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Russian prisons don't make one healthier, and many political prisoners had to face it firsthand. Vladimir Kara-Murza has lost almost 25 kg behind bars. Alexey Navalny has been basically tortured in a disciplinary cell for the past 6 months, his health deteriorating continuously. Alexey Gorinov, incarcerated for declaring a minute of silence in memory of the killed Ukrainian children, had to spend a few months in a hospital due to hyperthermia.

I've managed to keep my own physical and mental health intact so far. Before getting arrested I had a chance to do medical check ups, fixed my health up where needed, got some dental work done. And now I make sure to look after myself, to not catch colds, I jog in the courtyard, do pull ups on a bar, protect myself from depression and low spirits. This is probably the most important part, to not get depressed. If you let yourself hit the emotional rock bottom, the physical diseases will follow. I've witnessed it here aplenty.

Working helps. I read a lot every day, write a lot, including composing texts. Every week I receive letters from my supporters and sympathizers, they are an immense support. And knowing that I'm right gives me strength as well.

It is soon about to be a year since my arrest. I'm still in Moscow, in a 4 person cell of an isolated special unit. But because I've been convicted, and the court dismissed the appeal against the sentence, I shall get transferred into a colony in one of the regions of Russia.

2

You are correct. I knew that the arrest was imminent. A week after invading Ukraine, president Vladimir Putin has signed into law a legislative package on military censorship. Any criticism against the military leadership, detached judgements about the war, voicing opinions that are different from the official — all of it became criminal, with large prison times pending. Putin has basically criminalised the truth about the war.

Regardless, I have not gone silent, and considered it my duty to inform our society of the truths of this war, of the occupation of Ukrainian territories, of tens of thousands of people dying and millions becoming refugees, of the crimes committed by Russian soldiers and officers.

I was not ready to come to terms with the fact that Putin brings death and destruction in the name of our people, using them as a cover. My online appearances and public speaking have garnered large attention and reached audiences of millions. So very soon I began to feel pressure from the siloviks. They conducted searches in the

municipality I was head of. I was being openly followed. I was getting fines for “discrediting the army” and countless threats.

A month before the arrest I was directly told that if I didn't immigrate in the nearest future, I would end up behind bars. Why didn't I leave? To be honest, even the way and the fact that the question was asked, felt humiliating. Russia is my home. I was born and raised here, I love my country and want the best for it. Besides, I was aware that it would be impossible to remain a Russian politician outside of Russia, away from my supporters and my people. Even in prison I can still remain a politician but not outside of the country. That's exactly what Putin was counting on, that all his opponents get scared and leave, and he would explain to the people that we are the foreign agents who ran away back to their masters. That's why I've made the decision to stay, push back and hold my ground, despite the obvious risks. And though my current predicament is what it is, I am sure that I've made the right choices. Yes, I've lost my personal freedom, but I've kept my voice, made it sound louder and more convincing. Even though my voice is not speaking through internet streams but from a court's tribune and from a prison cell, it is still the voice of a person who believes in what he says and is ready to pay a high price for his beliefs.

More than that, I find it instrumental that there is a voice against the war and Putin's dictatorship to be heard inside of Russia, not only abroad. This is saving at least somewhat my country's reputation.

3

Considering how harsh and brutal Russian authorities are acting, protests have been taking place, and not too few of them. During the war tens of thousands of my compatriots have been detained, arrested, brutally fined, fired from their jobs, bullied. In the first weeks people have been taking to the streets every day. They got beaten up, tortured in police stations, thrown in jails. Putin had to break the protesters over his knee, figuratively, by using every repressive mechanism at his disposal. Still the protests continue throughout the entire country. People are getting jailed for likes on social media, for private conversations, for having the colours of the Ukrainian flag in elements of their clothing. A man was sentenced to 2 years in jail for the fact that his daughter made an antiwar drawing in a school class. A guy went to prison because the police patrol noticed that he had been reading dissident media on his private phone on the subway. A retired woman ended up behind bars for ripping off a poster on a bus that contained the insignia of support for the military actions in Ukraine. There's a multitude of stories like this. They are the realities of modern-day Russia.

