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Number of Political Prisoners in Russia Jumps to 195, Memorial NGO Says in Annual List

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Alexander Avilov / Moskva News Agency

The number of political prisoners in Russia has nearly doubled over the past year, according to an annual report published by the Memorial Human Rights Center.

Memorial, one of Russia's oldest and most prestigious human rights organizations, publishes the annual list on Oct. 30 — the day of remembrance of the victims of political repressions in Russia. Other events that day included "Immortal Gulag" commemorations that were organized by local activists in cities across Russia, in which at least two people were detained by police.

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In its latest report, Memorial said that 195 individuals were being held as political prisoners in

Russia, up from 117 people one year ago.

The NGO noted that 115 new names had been added to the list in the past year, while 37 prisoners had been released.

“The real number of political prisoners and other individuals deprived of their freedom for political reasons in today’s Russia is undoubtedly much higher [than in the list],” the group added.

One new name in the list is Oyub Titiev, the head of Memorial’s branch in Russia’s republic of Chechnya, who was arrested in January and faces up to 10 years in prison on marijuana possession charges that critics say are politically motivated.

Memorial's list also included the 10 defendants of the controversial “New Greatness” case, most of whom are teenagers who prosecutors accuse of planning to topple the government.

Oleg Navalny — the brother of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny — was one of the individuals who had been released in the past year. He was set free in June after spending three and a half years behind bars over a fraud conviction.

“Most of the released prisoners fully served the unjust and unjustified punishment imposed on them by the court,” Memorial said.

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