

# WHY ARE RUSSIANS NOT PROTESTING PUTIN'S REGIME AND FULLSCALE INVASION IN UKRAINE?



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# THE RUSSIAN CONTEXT

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- The entire population of Russia ~ 146 million
- Over a hundred years of repression (since 1917 to the present day; with a 10-year pause for the attempt to build democracy in the 1990s)
- ~ 30–39 million Soviet citizens were murdered in the XX century during the repressions (including Holodomor)
- ~ 26,6–27 million Soviet citizens died in World War II
- By the early 1990s, a quarter of the country's population had been imprisoned and tortured

# THE LONG HISTORY OF PROTESTS IN RUSSIA THAT CONTINUE TO THIS DAY

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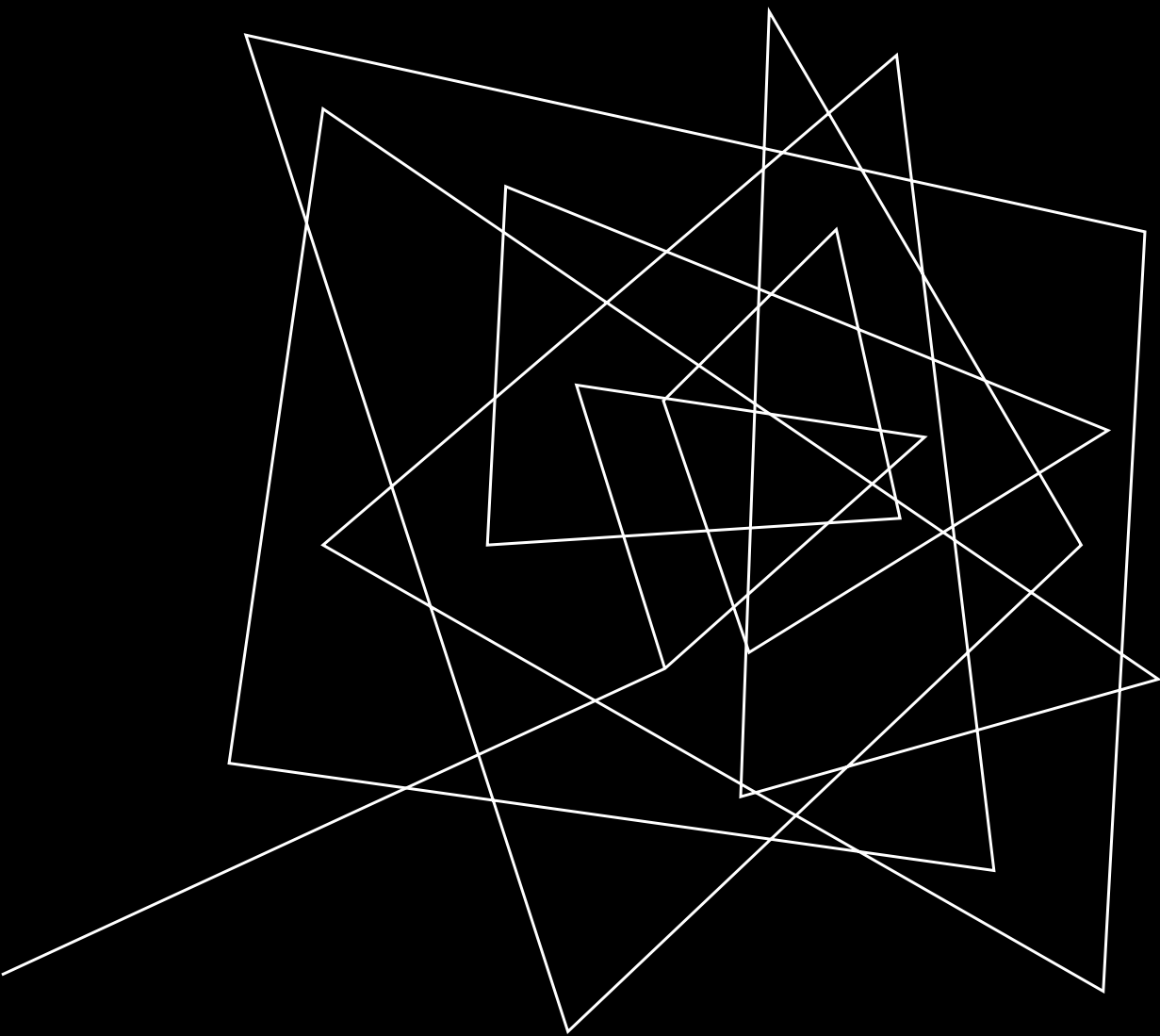
Mass protests of various kinds have been held in Russia every year since 2011 – to little effect.

After 2018, public demonstrations became almost impossible due to increased repression, but still continued. Now, those who protest on the street face a high probability of imprisonment, torture and cruel treatment, as well as dismissal from work and indirect reprisals against loved ones.

