

# THE VERBOSE SILENCE OR THE HANDBOOK ON HOW TO GET INTO JAIL FOR A RIBBON

'EVERYBODY WANTS TO CHANGE  
THE WORLD  
EVERYBODY WANTS TO CHANGE  
THE WORLD  
BUT NO ONE NO ONE WANTS TO  
DIE'

MY CHEMICAL ROMANCE - NA NA NA  
SEPTEMBER 28 2008 .

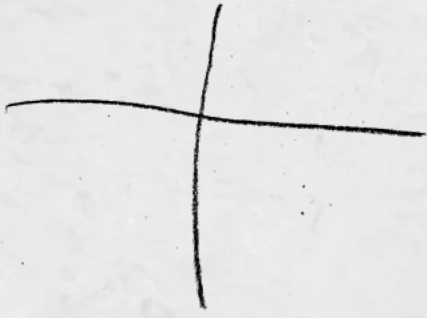
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Current events, to say the least, have taken us all by surprise and made the world shudder once again. As someone ethnically affiliated to one of the warring groups, a wave of horror, misunderstanding and endless flood of unanswered questions has overwhelmed me and plunged me into the black abyss of news without a chance to breathe or exhale.

I am Russian. That is something I can never change and something I've been running away from ever since I graduated high school. But to quote my own letter from 2020,

**"Whoever I am and wherever I am, I will forever remain a native Russian and represent my country."**

I can't change who I was born to be, but I can be a part of the change of how 'we' are perceived as a nation, by trying to be a good difference and an even better person.

I will write about war - not about the ruthless and inhuman bloodshed, but about people who put their lives at risk even without taking part in the fighting. But first I want you to think: what is the color of war? I guess, many will consider red; the color of blood, brutality, terror, rage. Or black - dirt, mourning, death. But in my opinion, war is colored in all the colors that the human eye can discern. It's not just about death and deprivation, about bloodshed and murder; it's about the bright blue sky that keeps your spirits up, the yellow sun that gives hope for a happy future, the colors of your own flag, your favorite jumper - everything that reminds you of how and why to keep on living and fighting. But perhaps it's worth stepping back from the poetry and the metaphorical nature of color in war and move on to those shades and combinations which could cripple a person's life.

At what point does wearing a ribbon of a certain color become illegal, as do the silent and non-violent expressions of support for innocent people dying in another country through the color of clothes become anti-political

and hostile? Where is the line that determines that during these times a certain color combination can lead a person to prison, and that one ribbon stands for patriotism, love of country and memory of the heroes who fought in the previous war, while another, carrying the message "~~no to war~~", will be recognized by the law enforcements as high treason? In this text I would like to take a closer look and delve into this alien ideology of idiocy, which divides people into 'right' and 'wrong'; the use of violence against the opposers of violence and the decisive role of color in this absurd question.

Long before the current events, the political regime in Russia began tightening the noose around the necks of civilians. Unfortunately, people outside of Russia are little aware of this, or at least few see the horror of the scale of what is happening. I will not draw any correlations with countries with a similar or worse regime, because I think that anyone who needs to do so will draw the parallels themselves. My job is to show how things are in my country, and to explain why this is relevant to the issue at hand.

Our constitution states that **everyone has freedom of speech and thought**<sup>1</sup>. We, as citizens of our country, have the right to express our opinions in any way we can, so long as it does not incite hatred and hostility. And yet, for many years now, people have been put behind bars for opposing violence, for expressing a position for peace, for the hope of a happy future with many opportunities. The basic right of freedom of expression through speech has been taken away, and taken away ~~illegally~~<sup>2</sup>. Many lives have already been ruined by countless baseless court sentences or ordered executions. The result was obvious and predicted by the puppeteers themselves - the people got scared and massively decided to keep silent, in order not to harm themselves or make things worse. Nevertheless, many people still disagree with the regime, and so bypassing the verbal expression of position was the visual: through art, fashion, color.

