

# Russia Had 1,500 Political Emigres in 2021 – Rights Group

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**Alexander Avilov / Moskva News Agency**

More than 1,500 political activists and journalists left Russia in 2021 due to criminal prosecution or political pressure, according to a pro-democracy NGO's estimate [cited](#) by Russian media Thursday.

The U.S.-based Free Russia Foundation — which Russia blacklisted as an “[undesirable](#) organization” in 2019 — said its figure excludes family members or those who had left Russia for other, non-political reasons.

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The wave of political emigration began in spring 2021 as Russian security forces targeted people who had attended rallies in support of jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny, the Znak.com news website reported, citing Free Russia.

A growing number of Navalny-linked opposition figures have fled Russia in the months following a court ruling that outlawed the opposition leader's political and activist networks as "extremist." Several criminal cases have been opened against Navalny's associates and at least one network coordinator has been [jailed](#) under the charges.

Several [journalists](#) and opposition activists have also left the country amid the widening crackdown on dissent.

"The wave [of emigration] began to grow," Free Russia project manager Anton Mikhailchuk was quoted as saying.

"Then they went by segments: they pressure Navalny supporters to leave, they pressure journalists to leave, they pressure human rights activists to leave," he added.

Mikhailchuk named the ex-Soviet republics of Georgia, Lithuania and Ukraine as the most popular destinations for Russia's political emigres.

A study of official statistics published in October 2021 [estimated](#) that 5 million Russians have left the country during the 20 years of President Vladimir Putin's rule.

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