There have been demonstrations against the 2021 false election results; a series of large-scale rallies demanding the end of government corruption; environmental protests; and marches in support of regional governor Sergei Furgal and opposition leader Alexei Navalny (2022), to name just a few.

# MUDERED OPPOSITION IN XXI CENTURY

Since Putin came to power, more than 300 journalists have been killed, including women such as Anna Politkovskaya, as well as opposition leaders Boris Nemtsov and Alexei Navalny.



AN INITIATIVE STUDY  
“HIDDEN OPINIONS”  
FROM MARCH 2022 TILL  
NOWDAYS

(WITHIN RUSSIA AND  
ABROAD; MORE THAN 400  
RESPONDENTS)

*685 RUSSIANS LIVING IN  
RUSSIA WERE SURVEYED  
THROUGH TELEGRAM  
CHANNELS (1/12/2025-  
10/12/2025)*

# THE TOP THREE FEARS

***685 Russians living in Russia were surveyed through Telegram channels***

- Fear of losing access to free information and communication with the outside world
- Concerns about children's education, safety, and future
- Fear of losing the possibility to leave the country

# THE LOGIC OF FEARS

These are NOT economic fears.

They are NOT personal fears; even war and mobilization rank lower than any of the top three fears.

These are existential fears of UNFREEDOM — all of them relate to restrictions on freedom and control, rather than to survival or material well-being.

# AUTOETHNOGRAPHY: WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO GO OUT TO PROTEST IN RUSSIA?

If the chance of being arrested and tortured is 50-90% (depending on the nature of the protest).

Ask yourself:

*Would you let your partner go to the protest?*

*If your husband or son could be sent to war as a result of your protest –  
what your decision would be?*





# **AUTOETHNOGRAPHY: WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO GO OUT TO PROTEST IN RUSSIA?**

## **One family member takes part in protests**

One family member comes out to protest so that if the children are detained, they won't be sent to an orphanage.

## **Necessary to take on the protests**

Warm socks and a sweater for prison, essentials. Preparedness for cold, hunger and violence.

# ELECTRONIC TRACKING SYSTEMS: DIGITAL TOTALITARISM

***«This is not about being unwilling or afraid to protest; I may not even be able to reach the protest site. I can be stopped on the way, identified by facial-recognition cameras in the subway, while mobile operators may provide data on my movements to the security services. And even if I am not detained immediately, the risk does not end there».***

Video surveillance and facial-recognition systems enable law-enforcement agencies to identify and pursue participants after the protest has already ended, making delayed repercussions highly likely.



## HOW DO AUTHORITIES BLOCK PROTESTS SO THAT PEOPLE CANNOT GATHER TOGETHER?



Trains are running non-stop, skipping stations to prevent people from getting off and joining protests, and metro stations are closed to entry. Mobile phone service is being jammed.



## NO ONE WILL HELP

This state isn't due to apathy or a reluctance to protest. What's important is the lack of examples of victory over the system.

*«Look at Alexei Navalny – he's known worldwide, but has anyone managed to free him from prison? No. If no one comes to help public figures, what hope do ordinary citizens have? How will their loved ones survive? People are trying not to risk their families».*

# PROTESTS DON'T CHANGE ANYTHING

Without the ability to unite, out of fear of becoming an outcast or ruining their own life, people choose to stay at home. You can hold a protest, but it will not lead to anything changing, except for serious consequences for the individual.

*«I have been protesting since 2011. What has it changed? I am now in exile. And to my brother who remained in Russia, I say the same thing again and again: **survive - do not expose yourself.** A dictatorship is like a snake: **if you are not prepared to kill it, do not provoke it».***

# THE FEELING OF ISOLATION

It's not easy to leave Russia, which is partly why so many have stayed. And those who tried and returned have experienced problems: their bank card has been blocked, they have been rejected visas and residence permits or they've lost employment and therefore their means of living.

Some Russians **feel rejected by the outside world.**

# TRUST ITSELF HAS BECOME IMPOSSIBLE

*«Trust itself has become impossible. You fear provocateurs, informers, and denunciations at every step.*

*In this context, calls from abroad to “go out and overthrow Putin” infuriate me. They ignore the reality on the ground. **I already exist like an organism at the very bottom, without light, without air.** This is not life; it is survival.*

*But to go out and protest now would be to sign my own death warrant. I fear arrest. I fear torture. And yes, call me a rat if you like, **but I am responsible for my family».***



VISUAL  
PROTEST AND  
OTHER FORMS  
OF PROTEST  
REMAIN



NAVALNY MEMORIAL BENCHES IN THE HAGUE AND NEW YORK. AND WHAT ABOUT LUXEMBOURG?  
IT IS IMPORTANT TO SUPPORT THE FIGHT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN RUSSIA





# THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

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