

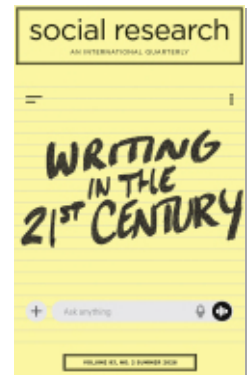


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Endangered Scholars Worldwide

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Endangered Scholars Worldwide

Attacks on higher education communities are occurring at an alarming rate worldwide, threatening the safety and well-being of scholars, students, and academic staff, as well as the autonomy of higher education institutions. While we continue to publish regular updates in *Social Research: An International Quarterly*, in response to a global increase in threats to academic freedom, Endangered Scholars Worldwide (ESW) has expanded its presence as an online publication under the auspices of the New University in Exile Consortium (www.newuniversityinexileconsortium.org), sharing frequent updates on new and developing cases in contribution to the Consortium's efforts to create a supportive intellectual community for threatened or exiled scholars.



For the most current information and ways in which you can be involved in our efforts to defend academic freedom and free expression, we invite you to visit our website www.endangeredscholarsworldwide.net.

If you are aware of a scholar or student whose case you believe we should investigate, please get in touch with us at esw@newschool.edu.

Thank you for your unwavering support.

Quarterly Report

Academic freedom conditions in Russia are among the worst in the world. The Academic Freedom Index of the Varieties of Democracy Institute now places Russia, which has experienced steady and substan-

tial decline since the 1990s, in the bottom 10–20 percent of countries worldwide (151st out of 179 countries). The reactionary authoritarian regime led by Vladimir Putin since 1999 is the main impetus behind this decline, and the war against Ukraine, which began with support for pro-Russia separatist governments in the Donbas and the annexation of Crimea in the spring of 2014 and escalated into a full-scale invasion in February 2022, has only increased the scale and magnitude of the repression of academic freedom in Russia.

The Russian government employs the full force of the law in its suppression of academic freedom. Two pieces of legislation are key. One is the 2015 law on “undesirable organizations,” which gives prosecutors, and hence the government, in the absence of judicial independence, the ability to prohibit the activities of organizations that are deemed to be threats to the constitutional order and the security of the state and the country. In March 2023, the Free University in Moscow, established in 2020 by scholars fired from their jobs for political reasons, was designated as an “undesirable organization” and subsequently forced to shut down. The Russian government uses this law to target foreign institutions as well. Recent entrants to the list include funding organizations such as the US Institute of International Education and the German Academic Exchange Service. There are also a dozen, mostly North American, universities and colleges on the list now, after Tufts University and Stanford University were added, respectively, in March and April 2026. The “undesirable organization” designation not only restricts academic exchange but also exposes Russian students, faculty, and staff currently affiliated with such organizations to legal sanctions, including fines, travel bans, and jail sentences.

Another key measure is the 2012 “foreign agents” law, under which individuals and organizations deemed to be under the influence of foreign actors are categorized as such by the government and face many restrictions that have been gradually expanded over time. The law is frequently used to target and punish academics who are politi-

cally opposed to the Putin government, especially since a 2022 expansion of the law prohibited “foreign agents” from being employed at public educational institutions. Examples include Yulia Galyamina, an academic, politician, and opposition activist, who was a professor in the Department of the Theory and Practice of Media Communications at the Institute of Social Sciences of the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration. Galyamina was declared a “foreign agent” in September 2022 and subsequently fired in December of that year. Another example is Mikhail Lobanov, a left-wing politician and labor leader who was a professor of mechanics and mathematics at Moscow State University until June 23, 2023, when he was declared a “foreign agent” and fired from his position. Lobanov was previously detained in December 2022 and May 2023 following police raids on his residence. He was forced to flee the country on July 10, 2023.

Russian academics risk severe forms of unjust punishment for expressing their views or simply doing research. Very frequently, they are targeted for voicing antiwar sentiments. Such is the situation of prominent sociologist Boris Kagarlitsky, who was declared a “foreign agent” in May 2022 and arrested in July 2023 on terrorism charges following the publication of a video deemed to be “justifying terrorism” in the Marxist online magazine *Rabkor*, of which Kagarlitsky is the editor. He was convicted in February 2024 to a five-year prison term that he is currently serving. More recently, the Russian government has targeted public figures who live abroad and are affiliated with the Russian Antiwar Committee, a civil society organization established in 2022 to coordinate the antiwar efforts of Russian émigrés and raise awareness against Russia’s war on Ukraine. Among them are Sergei Guriev, Dean of the London Business School, Konstantin Chumakov, professor at George Washington University and the University of Maryland, and Eugene Koonin, senior investigator at the US National Center for Biotechnology Information, who were indicted on October

14, 2025, under terrorism charges.

Silence on political subjects is not enough to protect Russian academics. As of January 2026, there were at least 31 imprisoned scholars and scientists in Russia, many of whom worked on hypersonic research and were charged with treason. One such academic is Alexander Shipliyuk, who was arrested in August 2022 and sentenced to 15 years in prison in September 2024 on treason charges, being accused of transferring state secrets related to hypersonic technology to the Chinese government during a 2017 academic conference in China. Following his arrest, academics at the Khristianovich Institute of Theoretical and Applied Mechanics in Siberia, of which Shipliyuk was the director, released a statement rejecting the accusations against him, stating that the persecution of academics for merely sharing research findings makes it practically impossible for them to do their jobs. Furthermore, detention conditions place the lives of academics at risk. Dmitry Kolker from the Institute of Laser Physics was undergoing treatment for late-stage pancreatic cancer in 2022 when he was arrested and died two days later in custody. A lawyer who in the past had represented scientists accused of leaking state secrets told the BBC in 2024 that while these scientists study topics that could be relevant for military research, none of them directly work on weapons development. Since the scientists are charged with treason, their trials are conducted under highly secretive conditions without much publicly available information.

Endangered Scholars Worldwide condemns the ongoing state repression of academic freedom in Russia, including coercive attempts to impose state ideology on higher education institutions, as well as the subjection of academics to undue carceral punishment for expressing their political views or for even merely their scientific activities. We invite the global community to join our call.