



# RUSSIA VS LAWYERS

by Masha Novikova



## SYNOPSIS

Civil society and the law system in Russia are under severe pressure from the state. We document the struggle of human rights lawyers who fight for justice in an increasingly suffocating dictatorship.

After Russia started a fully-fledged war against Ukraine, the state's repressive machine against its own civil society started spinning with even greater velocity and the law system, which barely functioned before, eventually turned into a mechanism of abuse and brutality. Human rights lawyers have become the last frontier between state violence and society. Our main protagonist Mikhail Benyash has been representing activists, bloggers, and protesters for many years, now he is also helping those who refuse to serve in the war. He was the victim of reprisals long before the war started, and in October 2022 was registered as a "foreign agent" - meaning he could lose his licence and face imprisonment. Film-maker Masha Novikova followed Benyash and a whole network of human rights...

## FESTIVALS

2023

33 FFC Cottbus

2024

Movies that Matter Festival, The Hague, The Netherlands

#MtM

HUMAN - IDFF Oslo

## CAST AND CREW

DIRECTOR Masha Novikova · SCORE Martynas Bialobzeskis ·

SOUND Maria Urikh · EDITOR Eimantas Belickas · DOP Alexandra Ivanova

Netherlands, Germany, Italy  
2023

90 min

FORMAL CATEGORIES

Current Affairs, Conflicts,  
War/Peace, Human Rights,  
Politics

ORIGINAL LANGUAGES

Russian, English

PREMIERE

Germany (2023)

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ERA FILM

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