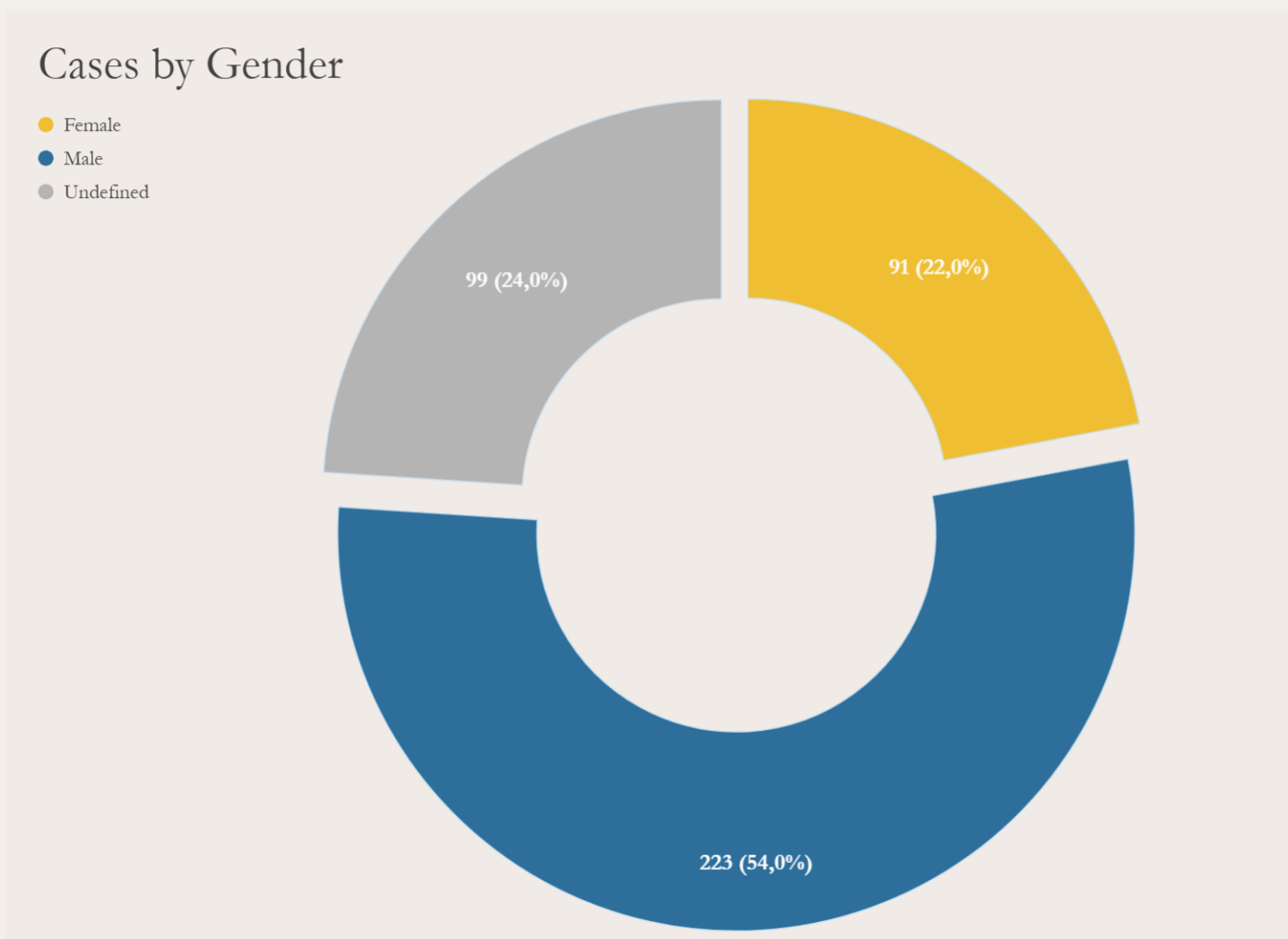


The most common category of violations was denial of access to a client during initial investigative actions or court proceedings, with 115 cases (27.9% of the total). This was followed by criminal prosecution – 105 cases (25.5%) and searches and seizures – 94 cases (22.8%). In 2024, 13 cases (3.2%) of criminal acts against lawyers related to their professional activities were recorded. In 11 cases (2.7%), attorneys were denied access to pre-trial detention centers (SIZO) and other penitentiary institutions. Additionally, 9 cases (2.2%) were recorded involving attorneys being summoned as witnesses in their clients' cases and attorneys facing administrative liability due to their professional activities. The remaining categories of violations are presented in the [table](#) and the chart.

Violations of Professional Rights and Persecution of Lawyers in 2024



Male lawyers faced persecution in 223 cases, while female lawyers were affected in 91 cases. However, in 99 cases, information about gender was not available.



Violations of Professional Rights and Persecution of Lawyers by Categories

1. Criminal Prosecution

In 50 out of 105 cases, we could not classify the event as showing signs of violating a lawyer's professional rights. As mentioned above, we primarily relied on the presumption of the lawyer's good faith in our assessment. In most disputed cases, there was insufficient information regarding the substance of the charges and supporting evidence. However, in some instances, the available details about the case did not allow us to conclude beyond a reasonable doubt that the criminal prosecution of the lawyer might be unjustified. In 52 cases, we identified violations of lawyers' professional rights. In 3 cases, we found that the criminal prosecution of legal professionals (not attorneys) was highly likely related to their professional activities—specifically in the cases of Ruslan Artamonov, German Moyzhes, and Ruslan Nurushev.

Criminal prosecution cases were most frequently recorded in Moscow—25; St. Petersburg, Samara, and Rostov Regions—6 cases each; Udmurt Republic—5 cases; and Novosibirsk Region and Krasnodar Region—4 cases each.

The highest number of criminal prosecution episodes was recorded in November – 21 cases, July – 20 cases, and May and February – 15 cases each; the other months had 10 cases or fewer.

Lawyers faced prosecution most frequently under the following articles of the Russian Criminal Code: Article 159 – Fraud; Article 291.1 – Mediation in bribery. Most disputed criminal prosecution cases that could not be classified as violations of professional rights fell under these specific charges.

Among the cases of criminal prosecution of lawyers in 2024 related to their professional activities, we highlight the following:



On February 15, the Basmanny District Court of Moscow granted the investigator's motion and issued a ruling for **Olga Mikhaylova's in absentia arrest**. She, along with V. Kobzev, A. Liptser, I. Sergunin, and A. Fedulov, was charged with participation in an extremist organization (Part 2, Article 282.1 of the Russian Criminal Code) in connection with providing legal assistance to politician Alexei Navalny.

