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How an exiled pirate media outlet breaks through the Kremlin's propaganda firewall

Alex
Aug 12, 2023

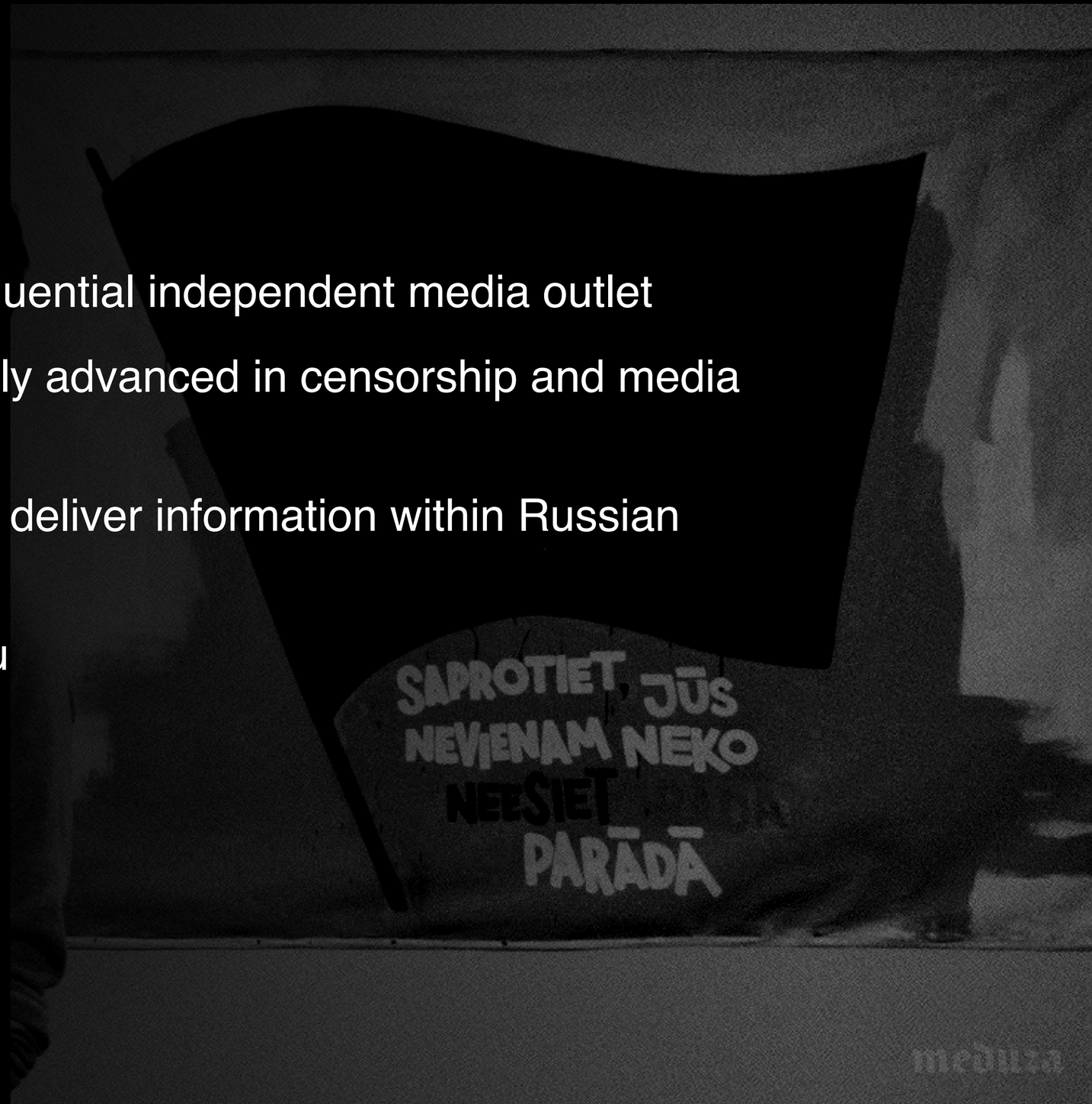
You’ll learn

How Meduza has become the most influential independent media outlet

How Russia has become technologically advanced in censorship and media control

Why we are still alive, and how we can deliver information within Russian borders

Where it all goes and how it affects you



My name is Alex

Head of the Tech Department

Tech team:

- We design and develop our products in-house
- Today we are focusing on
  - how to deliver content to RU
  - how to protect our infrastructure




Russia
143.3 million


Russia
Belarus
Kazakhstan
Uzbekistan
Kyrgyzstan
Turkmenistan
Tajikistan
143.3 million + 95.4 million



What might go wrong?

How it started…
2014

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Editor of independent Russian news site replaced with pro-Kremlin figure



Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol: Council renews sanctions for a further year

The Council today decided to renew **sanctions** introduced in **response to the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol by the Russian Federation** for a further year until **23 June 2022**.

Russian government decides to take control of media and Internet

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This is how Meduza appeared

Editor of independent Russian news site replaced with pro-Kremlin figure

Главное
Россия
Мир
Бывший СССР
Экономика
Наука и техника
Спорт
Культура
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Мотор
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Статьи
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Поиск

LENTA.RU

12 МАРТА 2014, СРЕДА, 18:18

Россия

Зачем ты меня убила?
Персонажи книги о сельской глубинке засудили автора: репортаж «Ленты.ру»

Дорогим читателям от дорогой редакции



16:13 В «Ленте.ру» сменился главный редактор

21:47 Из сектора Газа по Израилю выпущено не менее 70 ракет

22:05 «Спартак» проиграл «Тосно» в 1/8 Кубка России

18:40 Сенат США подготовил законопроект о санкциях против российских чиновников

19:50 Россия разрешила Украине наблюдательный полет над своей территорией

Meduza in 2014: a small pirate ship



In a safe haven (EU)

Decentralized leadership & funding

Technologically advanced

Security focused

Appealing to younger generation

And it is never boring with us!