I want you to understand: there has been a full-blown police dictatorship established in Russia, and the society is paralysed with fear. It's not excited about the militarists' ideas, as many in the West think but paralysed by fear. You can of course judge my fellow Russians for being afraid of the maniac in power, whose hands are soaked in the

blood of tens of thousands of victims. But before you judge the Russians, ask yourself – wouldn't you be afraid?

5+7

There are no countries destined for authoritarianism, as there are no people that don't deserve freedom. The path that Russia is currently on has been walked by many countries before. Germany used to be ruled by absolute evil that was destroying people on an industrial scale and set off the most horrible way in human history. But the Germans were able to make it out of this darkness and created an amazing society based on humanism, justice and progress. In Poland and Romania the special forces would steamroll any attempt for thinking differently. But with time the societies there made away with the oppression and became democratic. Japan covered a dramatic distance from militarism and imperialism towards democracy and is currently one of the most thriving countries on the planet. How is Russian different? Why would anybody give my people up for lost? I don't think it's fair.

True, Russian society has made many mistakes after the fall of the USSR. Unfortunately we have allowed the KGB people back into the Kremlin. We have poorly held our authorities accountable, we allowed for usurpation, we turned out to be vulnerable and susceptible to propoganda and manipulation. We are responsible for our own mistakes and will be paying the price for many years to come, probably even after Putin's gone. But let's not forget the impact that my people have had and keep having on the global culture and science. We are not a nation of thieves and killers. We are a nation that's been taken hostage by thieves and killers. But sooner or later we will make it back onto the path of civilised development.

6

The most efficient and effective sanctions are the ones that target the pockets of Russian oligarchs, siloviks, corruptioneers and propogandists. These are the people that Putin's regime is being held in place by. In return he provides them with larger-than-life incomes that allow Putinist elites to become part of the Western consumer society and lead lavish lifestyles of Arab sheikhs.

Blocking their accounts, arresting their mansions, superyachts, personal jets, and other personal sanctions have rid them of their privileges and created a rupture in the foundation of Putin's rule, thus provoking a split between the elites. Putin has become toxic for his own environment, so continuing to press down on this tendency is very reasonable. The sanctions against the military and industrial complex are as well. Unfortunately our authorities use the tanks, aviation and rockets not to defend our land but to invade others'. This needs to be pushed back against.

But putting pressure on regular Russians that are not supporting Putin and are hiding abroad from mobilisation and repressions I don't find right. The attempt of some of the Western politicians to make the Russian people, including the antimilitary part of our

society, responsible for the actions of the Kremlin junta is a mistake. Such positions and policies help the propaganda by giving them strong arguments, help to create the enemy image, speculating on Russophobia. In the end of the day it allows Putin to hide his crimes behind the regular Russian folks.

Using very popular currently military metaphors, I'll say that the sanctions should be used like the newest precision-guided munitions to target the critical infrastructure and decision making centres and not a mass destruction missile, targeting places where large numbers gather, without clarifying who is guilty and deserves punishment, who is a hostage and who was just passing by.

8

The war should end with several consequences.

First, by returning to Ukraine the territories that are internationally recognised according to the agreements of 1991. Second, by paying up compensation to Kyiv for the horrifying damages of the military aggression. These should be probably made from International reserves of Russia and partially the income from sales of raw materials. Thirdly, handing the war criminals, including the political and military leadership of current Russia, over to the International Criminal Court. These individuals need to be judged and imposed lawful sentences on.

And lastly, Russia has to transition to a different political regime. Our society needs to leave behind imperialistic politics, build good neighbourly relations with the world outside, embark on the path toward freedom, democracy and humanism. If it doesn't happen, I'm afraid, even a truce won't keep us safe from a new war of massive proportions. It is instrumental to create mechanisms that guarantee that this will never happen again.