The next day, on February 16, 2024, Navalny died in a maximum-security penal colony in the settlement of Kharp, Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug. According to the investigation, Navalny allegedly transmitted information from the colony to his associates through Mikhaylova. There are "sufficient grounds to believe that Mikhaylova is a member of an extremist organization, is abroad, and continues criminal activities, potentially obstructing the investigation." On August 16, Rosfinmonitoring (Russia's financial intelligence agency) **added** Olga Mikhaylova and Alexander Fedulov to its list of extremists and terrorists.

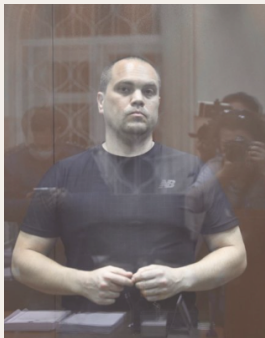


On February 15, the Basmanny District Court of Moscow granted the investigator's motion and issued a ruling for **Alexander Fedulov's in absentia arrest** on charges of participation in an extremist organization (Part 2, Article 282.1 of the Russian Criminal Code) in connection with providing legal assistance to politician Alexei Navalny.



In 2024, the criminal prosecution of **Alexey Liptser, Vadim Kobzev, and Igor Sergunin** on the abovementioned charges continued. Their pre-trial detention periods were repeatedly extended, and in September 2024, the substantive hearing of their criminal case began at the Petushinsky District Court of the Vladimir Region.

At the very first hearing, the state prosecutor moved for the trial to be held behind closed doors. Judge Yulia Shilova justified this decision with a letter from the Center "E" of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs citing "operational information about planned provocations" that could affect the trial participants and their family members.



Additionally, on May 29, the Moscow City Court rejected Vadim Kobzev's appeal against the Basmanny District Court's ruling of October 11, 2023, which had authorized a search at Branch No. 5 of the Moscow Bar Association "to find and seize correspondence between Kobzev and other members of the extremist organization FBK."

In August 2024, the Supreme Court of Russia refused to change the territorial jurisdiction of the case and transfer it to Moscow. The defense lawyers argued that the Petushinsky District Court is subordinate to the Vladimir Regional Court, which had previously authorized covert surveillance measures against Navalny's defense team—including wiretapping and video recording of meetings between the attorneys and their client in the penal colony, an action that constitutes a violation of attorney-client privilege.





On March 29, 2024, the Leninsky District Court of the Republic of Mordovia placed attorney **Marat Ashimov** under house arrest following the initiation of a criminal case against him under the article on attempted fraud (Part 3, Article 30; Part 2, Article 159 of the Russian Criminal Code). However, on May 21, the court tightened the pre-trial restriction, ordering his detention in a pre-trial detention center (SIZO). On September 26, 2024, Ashimov was released from detention, as the measure of restraint was changed to a ban on certain actions. The attorney is accused of receiving 200,000 rubles from a client serving a sentence in a penal settlement in Mordovia and allegedly promising to secure early release (UDO) by bribing certain officials. However, Ashimov and his defense team claim that the case was a deliberate provocation aimed at obstructing his professional activities. On May 9, 2024, Ashimov submitted an appeal to the Federal Chamber of Lawyers, in which he detailed the circumstances of the case and presented his defense position.



In 2024, the criminal prosecution of attorney Vladimir Buzyurgin from the Novosibirsk Bar Association continued. A criminal case was initiated against him on October 3, 2023, under Article 310 of the Russian Criminal Code (Disclosure of preliminary investigation data). According to the investigation, after the preliminary investigation was completed and the case transferred to court, the attorney allegedly "in an unidentified manner" provided copies of the case materials concerning his client to an "unidentified employee" of Channel One Russia. These copies were then featured in an episode of the television program "Male and Female" that aired on April 28, 2023.

After receiving an appeal from Buzyurgin, Henry Reznik, Chairman of the Federal Chamber of Lawyers' Committee for the Protection of Professional Rights of Lawyers, announced that he was controlling the situation. On April 1, 2024, Reznik sent a letter to the Prosecutor of the Novosibirsk Region, stating that Buzyurgin's actions did not constitute a criminal offence, as the investigative secrecy regime had already been lifted at the time of the alleged actions. Despite this, Buzyurgin was formally charged on April 23. On May 2, the investigator submitted a motion to the Novosibirsk Bar Association requesting the initiation of disciplinary proceedings against him. The regional bar association supported its colleague, concluding he had not committed any violations.

On July 2, Justice of the Peace Irina Nosova of Judicial District No. 6 of the Dzerzhinsky District of Novosibirsk started substantive consideration of the criminal case. During the proceedings, she granted the state prosecutor's motion to return the case to the prosecutor's office. Buzyurgin appealed the judge's decision, arguing that the court exceeded its authority by returning the case to the prosecutor's office, suggesting that investigators expand the charges by adding allegations related to the "disclosure of information about the private lives of the victims." However, on November 11, the Dzerzhinsky District Court of Novosibirsk denied Buzyurgin's appeal and upheld the Justice of the Peace decision without changes.



On July 8, it became known that a second criminal case had been initiated against **Ivan Pavlov**, an attorney from the St. Petersburg Bar Association, this time under Part 2, Article 330.1 of the Russian Criminal Code (Evasion of obligations stipulated by the legislation on foreign agents). According to the ruling initiating the criminal case, several publications in Pavlov's Telegram channel were the basis for the charges. The channel allegedly did not include a mandatory disclaimer stating that the materials were produced, distributed, or sent by a foreign agent.

The ruling further states that "as a result of Pavlov's unlawful actions, the published materials became accessible to at least 10,900 users who subscribed to the multi-user public channel on Telegram ('Pavlov's Dog Channel')." An investigator from the Investigative Committee's department for the Frunzensky District of St. Petersburg is conducting the preliminary investigation of this criminal case. On August 23, 2024, the Frunzensky District Court of St. Petersburg ordered Pavlov's in absentia detention. However, on September 23, the St. Petersburg City Court upheld the defence's appeal and overturned this decision.