You can see this kind of silent yet vociferous protest all over Russia, which is both an endless source of inspiration for us citizens and a major hindrance for the state, which forces the authorities to do completely tragically absurd but nonetheless violent things, as people who think and have their own opinions are harder to control. One such high-profile example is the sensational photo of a woman from the Moscow subway, openly and vividly expressing solidarity with Ukraine in this terrible time (fig. 1). The headline to the photo states:

**«Sometimes the act of resistance doesn't have to be loud or bold, it just has to be».**<sup>3</sup>

1 [www.consultant.ru/document/cons\\_doc\\_LAW\\_28399/f703218d9357338507052de484404828b3da468e/](http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_28399/f703218d9357338507052de484404828b3da468e/)

2 [www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10610225/Protester-dragged-away-just-THREE-SECONDS-holding-sign-Moscow.html](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10610225/Protester-dragged-away-just-THREE-SECONDS-holding-sign-Moscow.html)

3 [www.twitter.com/bfreetheatre/status/1498029137189036032](https://www.twitter.com/bfreetheatre/status/1498029137189036032)



Beautiful and resonant. Unfortunately, I have no information on what happened to this woman later. Nevertheless, citizens of other countries who also disapprove of the war have a reasonable question: why don't we, as Russians, march in unison on the streets, declare our position openly and stop the ruthless bloodshed? Especially since the confrontation "does not have to be loud". Sadly, I can explain the difficulty of this with further examples.

On March 27, a picture and video of a single picket of a St. Petersburg woman were published in the 'P'YATNICA' telegram community. A girl in a white dress on the steps of the City Duma doused herself in red paint and began «calling out to our hearts, not our minds», as the poster at her feet indicated. The video shows her repeatedly saying «My heart bleeds», while another specifies that the performance lasted minutes at the most, until the girl fainted and taken to the police station<sup>4</sup>.



However, as I stated earlier, our freedom of speech has been taken away from us (illegally), so this case can be withdrawn as the case of a girl agitating for the citizens of St. Petersburg, with her words encouraging them to act. Thus, in contrast I would like to add such an absurd case, that at first it seems as some kind of silly joke or an alternate reality. According to Sibir.Realii, on March 6 in Irkutsk the police detained a Yandex.Lavka courier as he was wearing a yellow jacket (the company's corporate color) and a blue

backpack. He was taken to the station and had to leave his bike on the sidewalk<sup>5</sup>. Funny and sad at the same time, a person on Twitter perfectly expresses the situation with the words «yellow sun and blue sky, you're \*\*\* next!!!»<sup>6</sup>.

Another example of a peaceful picket is 'Women in Black', a movement organized these days by the Feministskoe Antivoennoe Soprotivlenie. The action itself appeared back in 1988, when Israeli women protested against the occupation

<sup>4</sup> [www.fontanka.ru/2022/03/27/70535558/](http://www.fontanka.ru/2022/03/27/70535558/)

<sup>5</sup> [www.sibreal.org/a/ukraina-nam-ne-vrag-v-56-gorodah-rossii-proshli-antivoennye-akcii-i-zaderzhaniya/31739151.html](http://www.sibreal.org/a/ukraina-nam-ne-vrag-v-56-gorodah-rossii-proshli-antivoennye-akcii-i-zaderzhaniya/31739151.html)

<sup>6</sup> [www.twitter.com/shipper\\_huipper/status/1500868529784082439](https://www.twitter.com/shipper_huipper/status/1500868529784082439)



of Palestine and the Israeli army's war crimes<sup>7</sup>. Every Friday women dressed in black clothes and stood silently in the streets and squares of their cities to commemorate those killed in military actions. In Russia in the 1990s, Women in Black went to the streets of Russian cities to protest the war in Chechnya.

