

**RUSSIA'S OTHER WAR: PATRIARCHAL CULTURE AND  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE. THE #ЯНЕБОЮСЬСКАЗАТЬ  
(#IAMNOTAFRAIDTOSPEAK) JULY 2016  
CAMPAIGN ON VKONTAKTE**

**Ioana-Mădălina Miron\***

© STUDIA UBB. EUROPAEA. Published by Babeş-Bolyai University.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons  
Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0  
International License.

---

DOI: 10.24193/subbeuropaea.2024.1.13

Published Online: 2024-06-30

Published Print: 2024-06-30

---

**Abstract:** *This article is dedicated to a controversial topic for Russian society, namely the campaign #ЯнеБоюсьСказать (#IamNotAfraidToSpeak) that took place in VKontakte's Russian speaking community in July 2016. First the article is based on a theoretical framework that draws attention to the concept of contentious politics and feminist movement. Second, I analysed the messages associated with #IamNotAfraidToSpeak, and argue that the campaign raised the visibility of the problem of domestic violence and patriarchal culture in the post-Soviet Russia, and this helped increase the significance of women's linguistic agency and made #IamNotAfraidToSpeak the first large-scale feminist movement in Russia. Moreover, in addition to the theoretical background, the paper focuses on a case study: The #ЯнеБоюсьСказать(#IamNotAfraidToSpeak) campaign of July 2016 on VKontakte.*

**Keywords:** *gender-based violence in Russia, feminist movements, former Soviet, flashmob, #IamNotAfraidToSpeak, VKontakte.*

## **Introduction**

The campaign #ЯнеБоюсьСказать (in English #IamNotAfraidToSpeak) started on Russian VKontakte on July 5, 2016. The hashtag initially appeared in Ukraine, when activist Anastasia Melnychenko encouraged women to fight against misogyny and the attitude of victim blaming in Ukrainian society by speaking about the sexual assaults they experienced during their lifetime. The

---

\* Ioana-Mădălina Miron is a PhD Student at the Faculty of European Studies, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj Napoca, Romania. Contact: ioana.miron@ubbcluj.ro.

post gained widespread popularity very rapidly and within less than 24 hours a similar campaign was created by women in Russia by altering the original hashtag (by changing one letter, ukr. #ЯнеБоюсьСказати) to Russian.<sup>1</sup> During the entire month of July, thousands of Russian women shared their stories on social media while others joined the discussion and expanded it to traditional media, including Russian TV channels. From the perspective of Structuration Theory, one argues that the campaign drew much attention and challenged feminist discourse in Russia. Being the first large-scale manifestation of women's solidarity in modern Russia, the #ЯнеБоюсьСказать campaign, opposed Structure, the "recurrent patterned arrangements which influence or limit the choices and opportunities available."<sup>2</sup>

Anthony Giddens saw structure as "a virtual order of transformative relations", "social systems, as reproduced social practices, do not have structures but rather exhibit structural properties and that structure exists, as time-space presence, only in its instantiations in such practices and as memory traces orienting the conduct of knowledge human agents."<sup>3</sup> Studying the Russian women's movement from the perspective of a discursive approach helps identify this kind of activism's potential and the opportunities it offers for women's solidarity at the level of language and consciousness and for collective identity building. Discursive patterns that permeated the public VKontakte posts related to #ЯнеБоюсьСказать touched upon various aspects of sexual violence and made social interactions more explicit in terms of issues concerning gender equality problems.

The objective of this article has more aspects. First the analysis is based on a theoretical framework that draws attention to the concept of contentious politics and feminist movement. Second, I analysed the messages associated with #IamNotAfraidToSpeak, and argue that the campaign raised the visibility of the problem of domestic violence and patriarchal culture in post-Soviet Russia. Several women who decided to

---

<sup>1</sup> Anastasia Bondareva, "#яБоюсьСказать. Мережею шириться флешмоб проти замовчування насильства" в *Комсомольская Правда*, 2016 [<https://life.pravda.com.ua/society/2016/07/5/214776/>], 19.09.2023.