Negative thinking is our strength

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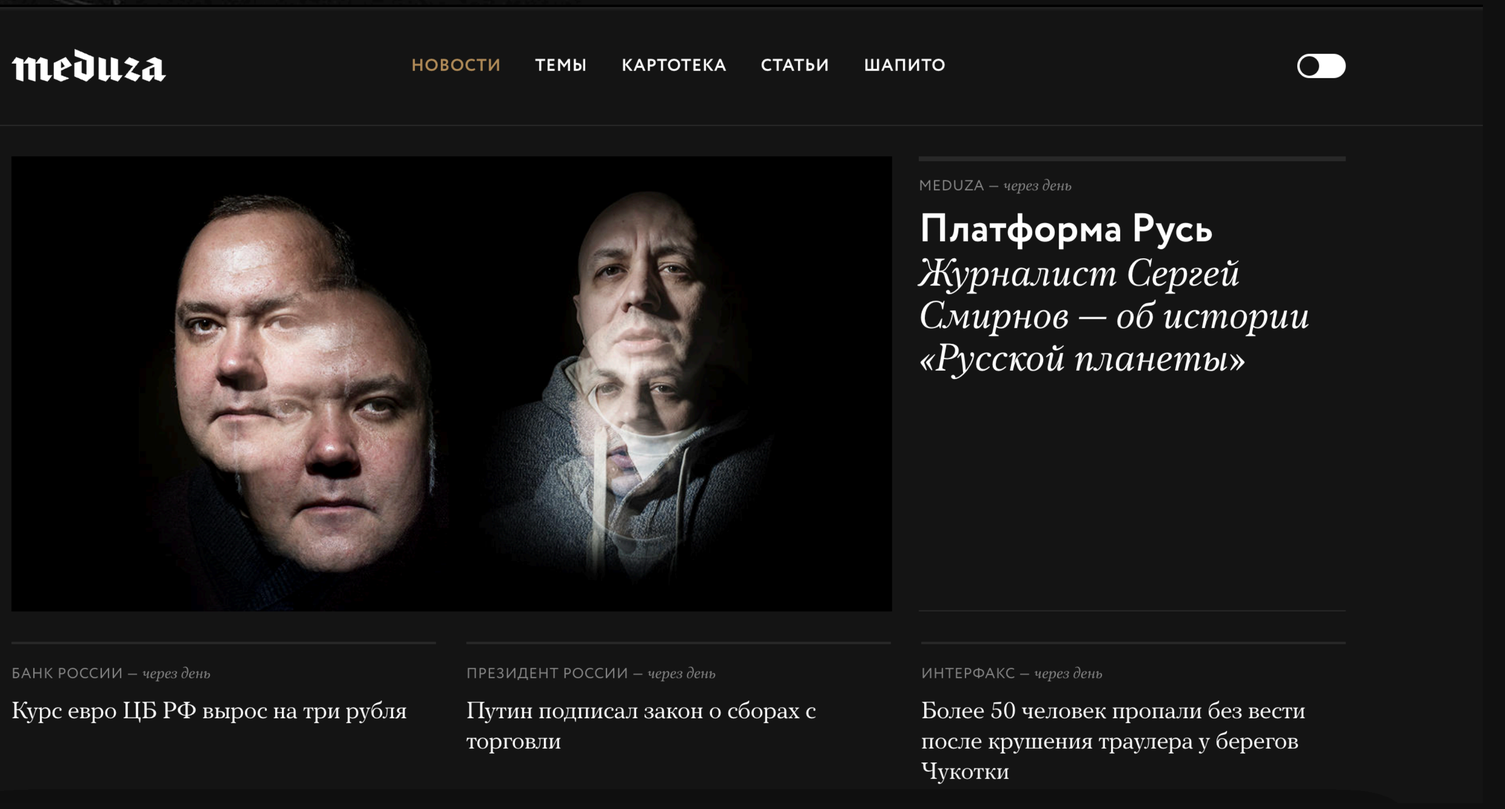

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Meduza today

Meduza is the biggest media outlet and the most influential, which is (still) reaching millions of Russians within the country

Website — 12 million unique users

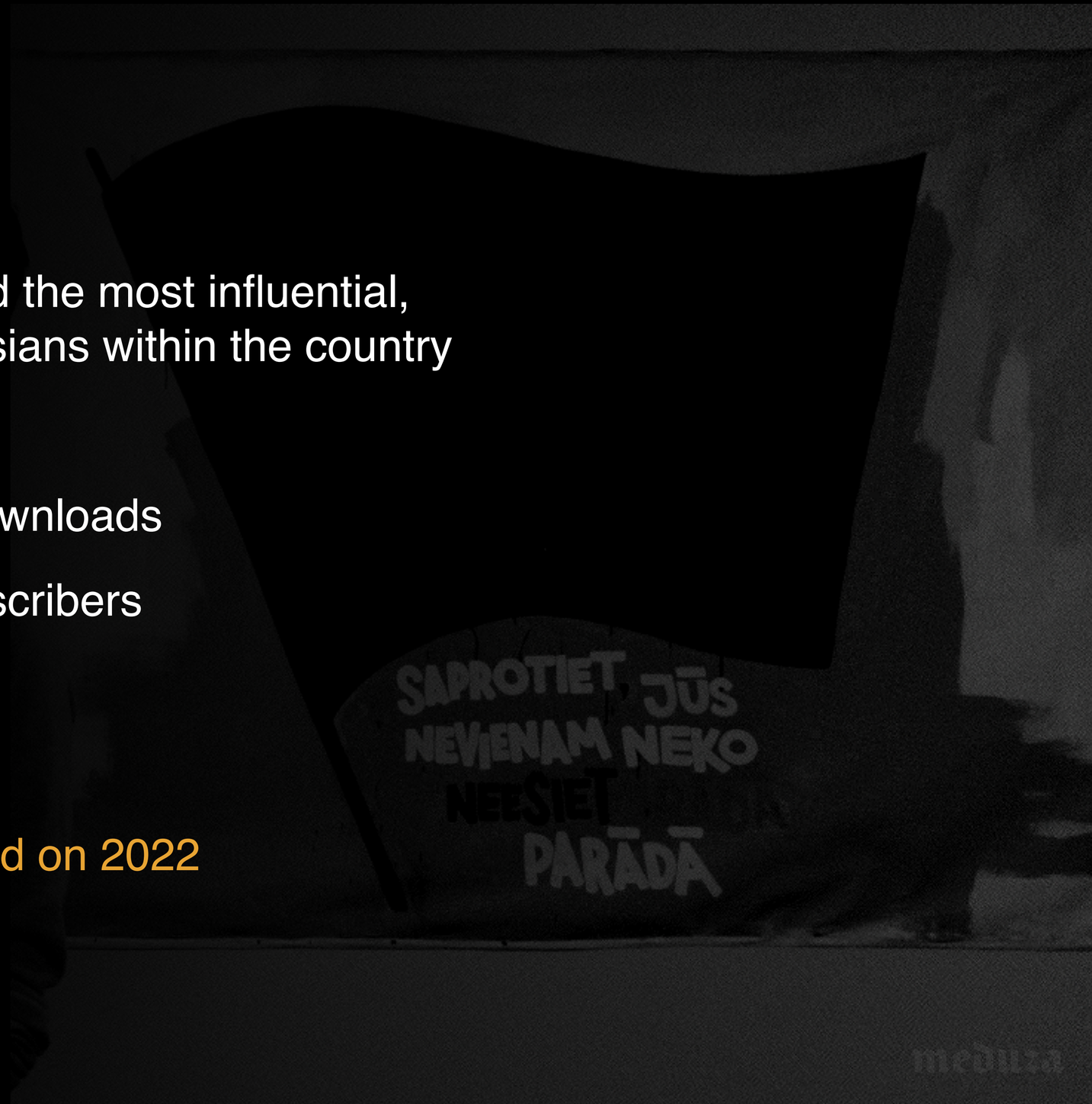
Mobile app — more than 1.5 million downloads