FIG. 2. RUSSIA 2022. PHOTO CREDIT: FEMINISTSKOE ANTIVOENNOE SOPRO-  
TIVLENIE. / TELEGRAM [HTTPS://T.ME/FEMAGAINSTWAR](https://t.me/femagainstwar)



Nowadays, the silent action is directed against the war in Ukraine, as well as to mourn the victims of this horror (fig. 2). As the 'FAS' source instructs,

«dress in all black, this is an action of protest and mourn; don't bring posters, better take white roses (this is a reference to the anti-fascist action of German students during World War II); there is nothing to detain you for, but just in case, prepare to be detained»<sup>8</sup>.

It might seem unreasonable – why detaining girls dressed in black and holding white roses? However, as later reported in the original source and in *Wonderzine* online magazine, two girls were detained for 9 days on charges of organizing this peaceful protest<sup>9</sup>. As was later added in the channel, «how agonizing the system is if it sees danger in human mourning». It's impossible not to agree. We have an ironic expression: «Russia is for the sad». Apparently, there is no place for the sad in Russia either.

Naturally, it is the Ukrainians who are the most likely to accuse the Russians of inaction at this point, and one can understand them: if I were in their shoes, I think I too would blame the citizens of the attacking country for passiveness and, consequently, silent approval. Therefore, I would like to finish this text with an agitation based on the experience of Ukrainians: for many years the nation has been seeking a change of power in their country, and in support of one

<sup>7</sup> [www.britannica.com/topic/Women-in-Black](http://www.britannica.com/topic/Women-in-Black)

<sup>8</sup> [www.t.me/femagainstwar](https://t.me/femagainstwar)

<sup>9</sup> [www.wonderzine.com/wonderzine/life/news/262431-women-in-black](https://www.wonderzine.com/wonderzine/life/news/262431-women-in-black)



of the presidential voters people wore orange clothing elements or ribbons. It was also a kind of protest - a protest against the current structure of the country, an expression of mass discontent and collective opinion. This movement was later called «The Orange Revolution» (fig. 3), and it paid off; people got what they wanted<sup>10</sup>. So now those



who understand the danger of expressing their opinions on the territory of Russia, but who want to inspire us to protest against the so-called «special operation» and to express our position and solidarity with those on the other side of the conflict - the side overwhelmed by fear, madness, cruelty and death - have suggested creating a similar movement in Russia, but using green ribbons - the color of peace, spring and new life<sup>11</sup>.

Interesting is that the very next day after the news were spread, I saw plenty of reports that people with green ribbons on their clothes were being caught by the police, and that the action itself was especially designed by the law enforcements to make it easier to catch the protesters. And what scares me at this point is two things: that people are so terrified that they are willing to believe this, and that in our alternate absurd reality this might actually be true.

To be honest, I had a hard time starting to write this text. I was waiting until the last moment, unable to find the strength to delve headfirst into all the horror that I have been watching and reading daily for the last month anyway. I could have chosen a different topic, but I knew that now it was my duty as a person involved in the situation in one way or another, it was my responsibility - notwithstanding the fear and all the danger, to express my position, to show, at least superficially, the situation in the country where I come from, to use my freedom of speech and to show that, as best I can, my fellow countrymen, antiwar activists and protesters in Russia are calling on people to take the blinkers off their eyes, expand their horizon and see the full picture. I don't know where this will lead and what will happen next, how many more people will suffer and how many more lives will be ruined. No one knows. All these color protests are protests for peaceful skies, and I truly hope that they can lead us to the desired result, because so far, they only lead people to jail. But I and those who have not yet lost faith believe that peace will come, that our words and silent appeals will not go in vain, and art... Art is eternal.

<sup>10</sup> [www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2013/11/26/ukraine-protests-and-memories-of-the-orange-revolution/](http://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2013/11/26/ukraine-protests-and-memories-of-the-orange-revolution/)

<sup>11</sup> [www.paperpaper.ru/papernews/2022/3/13/vizhu-na-ulicah-peterburga-mnozhestvo-z/](http://www.paperpaper.ru/papernews/2022/3/13/vizhu-na-ulicah-peterburga-mnozhestvo-z/)

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