<sup>2</sup> Chris Barker and Emma Jane, *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*, London: Sage Publications, 2016, p. 448.

<sup>3</sup> Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Introduction of the Theory of Structuration*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986, p. 17.

reveal their personal experiences and others who stood with them against domestic violence, helped increase the significance of women's linguistic agency and made #IamNotAfraidToSpeak the first large-scale feminist movement in Russia until now. I will examine the specificity of the #ЯнеБоюсьСказать campaign and argue it was predominantly of a grass-roots nature where self-organization and participation of ordinary people were crucial to it. It differs from the #MeToo campaign which exploded after The New York Times published allegations of sexual misconduct against Harvey Weinstein in October of 2017. The latter campaign, operating in the Western context, was largely initiated, and led by celebrities. In Russia this campaign did not have so much support.

### Theoretical background

**Feminist movements** find themselves on the longer-term end of the spectrum, having an exceptionally long history. This is probably why it is feminist movement studies that have yielded a conceptualization of political generations in social movements. It's first used in a feminist context by Beth Schneider,<sup>4</sup> the concept of political generations has been developed by Whittier.<sup>5</sup> In her study on the persistence of the radical women's movement in the United States, Whittier defines a political generation as a group of people who became politicised at the same moment and have thus made similar political experiences. Studying feminists of various generations, Whittier finds that women who joined the movement during its "heyday" in the 1960s and 1970s share several key elements of collective identity, which sets them apart from those who became feminists in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>6</sup> However, examining political generations and the shifts in feminist collective identity produced by them reveals how the movement endures and changes over time. I draw upon Whittier's concept of feminist political generations to consider the relationship between the women's movement of the 90s, and more specifically its feminist segment, and the contemporary feminist movement in Russia. The concept of political generation is more productive to describe the relationship between these two groups of feminists in Russia

---

<sup>4</sup> Beth Schneider, "Political Generations, and the Contemporary Women's Movement" in *Sociological Inquiry*, vol. 58, (1), 1988, pp. 4-21.

<sup>5</sup> Nancy Whittier, *Feminist Generations: The Persistence of the Radical's Women's Movement*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 17.

than, for instance, the widely used term wave<sup>7</sup> it has more analytical clarity and links differences between groups that discovered feminism at various moments to the political contexts in which this occurred. By studying feminist movement communities, researchers have produced a powerful argument against imagining movements, as is common in the contentious politics framework, as waves of mobilisation. Arguing against representations of “cultural feminism” as depoliticized, feminist movement researchers suggest that feminist culture produced in movement communities through their institutions and events, such as feminist bookstores, concerts, and festivals, is political both because it helps sustain the movement through periods of hostility and because it challenges the dominant culture by providing alternative models of being a woman.<sup>8</sup> By studying the forms of action used by feminist movements and the meanings attached to these forms of action by movement members, feminist movement research has challenged the dichotomies of mobilisation/abeyance and politics/culture that have dominated in social movement studies. I will argue in the following, this assessment reflects the perspective of many in the feminist scene in Russia. At the same time, many participants in the feminist movement rather endorse a contentious politics perspective on collective action.

**Contentious politics** is a central approach in social movement studies that is widely used to this day focuses on contentious politics. In this approach, contention is understood as making claims to those in power, usually governments, by engaging in public collective protest<sup>9</sup>. When contentious action is sustained and organised, researchers qualify it as a social movement.<sup>10</sup> In contrast to institutional politics, contentious action is practised by “ordinary people” who lack access to institutional channels or

---

<sup>7</sup> Linda Nicholson, “Feminism in Waves: Useful Metaphor or Not?” in *Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies Research*, vol. 12, (4), New York: Routledge, 2010, pp. 34-39 [<https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/wgss/30/>], 22.09.2023.

<sup>8</sup> Verta Taylor and Leila J. Rupp, “Women’s Culture and Lesbian Feminist Activism: A Reconsideration of Cultural Feminism” in *Signs* 19 (1), 1993, pp. 32–61 [<https://www.jstor.org/stable/3174744>], 22.09.2023.

