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Drug Charges Are 'Routinely' Falsified in Russia, Most Russians Say

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A majority of Russians believe that police routinely fabricate drug charges, according to results published by the independent Levada Center polling agency Tuesday.

The survey was conducted in the wake of the high-profile drug trafficking arrest — and subsequent release over insufficient evidence — of investigative journalist Ivan Golunov last month. Critics said the charges against Golunov were fabricated, igniting a public debate about drug laws in Russia, which imprisons the highest number of people per capita in Europe for drug-related crimes.

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Two-thirds (66 percent) of Russian respondents believe falsified drug cases and police planting evidence on people is common practice in Russia, the survey said.

Only 18 percent said falsified cases were rare.

“The notion of total corruption in law enforcement agencies and the authorities has taken root in public consciousness,” Lev Gudkov, the head of Levada, told the RBC news website.

Most respondents (55 percent) say they believe the case will have no serious consequences for the police, versus 36 percent who said they would have serious consequences.

Meanwhile, most respondents (52 percent) said they would have a slim chance of “solving the problem” if they were wrongly detained, the survey said. Almost a quarter (23 percent) viewed their chances as average and less than one in 10 said they would be confident in dealing with the situation.

Levada conducted the survey among 1,608 respondents in 50 Russian regions between June 27 and July 4.

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