Telegram — more than 1.5 million subscribers

YouTube channel — 14 million views

Podcast studio, newsletters, etc.

Outlawed in Russia since 2023, blocked on 2022



In the meantime Russia has advanced technologically

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2014



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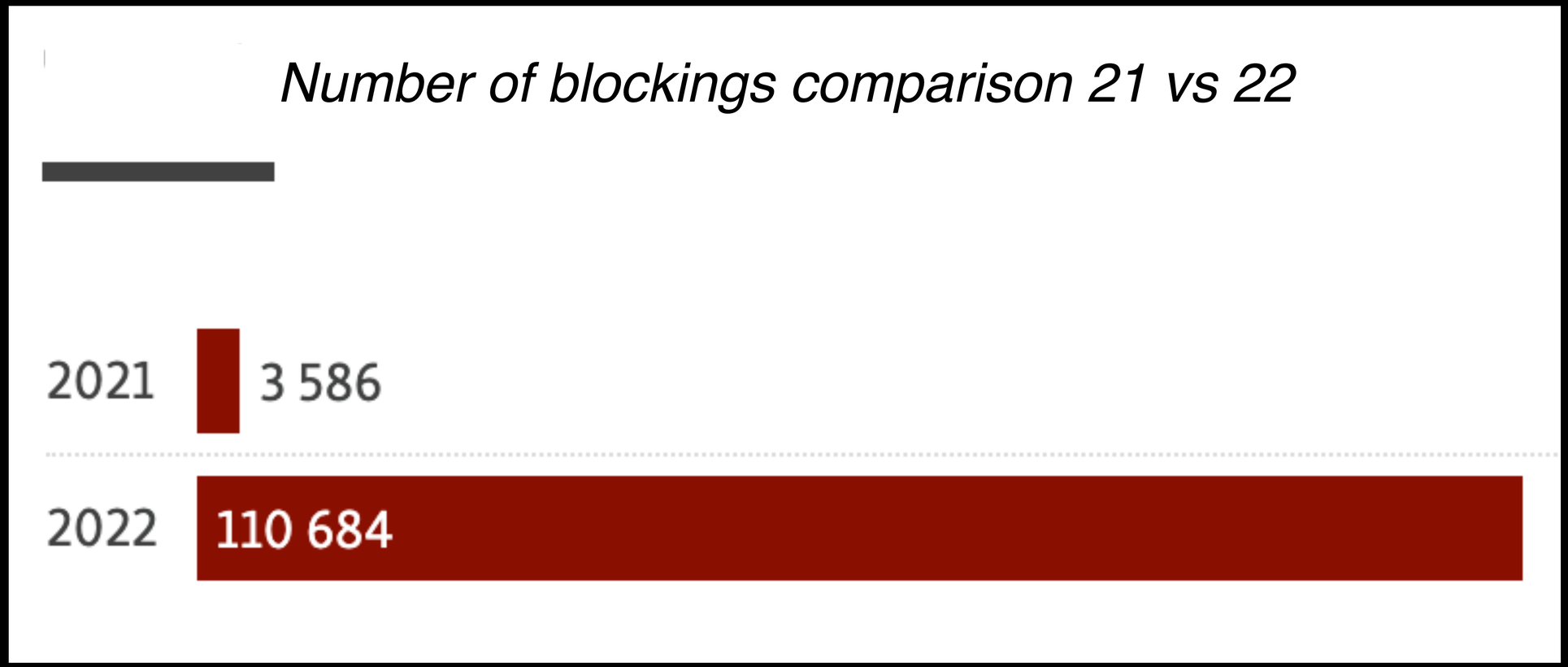
2022 — DPI implemented everywhere