<sup>9</sup> See Sergiu Mișcoiu, *Le Front National et ses répercussions sur l'échiquier politique français 1972-2002*, Cluj-Napoca: Editura Fundației pentru Studii Europene, 2005, pp. 5-9.

<sup>10</sup> Sidney Tarrow and Charles Tilly, *Contentious Politics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, p. 7.

challenge authorities in fundamental ways.<sup>11</sup> For this reason, contentious action is typically understood to take the form of protest: demonstrations, sit-ins, strikes, etc. The involvement of governments is central to the definition of politics from the contentious politics perspective, when social movements do not involve governments, they are labelled “apolitical”.<sup>12</sup> Several concepts developed in the paradigm of contentious politics, including contentious action, protest cycles, movement resources, and political opportunities, are relevant for the discussion of the contemporary feminist movement in Russia.

### **Patriarchal culture in Russia. Domestic violence and the government's reaction**

Feminist theorists have shown that violence is gendered and that most violent acts are committed by men therefore cannot be observed outside the concept of gender. Australian sociologist Raewyn Connell defines gender as “the structure of social relations that centres on the reproductive arena and set of practices that bring reproductive distinctions between bodies into social processes.”<sup>13</sup> Genders are socially constructed in terms of features and behaviours and are considered masculine and feminine. In many patriarchal cultural contexts, masculinity is associated with strength and dominance, femininity with weakness. According to The World Health Organization (WHO), gender-based violence against women is one of the most important global problems as of 2017: “Global estimates published by WHO indicate that about 1 in 3 (35%) of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence on non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime.”<sup>14</sup> In Russian society, as in many others, patriarchy links gender to the issue of power. In her book *The Manifesto of the Feminist Movement of Russia (Манифест феминистского движения России)* Dr. Olgerta Kharitonova states that “men make women culturally invisible and use their social power to create a wall of silence

---

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, loc. cit.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 8.

<sup>13</sup> Raewyn Connell, *Gender, and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009, p. 31.

<sup>14</sup> The World Health Organization, *Violence against Women*, November 29, 2017 [<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs239/en/>], 20.09.2023.

around those who are in pain, around women whom they use.”<sup>15</sup> In the past, the Soviet Union preached that it was a society that had achieved the complete equality of women and men. While this may be true with regards to some areas of social life, for example women’s employment, various scholars have argued that the extent of emancipation during the Soviet reign was in fact not as large as was proclaimed. “The Soviet state promoted and institutionalised a distinctive gender order which has had a lasting impact on gender relations and gender identities in post-Soviet Russia.”<sup>16</sup> The 1990s constituted a rupture in policy terms but not in the behaviour of men and women, which continued to be structured by Soviet gender norms.<sup>17</sup> Contemporary statistics on violence related crimes against women in Russia, including domestic violence, are imprecise. According to Russian Government Statistics, 24.058 women were victims of domestic violence in 2017.<sup>18</sup>



Fig. 1. Victims of domestic violence in 2017

Men 11.821

Children 2.432

Women 24.058

<sup>15</sup> Ольгерта Харитоновна, *Манифест феминистского движения России*, Екатеринбург: Издательские решения, мужчины делают женщин культурно невидимыми и используют свою социальную власть, чтобы создать стену молчания вокруг тех, кто страдает, вокруг женщин, которых они используют, 2015, с.61.

<sup>16</sup> Sarah Ashwin, “Gender in Russia: State Policy and Lived Reality”, in Graeme Gill (ed.), *Routledge Handbook of Russian Politics and Society*, London: Routledge, 2012, p. 329.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>18</sup> Константин Лаикам, *Женщину и мужчину России*, Federal Service of State Statistics Report, Moscow: Rosstat, 2016, p.185.