On July 17, a criminal case was initiated against **Ekaterina Ilyushko**, an attorney from the Buryatia Bar Association, under Part 2, Article 296 of the Russian Criminal Code (Threat of harm to the health of an investigator in connection with the conduct of a preliminary investigation). On June 10, 2024, Ilyushko arrived at Pre-Trial Detention Center No. 1 in Ulan-Ude to participate in investigative actions involving her client. During the proceedings, the defense attorney and the investigator disputed genetic and fingerprint traces. At one point, Ilyushko touched the investigator to demonstrate how such traces could appear on a person's body. The investigative actions continued afterwards, and no complaints were made by the investigator at the time. However, later that same evening (June 10), the investigator alleged an attack, presenting a medical certificate from an ENT specialist diagnosing a "throat contusion." This diagnosis was later disputed by a medical examination, which reclassified the claim as "causing physical pain."



On August 12, 2024, at the request of Deputy Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation Igor Tkachyov, the Fifth Cassation Court of General Jurisdiction overturned the acquittal and appellate ruling in the case of **Diana Tsipinova**, an attorney from the Kabardino-Balkaria Bar Association. The court remanded the case for retrial in the court of first instance with a new judicial panel. The judicial decisions were overturned on procedural grounds.

Tsipinova is being prosecuted under Part 1, Article 318 of the Russian Criminal Code (Use of violence against a government official). She was accused of assaulting a police officer during a conflict between police and lawyers who had arrived at a police department in May 2020 to provide legal assistance to their detained colleague, Ratmir Zhilokov. Video footage showed that she slapped a police officer who was pressing against her.

On July 7, 2023, the Urvansky District Court of the Kabardino-Balkaria Republic acquitted Diana Tsipinova, ruling that her actions did not constitute a crime. Her actions were recognized as self-defence. The Supreme Court of Kabardino-Balkaria upheld Tsipinova's acquittal.

On August 6, the day before the cassation hearing, the Federal Chamber of Lawyers (FPA) published a statement in support of Tsipinova. The statement emphasized that Tsipinova was subjected to extreme physical and psychological pressure at the police department, including threats of a sexual nature, and was handcuffed. The statement concluded:

"There is no doubt that what happened at the Urvansky Police Department is an egregious case of arbitrary actions against a female lawyer—one of the most outrageous incidents in modern Russian history."



On October 1, 2024, **Natalia Fedorenko**, an attorney from the Krasnodar Region Bar Association, was taken into custody in the courtroom for “obstructing judicial proceedings.” The basis for this was her absence from a court hearing due to health reasons, which was confirmed by medical documentation. On October 10, the Justice of the Peace of Judicial District No. 248 in Novorossiysk, Krasnodar Region, found N. Fedorenko guilty under Part 1, Article 137 of the Russian Criminal Code (Violation of privacy) and sentenced her to 300 hours of compulsory labor along with a two-year ban on practising law.

According to the prosecution, Fedorenko allegedly “unlawfully, without the judge’s consent, collected and publicly disclosed information about his private life, including his whereabouts and other personal details, thereby violating his constitutional right to privacy, personal, and family secrecy, as guaranteed by the Russian Constitution.” The “collection of such information” referred to a photograph taken by the attorney of the judge’s car parked outside a clinic owned by an individual who was a party to a civil case being reviewed by the same judge. Fedorenko represented the opposing party in that case and filed a motion to have the judge recused, citing his potential conflict of interest. The judge granted the motion for recusal but soon after filed a complaint against Fedorenko with the Bar Association, which was later followed by initiating a criminal case against her under the above-mentioned article of the Criminal Code.

Additionally, the Ministry of Justice of Krasnodar Region submitted a motion to the regional Bar Association requesting the initiation of disciplinary proceedings against N. Fedorenko. On January 26, 2024, the Qualification Commission of the Bar Association concluded that Fedorenko’s actions did not violate the law on the legal profession or the Code of Professional Ethics for Lawyers. On February 29, 2024, the Council of the Krasnodar Region Bar

Association, agreeing with the commission's conclusion, terminated the disciplinary proceedings against her. The Council determined that the attorney did not unlawfully collect or disseminate private information about the judge and that Fedorenko had acted on behalf of and in her client's interests by the Law on the Legal Profession.

On October 9, during a meeting of the Expanded Council of the Federal Chamber of Lawyers of Russia, Henry Reznik, Chairman of the FPA Council's Commission for the Protection of Lawyers' Rights, announced that the commission was taking control of the criminal case against Natalia Fedorenko. Following an appellate review on January 14, 2025, the Oktyabrsky District Court of Novorossiysk released N. Fedorenko from serving her sentence.



On October 30, 2024, **Timur Idalov**, an attorney from the Chechen Republic Bar Association, was detained in Grozny. The Khimki City Court of the Moscow Region changed his pre-trial restriction to detention and issued a warrant for his arrest due to his failure to appear at court hearings in his ongoing criminal case. He was charged under Part 2, Article 296 of the Russian Criminal Code (Threat of harm to a prosecutor in connection with a court case).

Idalov stated that his absence was due to a valid reason—while under a ban on certain actions, he was forced to travel to Grozny to care for his ill mother, where he was later hospitalized due to his own health condition and underwent treatment.

He was transferred to Moscow, and on November 28, 2024, the Khimki City Court convicted him, sentenced him to one year and eleven months of compulsory labor, and barred him from practising law for three years.

According to the prosecution, Idalov's crime consisted of a statement he made during a court hearing in Moscow in October 2022, when he allegedly told the state prosecutor, "Are you Commissar

Cattani? Well, he was executed." This statement was classified as a threat to the prosecutor's health and safety.

Despite his non-custodial sentence, Idalov was only released from Pre-Trial Detention Center No. 4 (SIZO-4) on December 28, 2024, because at the time of sentencing, the judge did not change his pre-trial detention status, keeping him in custody until the verdict became legally binding. As Idalov rightfully pointed out, this violated Article 311 of the Russian Criminal Procedure Code, which states that a defendant in custody must be immediately released in the courtroom if sentenced to a non-custodial punishment.



On November 28, 2024, the Zavyalovsky District Court of the Udmurt Republic issued a guilty verdict against **Dmitry Talantov**, an attorney, former president of the Regional Bar Association, and co-founder of the Interregional Public Organization of Lawyers "Initiative 2018". He was convicted of "spreading knowingly false information about the use of the Russian Armed Forces, committed with the use of official position and out of hatred" (paragraphs "a" and "d" of Part 2, Article 207.3 of the Russian Criminal Code); and "inciting hatred or enmity, as well as degrading the dignity of an individual or a group of people, using official position" (paragraph "b" of Part 2, Article 282 of the Russian Criminal Code).