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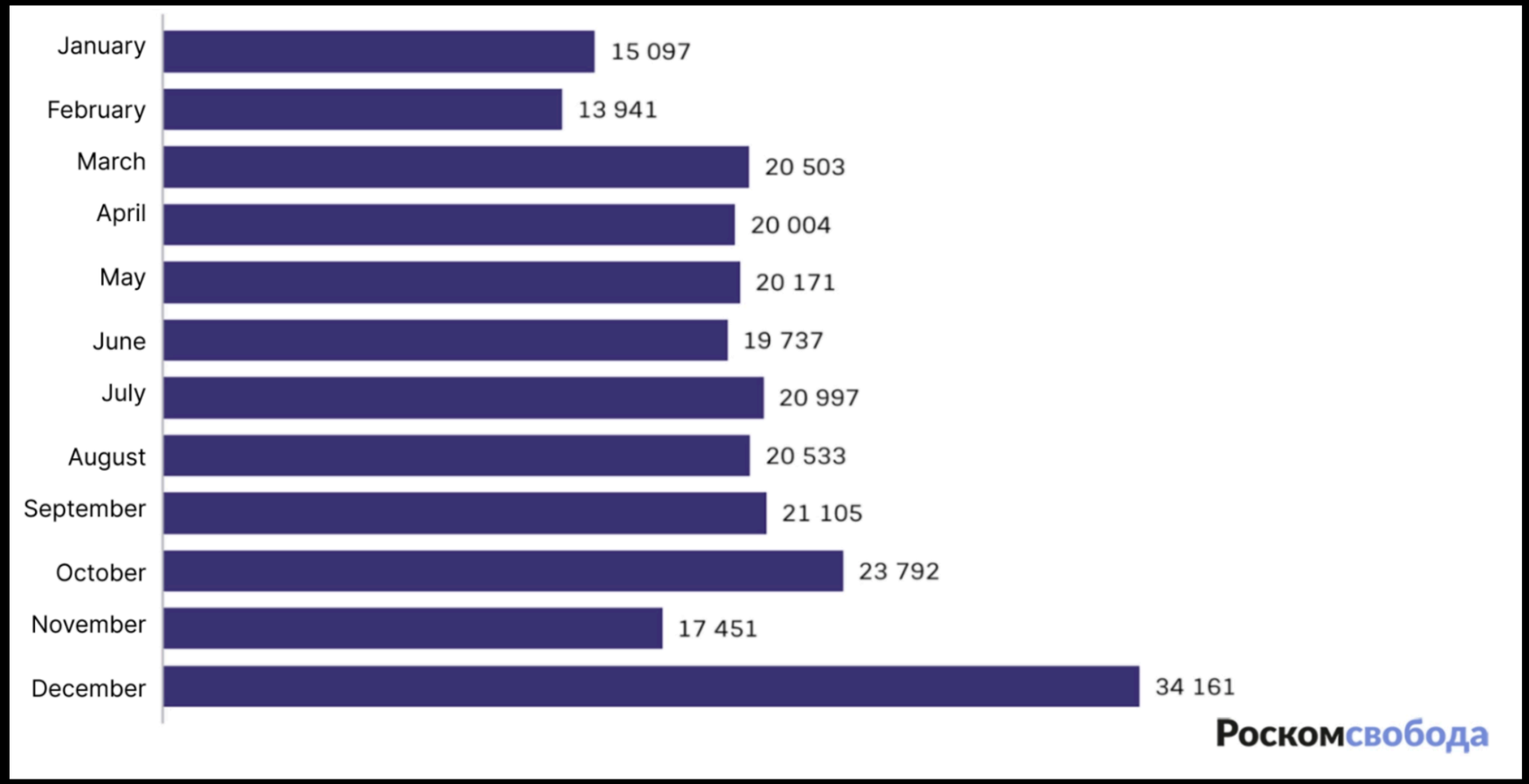
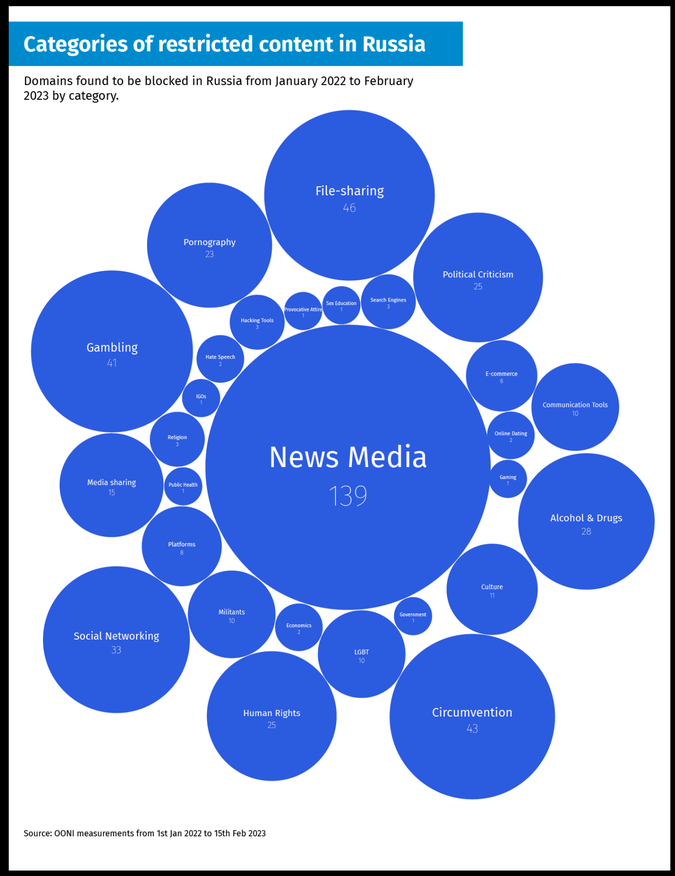
Massive blockings





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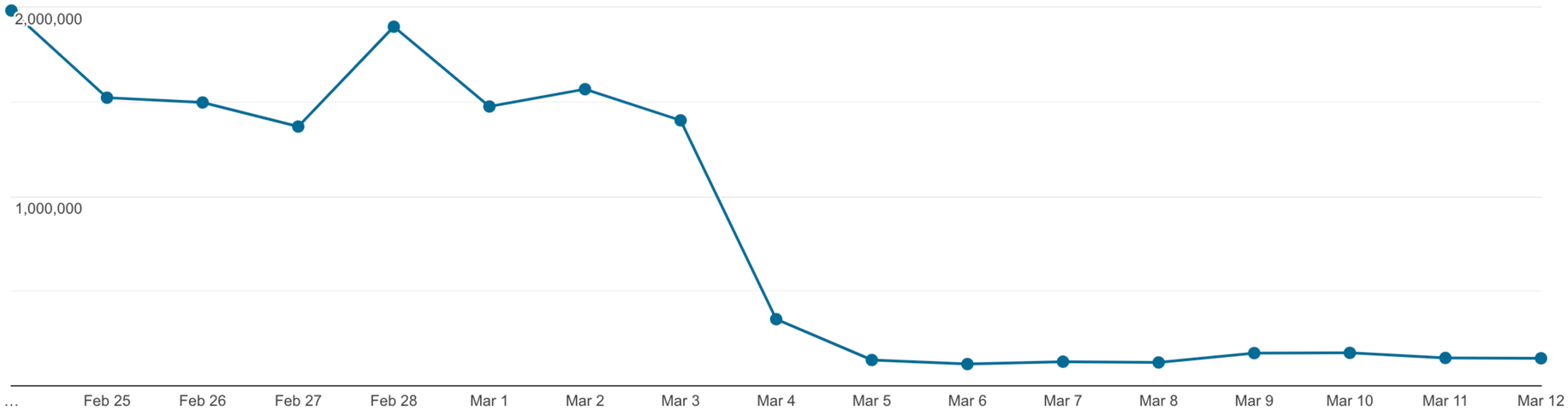
What our miserable life after being blocked looks like

Audience immediately drops by 90%



You blocked everything
What is your next step?