Russian law does not encourage reporting domestic violence to police. Russia has no law protecting individuals against sexual harassment. "According to reconstructed statistics, in Russia, every forty minutes a woman dies at the hands of a close male: her husband, cohabitant, father or friend. Domestic violence is the same as femicide, both being based on the belief that a woman is not an equal person to a man."<sup>19</sup>

In the mid-1980s, under Gorbachev, Perestroika gave life to the incipient women's rights movement in Russia. Between 1993 and 1997, the first 14 crisis centres for women appeared in Russia distributing literature and providing safe locations to those facing violence. By 1996, an estimated 400 civil society groups existed that were focused on the advancement of women's rights. Economic decline following the collapse of the Soviet Union thrust many Russian women into the workforce to make up for declining incomes as their husbands lost work. Consequently, many households no longer had a man as the primary breadwinner.<sup>20</sup>

To many in the Church and politics alike, re-criminalizing domestic violence would run against traditional values.<sup>21</sup> In the Russian Orthodox tradition, the family is a small church meaning that state interference in family matters like domestic violence would be tantamount to restricting religious rights. The religious leaders, like Dimitry Smirnov, a Russian Orthodox archbishop, also worry that laws criminalising domestic violence would break up the family unit leaving Russian children adopted by homosexuals.<sup>22</sup>

Putin has weaponized the issues of domestic violence to create a divide between the West and Russia. After refusing to ratify the 2014

---

<sup>19</sup> Ольгерта Харитоновна, *Манифест феминистского движения России*, Екатеринбург: Издательские решения, 2015, с.24. По реконструированной статистике, в России каждые сорок минут женщина умирает от рук близкого мужчины: мужа, сожителя, отца или друга. Домашнее насилие — это то же самое, что и феминизм, поскольку оба они основаны на убеждении, что женщина не равна мужчине.

<sup>20</sup> Kay Rollins, "Putin's Other War: Domestic Violence, Traditional Values and Masculinity in Modern Russia" in *Harvard International Review*, 2022 [<https://hir.harvard.edu/putins-other-war/>], 22.09.2023.

<sup>21</sup> This is not only the case of Russia, but also of other mainly Orthodox countries. See Sergiu Gherghina, Sergiu Mişcoiu, "Faith in a New Party: The Involvement of the Romanian Orthodox Church in the 2020 Election Campaign" in *Politics, Religion & Ideology*, Vol. 23, Issue 2, 2022, pp. 226-228.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*.

Istanbul Convention, a major international convention about preventing violence against women, Russia said that it found the Convention to be inconsistent with the principal approaches of the Russian Federation to the protection and promotion of traditional moral and family values. This division between Russia and the West has only encouraged an US versus THEM mentality among the Russian public. After a new round of cries by feminist activists for an anti-domestic violence law in 2020, mass vigils emerged around the country to protest Western liberalism. Meanwhile, Russian priests took to the news to lament the forces of globalisation. While isolating Russia from the rest of the West on this issue may create moral sovereignty for the country, it also acts as a form of perverse nationalism.<sup>23</sup> By defining Russian values in opposition to Western ones, Putin can mobilise tradition and religion in the service of a constructed national identity. Because traditional values emphasise clear gender roles for men and women, perhaps the more subtle way in which Putin's emphasis on traditional values has enabled the rise in domestic violence is through his use of masculinity.<sup>24</sup>

### **#ЯнеБоюсьСказать: A brief history of the hashtag campaign**

The #ЯнеБоюсьСказать campaign triggered widespread hashtag activism to further the feminist cause of fighting violence against women. On July 5, 2016, Anastasia Melnychenko, the head of NGO Studena (whose main activities focus on social adaptation of military veterans, gender equality and human rights activism) (NGO Studena 2018) launched a campaign on Facebook under the Ukrainian hashtag #ЯнеБоюсьСказать with the following request: "I want women to speak today. Let us talk about the violence that most of us have experienced."<sup>25</sup> After describing her own traumatic experiences with sexual assault, Melnychenko concluded her post with the words: "It's important for us women to talk about our experiences. It is important to make them visible. Please speak. #IamNotAfraidToSpeak".<sup>26</sup> The campaign stayed in active mode for one month. The post of Melnychenko received over 2,000 comments with many later additions in 2017 and 2018. Thousands of women responded to