Judge Denis Metelyagin sentenced Talantov to 7 years in a general-regime penal colony.

Prominent international legal organizations, including the International Bar Association and the International Commission of Jurists, strongly condemned Talantov's prosecution, stating that it violates Article 16 of the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers and Article 18 of the Federal Law "On Advocacy and the Bar in the Russian Federation."

Amnesty International recognized Dmitry Talantov as a prisoner of conscience, while the human rights project "Support for Political Prisoners. Memorial" designated him a political prisoner. His criminal prosecution was found to violate Article 29 of the Russian Constitution and Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

On November 27, 2024, UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights Situation in the Russian Federation, Mariana Katzarova, with the support of UN Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers, Margaret Satterthwaite, called for Talantov's immediate acquittal and release. On December 9, 2024, the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE) issued an appeal to the Russian Minister of Justice, urging him to take all necessary steps to drop the charges against Talantov and restore his freedom, stating that "his conviction is based solely on his legal practice."

2. Administrative liability imposed on an attorney due to professional activities

In 2024, we recorded 9 cases of attorneys being held administratively liable in connection with their professional activities: Krasnoyarsk Region and the Republic of Crimea – 2 cases each, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Leningrad Region, Republic of Bashkortostan, and Oryol Region – 1 case each. All the cases we examined were linked to attempts by law enforcement officers to obstruct legal practice, often when the attorneys visited pre-trial detention centers (SIZO) or courts.

Notable Cases

On January 23, 2024, attorney **Garifulla Yaparov** was administratively detained at Pre-Trial Detention Center No. 1 in Ufa while attempting to visit his client, who had been taken into custody for participating in a protest in Baymak. Yaparov, an attorney from the Republic of Bashkortostan Bar Association, submitted a request to the head of the detention center to allow him to use his phone to scan his client's appellate complaint. However, the staff refused to process the request and detained the lawyer, alleging he had attempted to bring a device into the facility illegally. The SIZO staff did not identify themselves and held Yaparov inside the administrative building of the detention center for two hours before releasing him without issuing an administrative offense report. In his appeal to the Investigative Committee, Yaparov emphasized that he had been subjected to unjustified aggression, psychological pressure, an unlawful search conducted by unidentified officers in Federal Penitentiary Service (FSIN) uniforms with insignia, an attempt to seize his property unlawfully, and detention in an isolated, secluded room.

On February 15, 2024, officers from Center "E" (Russia's Anti-Extremism Center) filed an administrative offense report against Crimean attorney **Emil Kurbedinov** under Part 9, Article 13.15 of the Russian Code of Administrative Offenses (Abuse of mass media freedom). The reason for the report was a post in Kurbedinov's Telegram channel "KEMska Volost", which provided guidance on military draft summons procedures for medical examinations. The attorney shared a template application for students called for a medical commission despite having a deferment.

On February 27, 2024, **Vasily Dubkov**, the Novosibirsk-based attorney for Alexei Navalny, who had died two weeks earlier, was detained in Moscow and accused of violating public order. Dubkov believes that his detention was an attempt to obstruct his legal work, especially given his recent trip to Salekhard with Navalny's mother to collect Navalny's body.

On November 1, 2024, a bailiff from the Vsevolozhsk City Court of Leningrad Region used special restraints (handcuffs) against attorney **Salome Zhvania** and filed an administrative offense report against her.

3. Summoning an attorney as a witness in a case involving their client

In 2024, we recorded nine instances of attorneys being summoned for interrogation concerning circumstances related to providing legal assistance to their clients. In Moscow, there were two cases, while in Primorsky Krai, the Kaliningrad Region, the Moscow Region, the Novosibirsk Region, the Tver Region, the Chelyabinsk Region, and the Kostroma Region, there was one case in each. In numerous instances, appellate courts overturned decisions made by lower courts that had authorized the interrogation of attorneys, thereby rectifying violations of their professional rights.

Notable Cases

On May 17, 2024, the Novosibirsk Regional Court overturned the Oktyabrsky District Court of Novosibirsk's ruling of March 11, 2024, which authorized the interrogation of **Alexander Pecherin**, an attorney from the Novosibirsk Bar Association, as a witness in a criminal case. Pecherin had represented a client in a civil case who was later charged under Part 1, Article 303 of the Russian Criminal Code (Falsifying evidence in a criminal case). The investigator petitioned for permission to interrogate the attorney, which the first-instance court granted. Pecherin appealed the ruling. The appellate court stated that the circumstances under which the investigative body sought to interrogate the attorney had become known to him solely through his professional legal work for his client, with whom he had a formal agreement for providing comprehensive legal services in civil, administrative, and criminal cases. Such information is protected under attorney-client privilege, cannot be disclosed, and cannot be the subject of witness testimony. Therefore, interrogating the attorney as a witness regarding information obtained through legal representation is impermissible, regardless of when the information was acquired.

On August 28, 2024, an investigator from the Second Department of the Investigative Directorate of the Main Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia for Moscow Region removed attorney **Valentina Yashchenko** from participation in a

criminal case and attempted to serve her with a summons for interrogation as a witness. On August 29, the Moscow Region Bar Association formally notified the Main Investigative Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia for Moscow Region that it was unacceptable to interrogate Valentina Yashchenko as a witness in a criminal case involving her client.

On November 22, 2024, the Chelyabinsk Regional Court upheld the first-instance court's decision to reject an investigator's motion to compel and interrogate an attorney as a witness in his client's case. The court emphasized that interrogating an attorney as a witness—particularly with coercive measures such as forced appearance—seriously threatens attorney-client privilege. Under the legal framework established by Russian law and international legal standards, an attorney cannot be compelled to appear before an investigator for interrogation as a witness regarding circumstances learned through legal representation without a prior judicial ruling.

4. Searches and seizures conducted against an attorney

In 2024, we recorded 94 events related to searches and seizures conducted in attorneys' residences or offices. The statistics include actual searches and court rulings authorizing searches and seizures, even in cases where the rulings were later overturned on appeal. In 64 cases, we could not classify the event as containing clear signs of violations of attorneys' professional rights, mainly due to lack of access to court rulings or insufficient information about how the investigative action was conducted. In the remaining 30 cases, we identified signs of professional rights violations.