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Circumvention

TOR blocked

Major VPN services blocked

Promotion of VPN services is not allowed

Discreditation of VPN services

Wireguard, OpenVPN protocols blocked

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Control of media space

Control of search and recommendation services

Launch of fake independent accounts

Use of social networks to spread propaganda

Kill virality (you can’t repost)

Use of fear

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What about global companies?

Facebook, Instagram, Twitter blocked

High risk of YouTube block

Pressure on Google and Apple

Google news blocked, Google search has been blocked today!!

People pushed to move to national platforms

But sometimes they help RU government

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Apple

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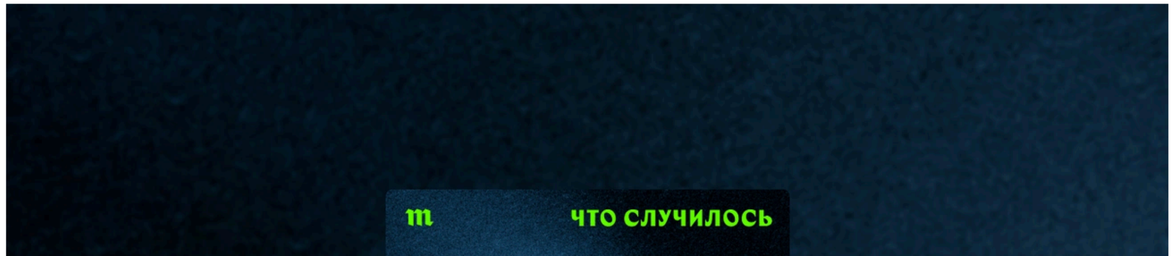
STAND WITH US NEWS FEED RU

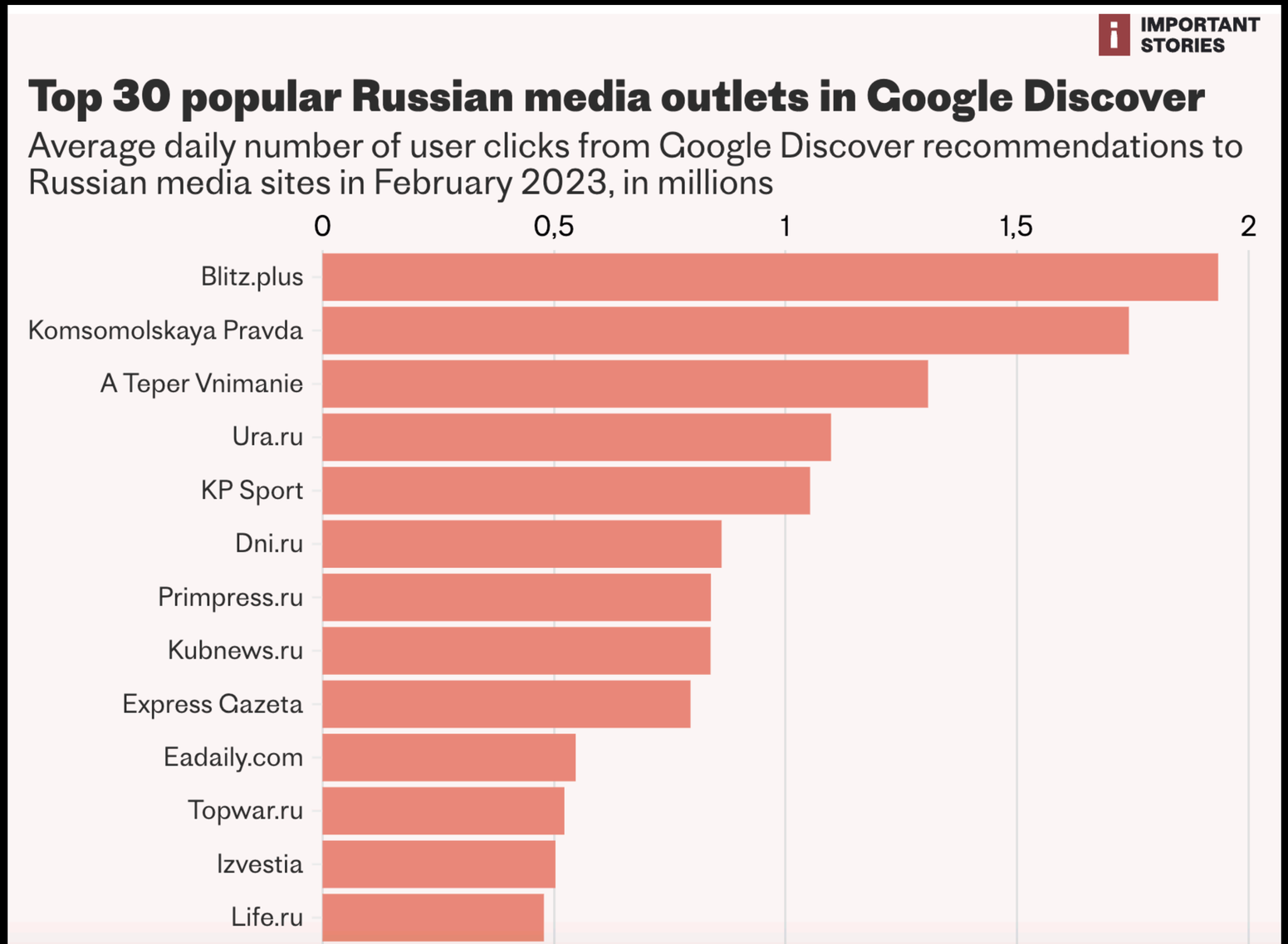
NEWS

Apple has removed Meduza's flagship news podcast 'What Happened' from Apple Podcasts, without explaining the reason Earlier this summer, the Russian state censorship authority had asked Apple to block the show

4:30 am, August 5, 2023 · Source: Meduza



Google Search



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But how did we survive?