---

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>25</sup> Anastasia Melnychenko on Facebook, [Private page], 2016

[<https://www.facebook.com/nastya.melnychenko/posts/10209108320800151>], 19.09.2023.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem.*



Melnychenko's call to share their experiences. Less than a day after the campaign was launched in Ukraine, shares were expanded to Russian Facebook and the hashtag was translated into Russian #ЯНеБоюсьСказать. From then on, the two campaigns developed simultaneously within Ukraine and Russia. Studies have shown that hashtag activism has become a new and popular form of mobilisation in recent years. As a social phenomenon, it started on the platform Facebook and continued on the Russian platform VKontakte. Hashtag activism, a term that entered the public consciousness when New York Times media columnist David Carr wrote of the phenomenon, gives communicators an ability to streamline their messaging on the micro-blogging social networking platform. The hashtag, a function of Twitter that allows users to cluster their tweets around a single issue or focus, has garnered growing media interest in the wake of well-publicised efforts stemming from the Arab Spring and Occupy movements.<sup>27</sup> After the events of the Arab Spring, activists resorted to using hashtags to attract public attention on a wide range of issues on Twitter, and various other social media platforms such as Facebook. An important difference between hashtag platforms relates to post limitations. In 2016, tweets on Twitter were limited to 140 characters<sup>28</sup> whereas Facebook offered authors the wherewithal to narrate and detail their stories more emotionally (e.g., Melnychenko's post had 2,475 characters). Hashtags have become, in effect, a "Wikipedia database" of social media platforms. In terms of hashtag campaigns, one could easily navigate and find updated news regarding a topic framed by hashtags and every participant becomes akin to a news reporter, thus helping social media platforms become (uncensored and emotional) forums for public debates on crucial social issues.

The environment in Russia where the #ЯНеБоюсьСказать campaign developed, was not all comparable to the one in which #MeToo movement gained traction. Russian civil society differs to what exists in many other

---

<sup>27</sup> Derek Moscato, "Media Portrayals of Hashtag Activism: A Framing Analysis of Canada's #Idlenomore Movement" in *Media and Communication* vol. 4, no. 2, p. 3 [https://www.doi.org/10.17645/mac.v4i2.416], 19.09.2023.

<sup>28</sup> Kurt Wagner, "Twitter Is Testing a Big Change: Doubling the Length of Tweets from 140 to 280 Characters" in *Vox*, September 26, 2017 [https://www.vox.com/2017/9/26/16364002/twitter-longer-tweets-character-limit-140-280], 19.09.2023.

countries, particularly in many European nations and North America, where campaigns of a protest nature are not uncommon. Recent political actions relating to “the regime’s restrictions on the right to public protest and on the independence of the media.”<sup>29</sup> This a complicated environment in which Russian citizens to have their voices heard.

In March 2017, a victim named Diana Shurygina was subjected to public condemnation and mass internet-bullying. The Burger King Company in Russia created an advertisement wherein a girl without a visible face was painted mimicking a hand gesture used by Diana to indicate how little vodka she had in her bloodstream at the time of her attack. In the advertisement, the gesture indicated that the promotion would be limited in duration. The Burger King restaurant chain removed from its VKontakte community an advertising poster that used the image of a minor rape victim, Diana Shurygina, from the national TV show “Let Them Talk” (Пусть говорим).<sup>30</sup> Under the material, administrators of the Burger King community, in response to the indignation of users, joked, including about the prison sentence that Sergei Semenov received for raping Shurygina.<sup>31</sup> Immediately after the verdict was announced, support groups for the victim (more than 8 thousand subscribers) and the convicted person (more than 17 thousand) appeared on VKontakte. The release of the program provoked the appearance of many fake Shurygina pages on VKontakte and memes with her photographs. All of them are based on photographs of the girl or screenshots of the program “Let Them Talk.” The girl is ridiculed for drinking alcohol or directly blamed for what happened.<sup>32</sup> On 27 February 2017, Burger King removed from its community on the social network VKontakte

---

<sup>29</sup> Janet Elise Johnson and Arino Saarinen, “Twenty-First-Century Feminisms under Repression: Gender Regime Change and the Women’s Crisis Center Movement in Russia” in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 38, no. 3, 2013, pp. 543-567.

