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Russian Protest Fines Surge Fivefold Since 2012 — Study

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Alexander Zemlianichenko / AP / TASS

Fines for violating Russia's protest laws have increased fivefold in the past six years, an analysis of judicial data said.

Almost 6,500 people had cases brought against them for violating the law on organizing public meetings in 2012 and almost 4,500 in 2018, Russia's police-monitoring OVD-Info website said in research published Monday. Both 2012 and 2018 were election years when President Vladimir Putin secured two consecutive terms.

Related article: Putin Signs Law Increasing Fines for Violating Protest Rules

Average fines for violating the protest law grew almost fivefold from more than 3,500 rubles ($58) in 2012 to more than 17,200 rubles ($274) last year, OVD-Info said.

The law itself has ballooned in the 15 years since 2004, with authorities adding punishments

for actions including protesting without prior authorization and involving minors in protests.

OVD-Info said that minimum fines have grown from 1,000 rubles ($16) to 10,000 rubles ($160) since 2004, while repeat offenders now risk spending up to five years in jail.

“All this proves that the suppression of protest activity is on a mass scale and has been increasing in recent years,” the study’s authors said in a blog post.

In 2004-2018, OVD-Info said that judges heard more than 49,000 cases and handed out almost 161 million rubles ($2.5 million) in fines against more than 30,000 people overall.

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