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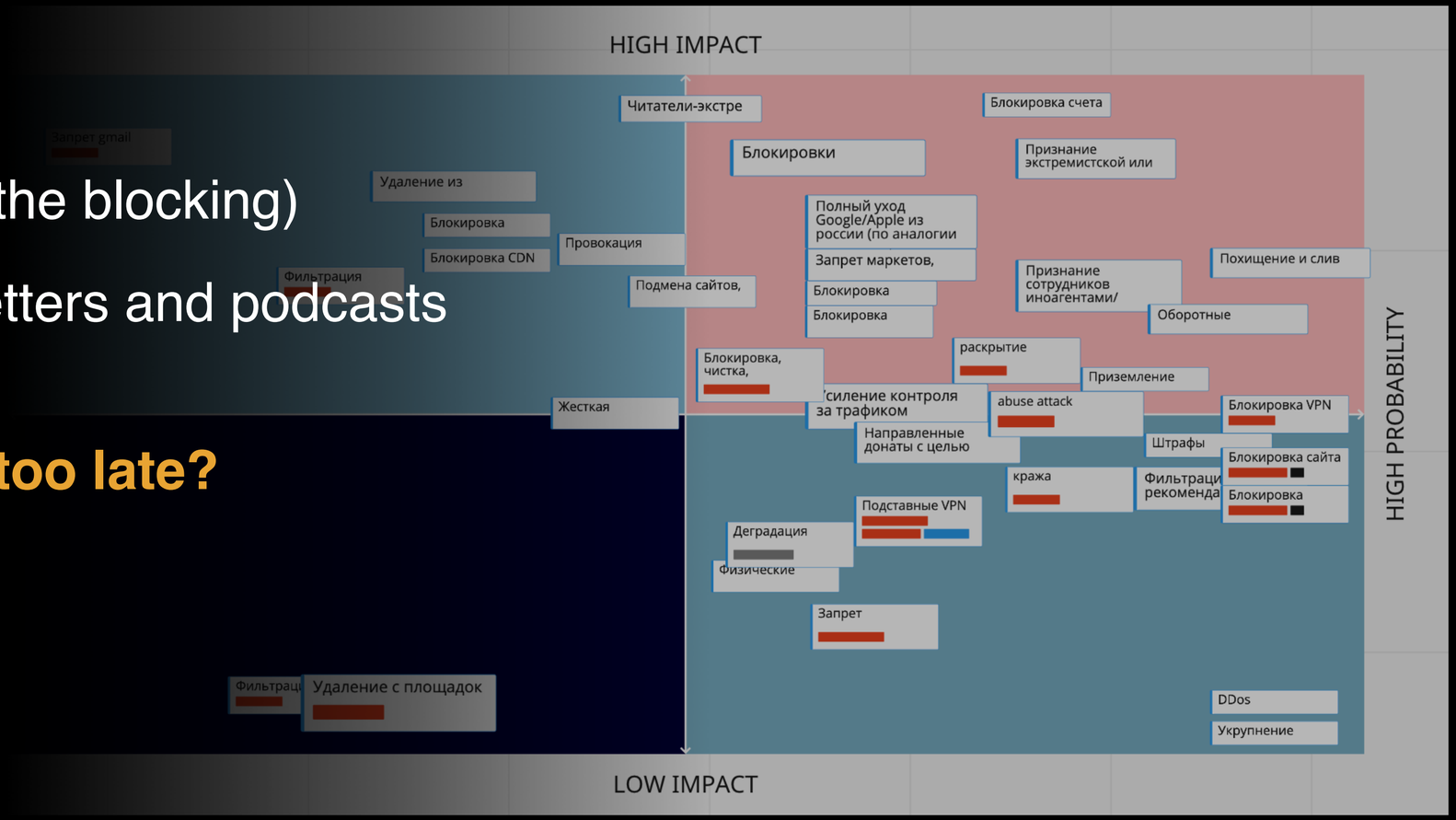
Negative thoughts keep us prepared

Disaster plan

SOS communication (before the blocking)

Diversity of platforms (newsletters and podcasts are awesome btw)

What can we do before it’s too late?