With a significant lead, Moscow recorded 73 cases, attributable to several factors. Unlike other Russian regions, the websites of Moscow's general jurisdiction courts provide access to judicial acts authorizing searches and seizures based on relevant queries. Furthermore, criminal investigations are often conducted by the Main Investigative Directorate of the Russian Investigative

Committee (GSU SKR), meaning that search motions are filed in Moscow, even when the actual searches occur in other regions. Following Moscow, the region with the highest recorded cases was St. Petersburg, with 13 cases. Other regions combined had 8 cases.

The most search-related events occurred in December (15 cases) and March (14 cases). For the remaining months, the figures ranged between 3 and 9 cases, with searches occurring every month of the year. A notable trend was conducting searches in attorneys' homes or offices, violating Article 450.1 of the Russian Criminal Procedure Code (UPK RF). This article stipulates that a search or seizure in a lawyer's premises may only be conducted if a criminal case has been initiated against them or they have been formally charged as defendants. Additionally, many court rulings authorizing searches lacked specificity, failing to mention the exact objects or documents being sought, which poses a significant threat to attorney-client privilege.

Notable Cases

On May 23, 2024, representatives of the St. Petersburg Bar Association's Committee for the Protection of Attorneys' Professional Rights documented violations during a search at an attorney's residence. The attorney was not charged with any crime or subject to criminal prosecution. The investigative action continued despite the attorney submitting a written objection to the investigator, stating that the search was impermissible.

In July 2024, the Moscow City Court overturned lower court rulings that had authorized searches in the homes and offices of several attorneys, including **Boris Fedosimov, Galina Ivanova, and Fedor Trusov**. The main grounds for overturning the decisions were the lack of specific details regarding the exact objects to be searched for, evidence that a criminal case had been initiated against the attorneys, or formal charges against them as defendants.

On September 11, 2024, attorney **Tatiana Sustina** submitted a formal complaint to the Moscow Bar Association regarding violations of her rights due to an upcoming document seizure by law enforcement. On July 18, 2024, investigators from the Moscow District Investigative Department in Cheboksary (Chuvash Republic Investigative Committee) arrived at a law firm's office to seize original legal service agreements signed by attorney **Alexander Aldaev** in representation of his client. The investigators claimed that on June 28, they had obtained a court order for the seizure. Aldaev appealed the ruling, but on September 10, the appellate court upheld the decision.

On November 19, 2024, officers from the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD), which specializes in high-security and restricted facilities, searched an attorney's office in St. Petersburg. The attorney was neither a suspect nor a defendant, as the criminal case was initiated against unidentified persons. Despite formal objections from representatives of the St. Petersburg Bar Association, which stated that the search was impermissible, the investigator proceeded with the search. Additionally, items containing attorney-client privileged information were seized during the search, further violating lawyer-client confidentiality protections.

5. Inspection and confiscation of personal belongings from an attorney

In 2024, four cases were recorded in this category, each exhibiting signs of violations of attorneys' professional rights. There was one case in each of the following regions: St. Petersburg, Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug Yugra, Vladimir Region, and Magadan Region.

Notable Case

A court ruling in Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug Yugra on July 15, 2024, upheld the decision of the Uray City Court of Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug Yugra, which authorized a search of the residence of an attorney suspected of committing an offense under Part 2, Article 30, and Article 9 of the Russian Criminal Code. According to the attorney, during the search, law enforcement officers seized a computer containing confidential legal case materials related to her client's legal proceedings.

6. Criminal acts committed against a lawyer in connection with their professional activities

This category encompasses incidents involving violence or threats of violence. In 2024, 13 cases were documented, with over half (7 cases) occurring in Moscow and St. Petersburg. One case each was reported in the Samara Region, Volgograd Region, Arkhangelsk Region, Leningrad Region, Kaluga Region, and the Republic of Dagestan. The highest number of incidents took place in March (4 cases). Tragically, at least one attorney was killed in 2024 as a result of their professional activities.

Notable Cases

On March 2, 2024, attorney M. contacted the Authorised Representatives Group, reporting that she and her client were receiving threats, including death threats, due to her professional work in a criminal case under investigation by the Investigative Committee in the Volgograd Region. Attorney M. provided screenshots of messages from unknown individuals who expressed an intent to harm her and her client, as well as threats to kill her and her minor child. Earlier complaints filed by attorney M. with law enforcement agencies in the Volgograd Region and St. Petersburg yielded no results.

On March 15, 2024, attorney **Sergey Osipov** was murdered alongside his client while exiting a courthouse in Dagestan. According to preliminary reports, the killer was the victim in the case in which Osipov was representing the defendant. This tragic case highlights the extreme risks faced by lawyers in their professional activities.

On March 26, 2024, while fulfilling her duties as an Authorized Representative of the St. Petersburg Bar Association, attorney **Maria Potsiupun** sustained physical injuries.

An unidentified police officer struck her with a metal entrance door, causing bruises to her chest and abdomen.

On May 18, 2024, attorney **Maximilian Burov** was physically assaulted in Elektrostal, Moscow Region. He had travelled there to document and video record unlawful interference with his client's right to communicate with their children. During the incident, his client's spouse and several other individuals began beating Burov and attempted to seize his mobile phone. A criminal case was initiated on October 15, 2024, recognizing Burov as a victim. However, the following day, the Deputy Prosecutor of Elektrostal, Moscow Region, cancelled the investigator's decision to initiate a criminal case and ordered the release of the suspects from custody. On October 21, 2024, Burov submitted an appeal to the Commission for the Protection of Lawyers' Rights of the Moscow Bar Association, requesting assistance in response to the crime committed against him.

7. Violations related to the payment of court-appointed legal fees

For many years, violations in this category have stayed consistent. In 2024, we identified four reports of widespread violations: two cases in Moscow, one in the Tula Region, and another in the Amur Region.

It is important to emphasize that bar associations can only accurately determine the number of attorneys affected by delayed or denied payments for court-appointed work if they systematically collect such data. We suspect that these violations go unreported in many regions and are not publicly documented.

Notable Cases

As of July 1, 2024, the total outstanding debt to attorneys appointed by the court to participate in criminal proceedings in the Tula Region amounted to 4,365,231 rubles (\$53,527). Of this debt, 2,220,747 rubles (\$27,230) had been overdue for over three months. From judicial practice, a notable example is the Moscow City Court's appellate ruling, which overturned a district court's decision denying reimbursement to an attorney appointed as court-assigned defense counsel. The lower court had refused to cover travel expenses incurred by the attorney, compensate for drafting an appellate complaint or for reviewing the court hearing transcript and submitting remarks on it. The appellate court ruled that these expenses should be reimbursed, recognizing them as necessary costs for the attorney's professional duties in court-appointed defense cases.

