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Russian Courts Hand Down Record Number of Life Sentences in 2025

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Russian judges sentenced 100 people to life imprisonment between January and November 2025, the highest annual total in at least two decades, the state-run TASS news agency reported Monday, citing data from Russia's Supreme Court.

The figure, recorded over an incomplete year, is nearly double the total for all of 2022 and marks a historic high in judicial statistics going back at least 20 years.

By comparison, courts issued 84 life sentences in 2005 and 2012, according to official data.

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The number of life sentences has risen steadily in recent years, with courts handing down 66 such verdicts in 2020, 47 in 2021, 58 in 2022, 78 in 2023 and 79 in 2024.

In total, courts issued 1,416 life sentences between 2005 and 2025.

The Supreme Court did not specify which criminal statutes were used to impose life sentences in 2025.

However, since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, courts have increasingly applied life terms under newly expanded provisions of the Criminal Code, including charges like treason, organizing acts of sabotage or terrorism and involvement in terrorist activity.

Life imprisonment is currently Russia's harshest form of punishment apart from the death penalty, which has been subject to a moratorium since 1997.

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