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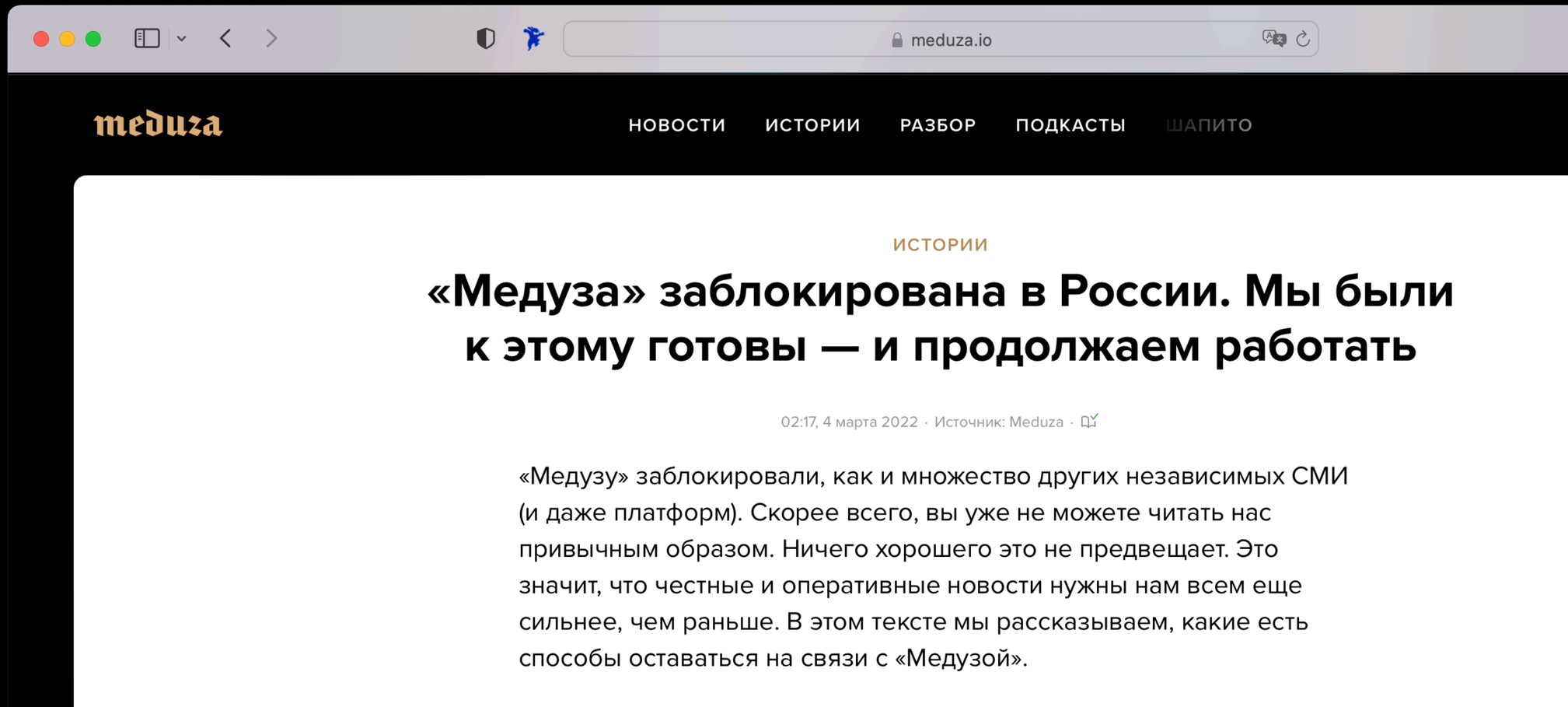
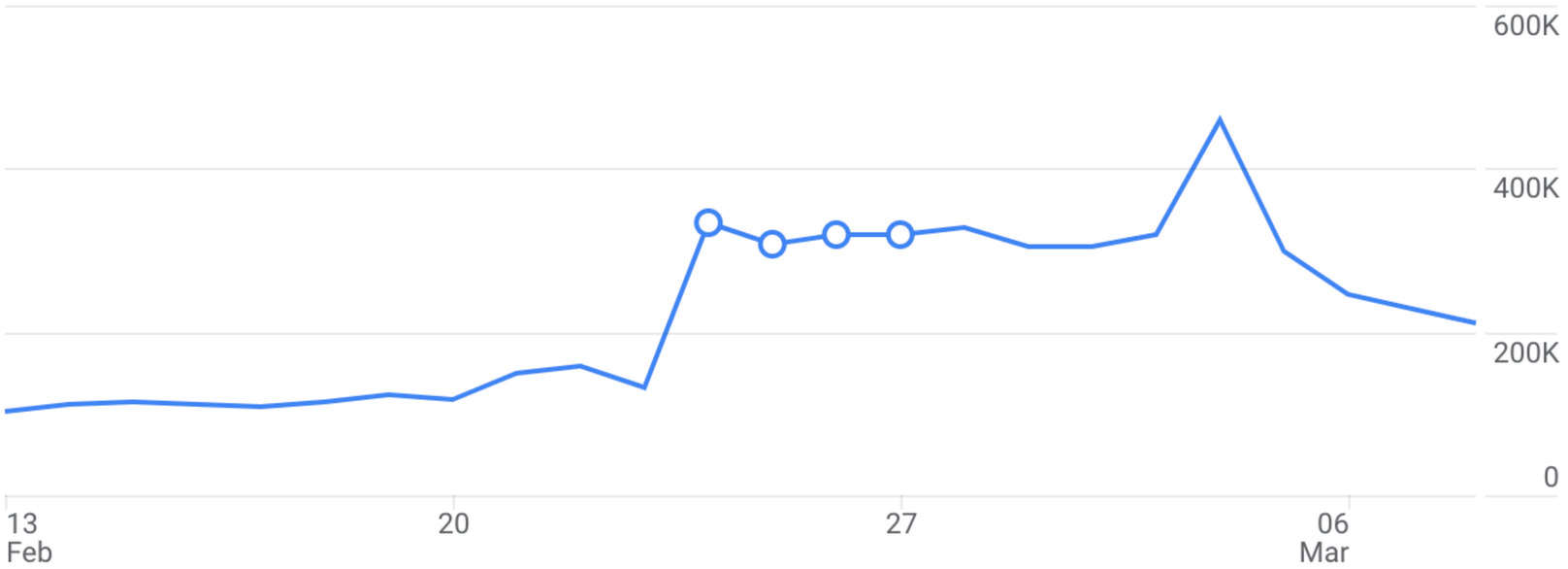
People are still there.
They just need another way