8. Denial of access to a client during initial investigative actions or in court proceedings

In 2024, the most widespread violation recorded was attorneys denied access to police departments and investigative authorities. 115 such violations were documented: 92 cases in St. Petersburg, 7 in Moscow, and 19 in other regions. This statistical imbalance is mainly due to the active role of the St. Petersburg Bar Association in documenting violations of attorneys' professional rights, mainly through the Bar's Rapid Response Group, which consists of authorized representatives for the protection of attorneys' professional rights. We believe that, in reality, the number of access denials is significantly higher in Moscow and other regions. Still, these incidents often go unreported and do not reach public records or bar associations.

Access denials were documented every month of the year, with the highest occurrences in December (20 cases) and November (15 cases).

Notable Cases

On March 26, 2024, **Maria Zyryanova**, a St. Petersburg Bar Association attorney, was denied access to participate in an investigative action: a search of her client's residence.

As previously noted, police officers used physical force against a bar association representative who arrived to document the violation.

On July 3, 2024, attorney **Nikolai Leontyev** was denied access and subjected to physical force at the Investigative Department of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) for the Kronstadt District of St. Petersburg.

A disturbing trend in St. Petersburg has been the mass denial of attorney access to detained clients for investigative procedures. In 2024, this practice was observed at the Main Investigative Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (GU MVD) for St. Petersburg and the Leningrad Region on the following dates: April 10, 2024, May 14–15, 2024, December 16, 17, and 18, 2024.

On February 19, 2024, the Moscow District Court of St. Petersburg ruled that police officers from the 3rd Police Department's refusal to issue an apology to attorney **Kalugin** was illegal. The court had previously recognized the access denial as unlawful and found that Kalugin's rights and freedoms had been violated. However, on June 19, 2024, the St. Petersburg City Court overturned this decision.

On September 24, 2024, the Vyborg District Court of St. Petersburg ruled in favor of attorney **Sergei Podolsky**, granting his administrative lawsuit against the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) for the Vyborg District of St. Petersburg and officers from the 36th Police Department. The court declared the denial of access to Podolsky’s client illegal.

9. Denial of access to pre-trial detention centers (SIZO) and other penitentiary institutions

During the reporting period, 11 cases related to this category were recorded: two each in Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Vladimir Region and one each in Stavropol Region, Orenburg Region, Rostov Region, Smolensk Region, and Luhansk People’s Republic. All documented instances showed clear signs of violations of attorneys’ professional rights.

Notable Cases

On February 29, 2024, attorney **Vyacheslav Savin** was denied access to his client at Pre-Trial Detention Center No. 1 (SIZO-1) in Stavropol. The detention centre staff refused him entry, citing a “letter from the investigator,” which they did not present. Savin lodged complaints with the prosecutor’s office, the Federal Penitentiary Service (FSIN), and the court. During the trial at Leninsky District Court, SIZO staff finally presented the letter issued by an FSB investigator. It indicated that “measures should be taken to prevent unauthorized attorneys and other individuals from meeting with the detainee.” The court ruled in favour of the detention center, with Judge Evgenia Nevecherya citing a report from SIZO-1 stating that on March 26—almost a month after Savin’s denied visit—the detainee allegedly refused to meet with any attorneys except for the one approved in the FSB investigator’s letter. However, on August 8, 2024, the Stavropol Krai Court overturned the first-instance decision, declaring the actions of the SIZO staff unlawful. The Commission for the Protection of Lawyers’ Professional Rights of the Stavropol Bar Association concluded that Savin’s rights had been violated.

Attorney **Igor Popovsky** was twice denied access to his client at Pre-Trial Detention Center No. 5 (SIZO-5) in Moscow on September 30, 2024 and October 3, 2024. In both instances, his applications for a visit were submitted via the "Gosuslugi" government portal. The requests were denied, with the justification: "The identity document details provided in the request do not match the information obtained through interdepartmental cooperation." According to Popovsky's client, other defense lawyers representing defendants in politically motivated criminal cases at SIZO-5 had also been denied visits, though details of those cases remain unknown.

On December 24, 2024, reports emerged regarding an attorney being denied access to a convicted client at Pre-Trial Detention Center No. 2 (SIZO-2) in Taganrog. SIZO staff justified the refusal by asserting that the client "did not wish to come out" for the meeting. However, the detainee had previously signed a written statement during an earlier meeting with his attorney at SIZO in Rostov, declaring: "I will not refuse to meet with my attorney unless I am under pressure." This case raised concerns about whether the detainee had been coerced into refusing legal assistance.

10. Disciplinary liability imposed on an attorney due to professional activities

Eight cases related to this category were recorded during the reporting period. In six cases, attorneys subjected to disciplinary measures claimed violations of their professional rights. Four cases were documented in Moscow, one in the Tyumen Region, Yaroslavl Region, Moscow Region, and the Republic of Khakassia.

Notable Cases

In April 2024, the Council of the Yaroslavl Bar Association revoked the attorney's licence of **Oleg Krupochkin**, who had secured a ruling from the Constitutional Court prohibiting the interrogation of attorneys as witnesses without prior judicial approval and challenged the ban on attorneys bringing mobile phones into temporary detention centers. Krupochkin believes that the decision to revoke his status stemmed from a longstanding conflict between him and the leadership of the Yaroslavl Bar Association. He claims that the bar association disapproved of his active efforts to defend the rights of fellow attorneys, as well as his public activities in the Russian Lawyers' Union, where he served as Vice President.

On July 17, 2024, the Supreme Court of the Republic of Khakassia upheld the first-instance court's decision declaring the Federal Chamber of Lawyers' (FPA) ruling to revoke an attorney's license illegal. Attorney **A. Ivanov** had previously served as the head of the Khakassia Bar Association Qualification Commission. The FPA argued that Ivanov had failed to meet deadlines for organizing bar exams in the region. However, local media linked the decision to an internal conflict within the regional bar association.

On July 26, 2024, the Tyumen Bar Association revoked the attorney status of **Alexei Ladin**.

In October 2023, Ladin had been charged with “discrediting” the Russian Armed Forces (Article 20.3.3 of the Russian Code of Administrative Offenses) and with displaying banned symbols (Part 1, Article 20.3 of the Russian Code of Administrative Offenses) on social media. As a result, he had been fined 45,000 rubles and sentenced to 14 days of administrative detention. The bar association used this as grounds for initiating disciplinary proceedings. Ladin announced his intention to appeal the bar association's decision.