<sup>30</sup> Медуза, «Burger King удалил рекламу с образом несовершеннолетней жертвы изнасилования», 2017 [<https://meduza.io/news/2017/02/17/burger-king-udalil-reklamu-s-obrazom-nesovershennoletney-zhertvy-iznasilovaniya>], 20.09.2023.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>32</sup> Медуза, «Кто такая Диана Шурыгина и почему ее так много обсуждают? Пользователи соцсетей не поверили жертве изнасилования и начали ее травлю» [<https://meduza.io/feature/2017/02/08/kto-takaya-diana-shurygina-i-pochemu-ee-tak-mnogo-obsuzhdaut>], 20.09.2023.

the advertisement.<sup>33</sup> Victim-blaming in Russian society is quite common. The above-mentioned case regularly faulted the single women appearing on them for their inability to keep man, often criticising their wardrobe and behaviour. The woman may be publicly condemned or subjected to ridicule in some manner and this while coping with her own sense of guilt and shame for what happened, in Russian society such victims are pushed-back against the stereotype that only women who dressed sexually provoked men's aggression. Public discourse and the way experiences of sexual violence are narrated fundamentally affect how the issue is treated by the public, legal system, and its institutions.

Analysing the VKontakte's campaign for violence against women, their participants explained their motives as the desire to change the public mood against victims of sexual assault, encouraging people to express solidarity with other women: "I hate violence. Read the stories on the hashtag, read the comments. You will understand a lot. Girls! You will realise that you are not alone. And now I want to say, girls, my darlings, my bold ones I am with you. Thousands of stories with the hashtag #ЯнеБоюсьСказать eloquently illustrate why we need it; I need this so as not to be afraid. I need it to fight, I need it to change this. I need this to win."<sup>34</sup> The last comment touches on a very important topic: this campaign was the first large-scale manifestation of women's solidarity in Russia. As the press secretary of Transparency International Russia, Anastasia Karimova, noted: "It seems to me that what arose was a request for a feminist discourse, which was previously not present in Russia...What is happening now with this campaign is quite in line with the actualization of feminism and the struggle for women's rights in general." On VKontakte many posts followed the

---

<sup>33</sup> Афиша, «Burger King удалил рекламу с образом несовершеннолетней жертвы изнасилования», 2017 [<https://daily.afisha.ru/news/6458-burger-king-udalil-reklamu-s-zhertvoy-iznasilovaniya-posle-kritiki-v-internete/>], 21.09.2023.

<sup>34</sup> Кризисный центр для женщин, 2017 [<https://crisiscenter.ru/pochemu/>], Я ненавижу насилие. Читайте истории по хештегу, читайте комментарии. Вы многое поймете. Девушки! Вы поймете, что вы не одиноки. И сейчас я хочу сказать, девчонки, мои любимые, мои смелые, я с вами. Тысячи историй с хештегом #ЯнеБоюсьСказать красноречиво иллюстрируют, зачем нам это нужно; Мне это нужно, чтобы не бояться. Мне это нужно, чтобы бороться, мне нужно это, чтобы изменить это. Мне нужно это, чтобы победить.

hashtag with the phrase “I’ll try to speak now.”<sup>35</sup> The hashtag itself was a kind of manifesto, a challenge not only to form society, a hashtag online movement, provided a platform for mobilising Russian women and gave them linguistic agency to participate. The authors used coloured letters in their posts. They often resorted to capital letters so that posts sounded like screaming.

