The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

# Russia Convicts 100 Army Deserters a Week – Mediazona

July 19, 2023



A mobilized Russian soldier at a military training ground in Crimea. **Viktor Korotayev / Kommersant**

Russia's military courts have convicted at least 100 deserters every week so far in 2023, the independent news outlet Mediazona reported Wednesday.

The soldiers are prosecuted under Russia's sweeping new laws that tighten punishments for wartime acts committed during mobilization, which is legally still in force despite the Kremlin's claims of its completion.

Russian courts in the first half of 2023 received 2,076 criminal cases against soldiers accused of abandoning their units without official leave, according to Mediazona's tally of military court records.

The figure is double the amount of cases registered in all of 2022 and three times the number in 2021, according to the outlet.

**Related article**: Russia Sentences 8 Mobilized Soldiers to Prison for Deserting in Ukraine

Other military service cases such as surrender, conscientious objection and looting remained "more or less the same" in 2023 despite the uptick in desertion cases, Mediazona said.

Unauthorized absence from units during mobilization, martial law or wartime is punishable by up to 10 years in prison.

Mediazona's previous investigation into Russia's desertion cases said a majority of the soldiers have received suspended sentences.

The lighter punishments allow the military to return the troops back to the frontline after standing trial and extract their loyalty under the threat of prison time.

On Tuesday, Mediazona noted a shift in the courts' rulings with mobilized soldiers receiving more prison sentences than contract soldiers.

Most of those convicted since March have been mobilized soldiers, according to Mediazona's latest investigation.

President Vladimir Putin has yet to lift his "partial" mobilization order despite announcing an end to the call-up campaign that sparked a mass exodus of military-age Russians last fall.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2023/07/19/russia-convicts-100-army-deserters-a-week-mediazona-a81889