11. Inclusion of an attorney in the registry of foreign agents

Two attorneys were designated as foreign agents in 2024: **Vadim Prokhorov** on March 29, 2024, and **Nikolai Polozov** on December 20, 2024.

12. Violation of an attorney's right to obtain information through legal requests

This is a new category added to our survey in 2024. It is highly likely that not all instances of these violations reach public records.

In 2024, we identified four cases, all of which contained clear signs of violations of attorneys' professional rights: two cases in the Krasnodar Region, one in St. Petersburg, and another one in the Volgograd Region.

Notable Cases

On May 16, 2024, the Volgograd Regional Court upheld a first-instance ruling declaring the inaction of a military unit unlawful for failing to respond to an attorney's request for information. On September 3, 2023, attorney **Valery Spiglazov** (Moscow Region Bar Association) sent an official request to Military Unit No. 22220 in Volgograd. The request sought confirmation of military service details regarding his client. The military unit did not respond within the legally required timeframe. Spiglazov subsequently filed an administrative lawsuit, which was granted by the Dzerzhinsky District Court of Volgograd.

On November 28, 2024, the Central District Court of Sochi ruled in favor of an attorney's administrative lawsuit, declaring the local MREO GIBDD (Traffic Police Registration and Examination Department) 's refusal to provide information unlawful.

13. Violation of an attorney's right to access case materials in court, police departments, or during the investigative stage

This is another new category we have introduced in our monitoring. In 2024, we recorded 8 cases, all of which contained clear signs of violations of attorneys' professional rights. Three cases were recorded in St. Petersburg, two in the Krasnodar Region, and one in the Kaliningrad Region, the Stavropol Region, and the Republic of Bashkortostan. Given the widespread nature of such violations, we recognize that our statistics are incomplete.

Notable Cases

The Federal Penitentiary Service (FSIN) refused to grant attorney **Roman Morozov** (Kaliningrad Bar Association) access to a medical-social examination report. The attorney was representing political prisoner Igor Baryshnikov, who was serving a sentence in a correctional facility. The attorney filed an administrative lawsuit, arguing that the denial violated his professional and his client's rights.

On June 4, 2024, an investigator denied attorney **Ovakim Aratyunyan** (Stavropol Region Bar Association) access to his client's testimony, asserting that: "The investigator is not obliged to provide the defense attorney access to statements made by a suspect while they were still classified as a witness." The attorney lodged a complaint with the prosecutor's office, which, on June 17, 2024, ruled in his favor and overturned the investigator's decision.

On July 15, 2024, the head of the Criminal Investigation Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) for the Labinsky District of the Krasnodar Region refused to allow attorney **Sergey Azarov** to review case materials related to a preliminary investigation. The reason given was that the attorney had presented his bar association-issued warrant (order) and attorney's ID, but

the authorities insisted he must provide a notarized power of attorney instead. On July 15, 2024, the Labinsky Interdistrict Prosecutor's Office upheld the police decision, ruling that denying access to case materials without a notarized power of attorney was lawful. However, the Krasnodar Region Bar Association's Commission for the Protection of Attorneys' Professional Rights found that the denial violated the attorney's professional rights. The commission's findings were used in a legal challenge against the police officer and the prosecutor. On October 17, 2024, the Labinsk City Court ruled that the refusals by the police and the prosecutor were unlawful, confirming that the attorney should not have been required to present a notarized power of attorney to access case materials.

14. Violation of an attorney's right to access a client held in a medical institution due to health conditions

Five cases were recorded during the reporting period, all of which clearly showed violations of attorneys' professional rights. These cases were distributed across Moscow, St. Petersburg, the Moscow Region, the Omsk Region, and the Kaliningrad Region.

Notable Cases

On March 16, 2024, officers of the "E" Center detained a member of an election commission with a decisive vote as she was leaving a polling station in Kaliningrad. The woman was forcibly taken to a psychiatric clinic. Once there, the hospital refused to allow attorney **Roman Morozov** to visit her, citing "a terrorist threat" and the need for "approval from the chief physician".

On July 4, 5, and 9, 2024, attorney **Sergey Safronov** was repeatedly denied access to his client, Vladimir Kara-Murza, at Prison Hospital No. 11 of the Federal Penitentiary Service (FSIN) in the Omsk Region.

Attorney **Olga Mitina**, whose client was detained in a psychiatric hospital, filed a lawsuit in the Chekhov City Court of the Moscow Region challenging the legality of an order issued by the hospital's chief physician. The order imposed restrictive regulations on how attorneys could meet with their clients within the facility. The court ruled in favor of Mitina, declaring that the psychiatric hospital must ensure an attorney's right to meet with their client regardless of any circumstances. The court further emphasized that attorneys must be allowed to personally ascertain their client's willingness to meet in person, without the use of video communication.

15. Violation of an attorney's right to confidential communication with a client in pre-trial detention (SIZO), law enforcement institutions, or during court proceedings

Three cases were recorded during the reporting period, all of which contained clear signs of violations of attorneys' professional rights: in Moscow, the Rostov Region, and the Irkutsk Region.

Notable Case

On August 26, 2024, attorney **Danil Proskurin** submitted a formal complaint to the Irkutsk Bar Association, reporting a serious violation of lawyer-client confidentiality. A few days earlier, he had participated in an investigative procedure inside Interrogation Room No. 3 at Pre-Trial Detention Center No. 6 (SIZO-6) of the Irkutsk Regional Federal Penitentiary Service (GUFSIN). While inside the room, he noticed a device that had fallen out of a cable duct above the entrance door. The device had a manufacturer's label, which contained the following information: "Model: SHOROKH-8," along with the manufacturer's details and a serial number. Upon conducting an online search, Proskurin found that this model was identified as an "active miniature microphone."

He concluded that the room was being used for covert audio surveillance, potentially violating lawyer-client confidentiality and attorney-client privilege. As a result, the President of the Irkutsk Bar Association formally requested that the Regional Prosecutor and the Head of GUF SIN investigate violations of citizens' right to defense and lawyers' professional rights, including attorney-client privilege and the confidentiality of meetings with detainees in SIZO-6.