## Conclusion

The hashtag #ЯНеБоюсьСказать and internet campaign was an unprecedented mobilisation of voices in the Russian public sphere as well as a political protest able to utilise few alternate forums. Spontaneity was one of the most important features of #ЯНеБоюсьСказать and could have been a factor of its unprecedented traction in Russia which drew the issue of violence against women into the mainstream of Russian public discourse. Feminist movement gained unprecedented public attention in Russian social media as well as drawing in more traditional Russian media. In my opinion, raising the important issue of violence against women with the intention of breaking the silence made this campaign de facto feminist.

While the Kremlin may be taking a regressive stance on domestic violence, Russians are becoming more concerned about the problem. In January 2017, nearly 60% of Russians supported the decriminalisation of domestic violence. Two years later in December 2019, almost 70% of Russians said that they favoured a law to protect Russians women against domestic violence. The tireless protests of Russian feminists have in many ways been somewhat successful at changing the minds of the public. Unfortunately, as Putin’s approval rating rises and his administration consolidates power, meaningful protections for women are still far from becoming a reality. Putin’s defining use of traditional values and hypermasculinity would have been impossible without an existing misogynistic society that views women’s lives as expendable and capitalised in such a way that violence is considered a universal means of solving many conflicts and problems. Gender limits individual opportunities and access to public discourse and the transformation of the associated Structural norms is a slow and often confrontational process. The campaign, being orientated to women and

---

<sup>35</sup> Кризисный центр для женщин, 2017 [<https://crisiscenter.ru/pochemu/>], сейчас попробую поговорить.

focused on domestic violence in Russia was accompanied by a strong backlash based on denial and victim blaming strategies often used to disregard domestic violence in other social and cultural contexts. #ЯНеБоюсьСказать posts have not been removed and are still accessible to online searches. The hashtag remains in the collective memory and to this day Russian social media still refer to it in their coverage. Posts in 2017, after the initial campaign used two or more hashtags such as #MeToo and #ЯНеБоюсьСказать reinforcing the idea that the #ЯНеБоюсьСказать campaign was successful and remains present in Russian society. The transnational nature of #ЯНеБоюсьСказать with its origin in Ukraine and its reach into other post-Soviet spaces, is another indication of its resonance. Dina Smailova a resident of Kazakhstan decided to share her story by creating the hashtags #ЯБоюсьСказать #НеМолчиКЗ (#Don'tKeepYourSilenceKazakhstan). After launching the campaign in Kazakhstan, she soon followed up with the creation of an assistance organisation for victims of domestic violence. Users of VKontakte were continuing to post under the hashtag #ЯНеБоюсьСказать.

According to my research, there are laws against domestic violence in 144 countries and laws against sexual harassment in 130 countries. As I mentioned above in this article, in Russia there are no such laws. The concept of domestic violence is not in Russian legislation and is a severe issue in Russia. As Amnesty International's report on domestic violence in Russia said the authorities have failed to implement a single measure to enhance protection and services for the victims. Also, this report highlights Russia is far behind global developments to protect victims of domestic violence, having very scarce measures in place such as government-funded shelters, effective practices of protection orders or police officers trained in how to respond to reports about abuse and protect domestic violence victims as in the case of victims of ethnic violence. Russia is a state party to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The UN's CEDAW Committee has specifically criticised Russia for its failure to take actions to address domestic violence.