16. Unjustified issuance of special court rulings against an attorney

In 2024, we identified seven cases, all of which contained clear signs of violations of attorneys' professional rights. Four cases were recorded in the Krasnodar Region and one in each of Moscow, the Novosibirsk Region, and the Republic of Bashkortostan. Given the widespread nature of such violations, we recognize that our statistics are incomplete. Judges have increasingly misused "special rulings" (private judicial orders) as a repressive tool against attorneys who vigorously defend their clients' rights.

Notable Cases

On March 4, 2024, the Kochnevsky District Court of Novosibirsk Region issued a judicial ruling directed to the President of the Novosibirsk Bar Association, calling for measures against an attorney who had allegedly been late to a court hearing. The attorney appealed the decision, arguing that she had attended the hearing as defense counsel, had never been informed of any private judicial ruling or had seen any mention of such a ruling in the official court records. Furthermore, she pointed out that the ruling was issued after the case had already been heard (March 4, 2024), it had not been announced during the hearing, and had been issued without a separate court session and without notifying her. On May 17, 2024, the Novosibirsk Regional Court overturned the ruling, finding no violations in the attorney's actions.

On September 26, 2024, the Moscow Bar Association Council reviewed a disciplinary case against an attorney, initiated at the request of a magistrate judge. The judge had accused the attorney of evading participation in court proceedings and refusing to take part in closing arguments. However, the Bar Association Council ruled in favor of the attorney, concluding that he had not refused to participate but had been instead defending their client's rights, and there had been no violation of legal or ethical standards under the Law on Advocacy and the Bar (Advocacy Act) or the Code of Professional Ethics for Lawyers (CPEA). As a result, the disciplinary proceedings were terminated due to the absence of any misconduct by the attorney.

17. Unjustified disqualification of an attorney

Four cases of attorneys' disqualification were recorded in this new category during the reporting period: two in Moscow, one in St. Petersburg, and one in the Republic of Bashkortostan.

Notable Case

On June 5, 2024, it was reported that attorney **Fyodor Sirosh** had been removed from the defense of journalist Antonina Favorskaya (SOTAvision) in a criminal case concerning cooperation with the Anti-Corruption Foundation (FBK). The investigator justified the disqualification by citing Sirosh's involvement in a 2019 interrogation of Evgeny Zamyatin, a member of Navalny's legal team, in a criminal case related to money laundering (Article 174, Part 4, Clause "b" of the Russian Criminal Code). The investigator asserted that this prior involvement created a conflict of interest, despite Sirosh having acted as a defense lawyer in that case as well. A second disqualification of Sirosh took place on November 7, 2024, in the Nagatinsky District Court of Moscow, where he was once again representing Antonina Favorskaya.

18. Other unlawful actions against attorneys

This category includes actions taken against attorneys that aim to obstruct their professional activities and do not fall under other specific categories of violations. During the reporting period, seven cases were recorded: three in Moscow and one in each of the Rostov Region, the Amur Region, the Kaluga Region, and the Volgograd Region. In six out of seven cases, evident signs of violations of attorneys' professional rights were identified.

Notable Cases

The Blagoveshchensk Prosecutor's Office audited two bar associations in the Blagoveshchensk Judicial District. The review focused on alleged violations of anti-corruption laws, specifically the failure of bar associations to notify authorities about the hiring of former civil servants as attorneys. The Amur Region Bar Council unanimously deemed these actions unlawful, emphasizing that bar associations are not the employers of attorneys and, therefore, are not subject to such reporting requirements.

On July 5, 2024, a magistrate judge (Judge of Magistrate Court No. 5, Novoshakhtinsk Judicial District, Rostov Region) postponed a criminal hearing to August 13, 2024. However, on August 9, 2024, the judge personally called the attorney (S.) on their mobile phone, informing them that the hearing had instead been rescheduled for August 12, 2024. The judge then instructed the attorney to notify the defendant about the new hearing date and ordered the attorney to ensure the defendant's attendance in court. The Rostov Region Bar Association's Commission for the Protection of Attorneys' Professional Rights determined that an attorney is not responsible for ensuring their client's presence in court and that the judge's actions constituted undue pressure on the attorney.

On August 16, 2024, the Federal Financial Monitoring Service of Russia (Rosfinmonitoring) added attorneys **Olga Mikhaylova** and **Alexander Fedulov** to its list of extremists and terrorists. The designation was based on a criminal case against them for alleged participation in an extremist organization (Article 282.1(2) of the Russian Criminal Code).

New amendments to Russian legislation came into force in February 2024, **allowing authorities to restrict attorneys' ability to travel abroad**. The restriction applies to attorneys with access to state secrets or classified information of special importance. At least one case of an attorney being denied the right to leave Russia under this new rule has been documented.

Conclusion

The documented violations across various categories impacted different aspects of the legal profession in Russia. Compared to 2023, the 2024 monitoring data revealed the following trends in violations of lawyers' professional rights:

- The total number of verified violations increased (296 cases in 2024 vs. 174 cases in 2023).
- The number of criminal prosecutions more than doubled (56 cases in 2024 vs. 22 cases in 2023).
- The number of searches and seizures also increased significantly (30 cases in 2024 vs. 12 cases in 2023).
- Restrictions on attorneys' access to clients surged nearly sixfold (115 cases in 2024 vs. 21 cases in 2023). However, this increase may be partially explained by the addition of new information sources in 2024, which provided more comprehensive data on such violations.

Some improvements also were observed. The number of criminal attacks and violent acts against lawyers decreased by nearly half (13 cases in 2024 vs. 30 cases in 2023). The number of attorneys summoned as witnesses in their clients' cases declined (9 cases in 2024 vs. 16 cases in 2023). Fewer attorneys were denied access to pre-trial detention centers (SIZO) and other penitentiary institutions (11 cases in 2024 vs. 19 cases in 2023).

The most common type of violation involves obstruction of legal defense, particularly the denial of access to clients and searches and seizures targeting attorneys. Restrictions on attorneys' access to their clients may suggest **an intent by law enforcement agencies to restrict legal representation and undermine citizens' legal protections**. Searches of lawyers' offices and residences remain among the most concerning trends, as they directly threaten attorney-client privilege and can be utilized as a means of intimidation and pressure.

The criminal prosecution of lawyers requires careful examination to differentiate between cases that are truly connected to their professional activities and those where charges may be politically motivated or influenced by external pressure.

The overall data indicates that pressure on lawyers in Russia is intensifying, manifesting in some of its most perilous forms: criminal prosecution, searches and seizures, and physical violence and threats. Such actions undermine the integrity of the legal profession and ultimately hinder citizens from exercising their constitutional right to qualified legal assistance.