## Bibliography

1. Афиша (2017), «Burger King удалил рекламу с образом несовершеннолетней жертвы изнасилования» [<https://daily.afisha.ru/news/6458-burger-king-udalil-reklamu-s-zhertvoy-iznasilovaniya-posle-kritiki-v-internete/>]
2. Ashwin, Sarah (2012), "Gender in Russia: State Policy and Lived Reality", in Hill, Graeme (ed.), *Routledge Handbook of Russian Politics and Society*, London: Routledge, 331-341.
3. Barker, Chris; Joe, Emma (2016), *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*, London: Sage Publications
4. Bondareva, Anastasia (2016), "#яНеБоюсьСказать. Мережею шириться флешмоб проти замовчування насильства", *Комсомолская Правда* [<https://life.pravda.com.ua/society/2016/07/5/214776/>]
5. Connell, Raewyn (2009), *Gender and Power: Society, the Person, and Sexual Politics*, Cambridge: Polity Press
6. Deutsche Welle (2018), "Как изменилась ситуация в РФ после кампании #ЯНеБоюсьСказать" [<https://www.dw.com/ru/>]
7. Gherghina, Sergiu; Mişcoiu, Sergiu (2022), "Faith in a New Party: The Involvement of the Romanian Orthodox Church in the 2020 Election Campaign" in *Politics, Religion & Ideology*, Vol. 23, Issue 2, 226-242
8. Giddens, Anthony (1986), *The Constitution of Society: Introduction of the Theory of Structuration*, Berkeley: University of California Press
9. Харитоновна, Олгарета (2015), *Манифест феминистского движения России*, Екатеринбург: Издательские решения
10. Johnson, Janet Elise; Saarinen, Aino (2013), "Twenty-First-Century Feminisms under Repression: Gender Regime Change and the Women's Crisis Center Movement in Russia" in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*. Vol. 38. No. 3, 543-567
11. Кризисный центр для женщин, 2017 [<https://crisiscenter.ru/pochemu/>]
12. Лаикам, Константин (2016), "Женщину и мужчину Росии", Federal Service of State Statistics Report, Moscow: Rosstat.
13. Meduza (2017), «Burger King удалил рекламу с образом несовершеннолетней жертвы изнасилования», 2017 [<https://meduza.io/news/2017/02/17/burger-king-udalil-reklamu-s-obrazom-nesovershennoletney-zhertvy-iznasilovaniya>]

14. Meduza (2017), «Кто такая Диана Шурьгина и почему ее так много обсуждают? Пользователи соцсетей не поверили жертве изнасилования и начали ее травлю»  
[<https://meduza.io/feature/2017/02/08/kto-takaya-diana-shurygina-i-pochemu-ee-tak-mnogo-obsuzhdayut>]
15. Melnychenko, Anastasia (2016), On Facebook [private page] 05 July  
[<https://www.facebook.com/nastya.melnychenko/posts/10209018320800151>]
16. Mişcoiu, Sergiu (2005), *Le Front National et ses répercussions sur l'échiquier politique français 1972-2002*, Cluj-Napoca: Editura Fundației pentru Studii Europene
17. Moscato, Derek (2016), "Media Portrayals of Hashtag Activism: A Framing Analysis of Canada's #Idlenomore Movement" in *Media and Communication*, Vol. 4. No. 2  
[<https://www.doi.org/10.17645/mac.v4i2.416>]
18. Nicholson, Linda (2010), "Feminism in Waves: Useful Metaphor or Not?" in *Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Research*, Vol. 12, No. 4
19. Rollins, Kay (2022), "Putin's Other War: Domestic Violence, Traditional Values and Masculinity in Modern Russia" in *Harvard International Review* [<https://hir.harvard.edu/putins-other-war/>]
20. Schneider, Beth (1988), "Political Generations, and the Contemporary Women's Movement" in *Sociological Inquiry*, Vol. 58, no. 1
21. Taylor, Verta; Rupp, Leila (1993), "Women's Culture and Lesbian Feminist Activism: A Reconsideration of Cultural Feminism" in *Signs*, Vol. 19, no. 1
22. Tarrow, Sidney; Tilly, Charles (2015), *Contentious Politics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
23. The World Health Organization (2017), "Violence against Women" [<https://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs239/en/>]
24. Wagner, Kurt (2017), "Twitter is Testing a Big Change: Doubling the Length of Tweets from 140 to 280 Characters", *Vox*  
[<https://www.vox.com/2017/9/26/16364002/twitter-longer-tweets-character-limit-140-280>]

25. Whittier, Nancy (1995), *Feminist Generations: The Persistence of the Radical's Women's Movement*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press