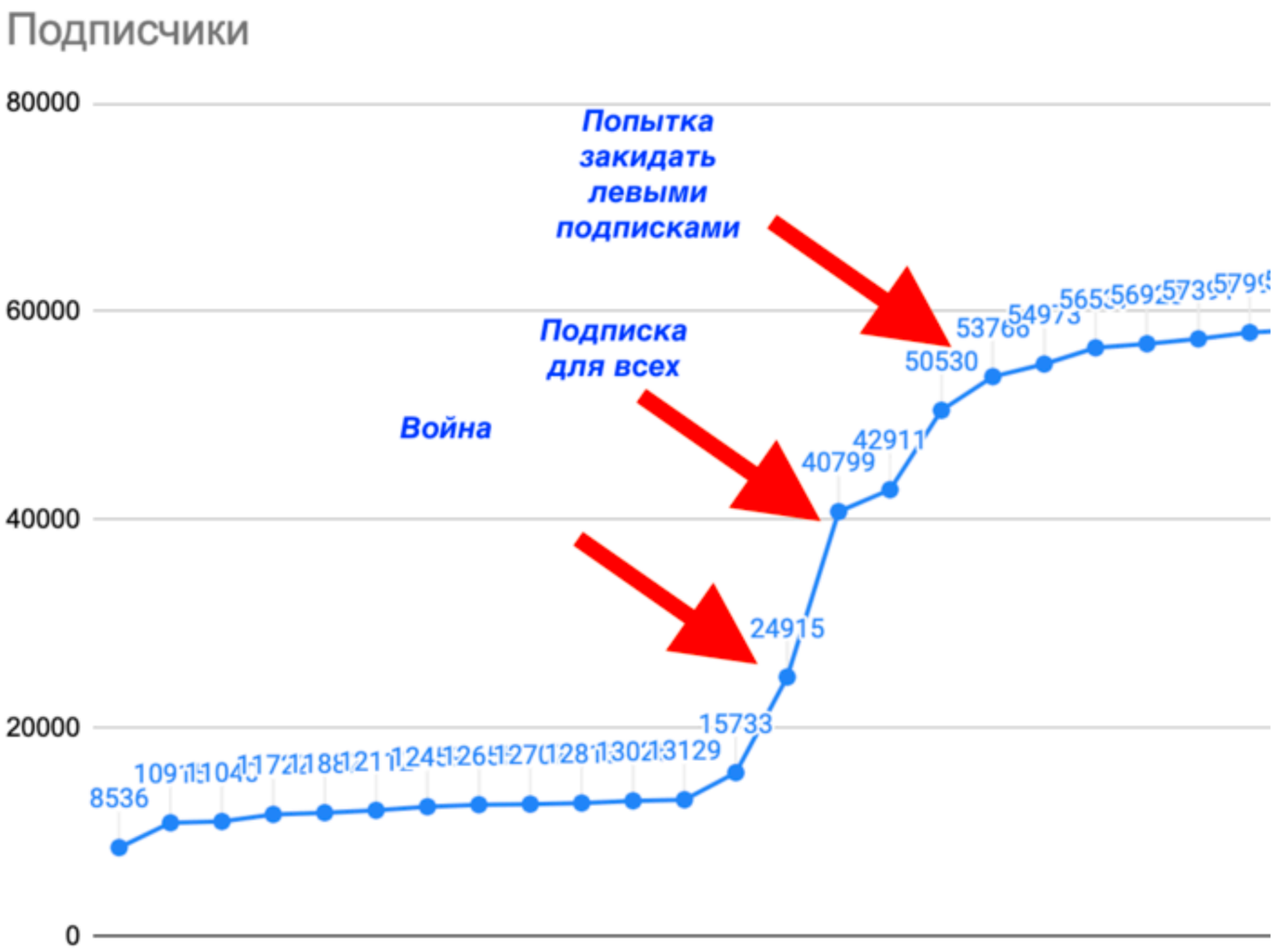
Telegram



Mobile App



Newsletter


Подписчики
80000
60000
40000
20000
0
Попытка закидать левыми подписками
Подписка для всех
Война
8536
15733
24915
40799
42911
50530
53766
54973

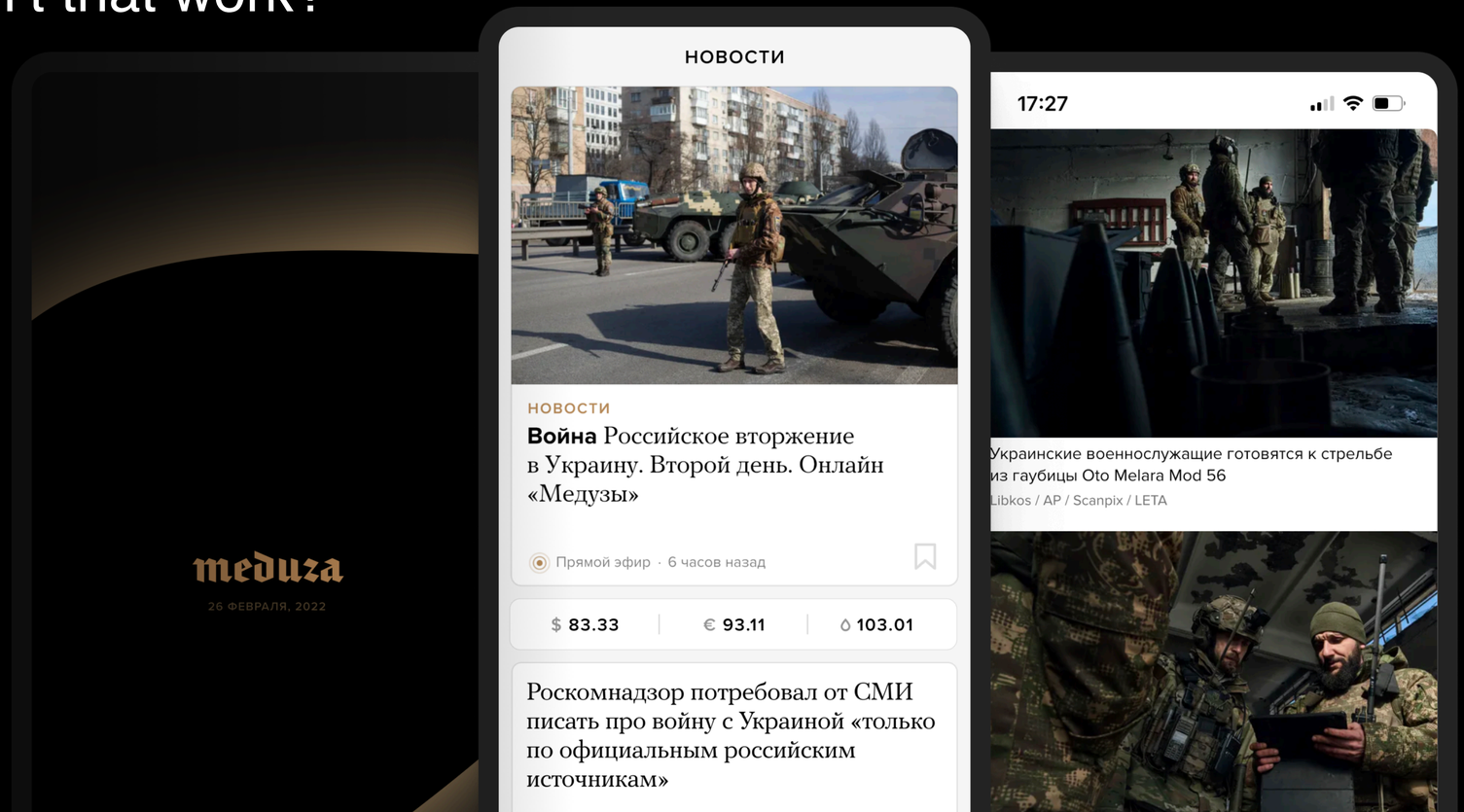
Mobile app

While it is in store, you can do whatever you want

Embedded circumvention tools

P2P and obfuscation - why doesn’t that work?

Automated mirror delivery



Mobile app - preparing to worst

Pre-cashing of content

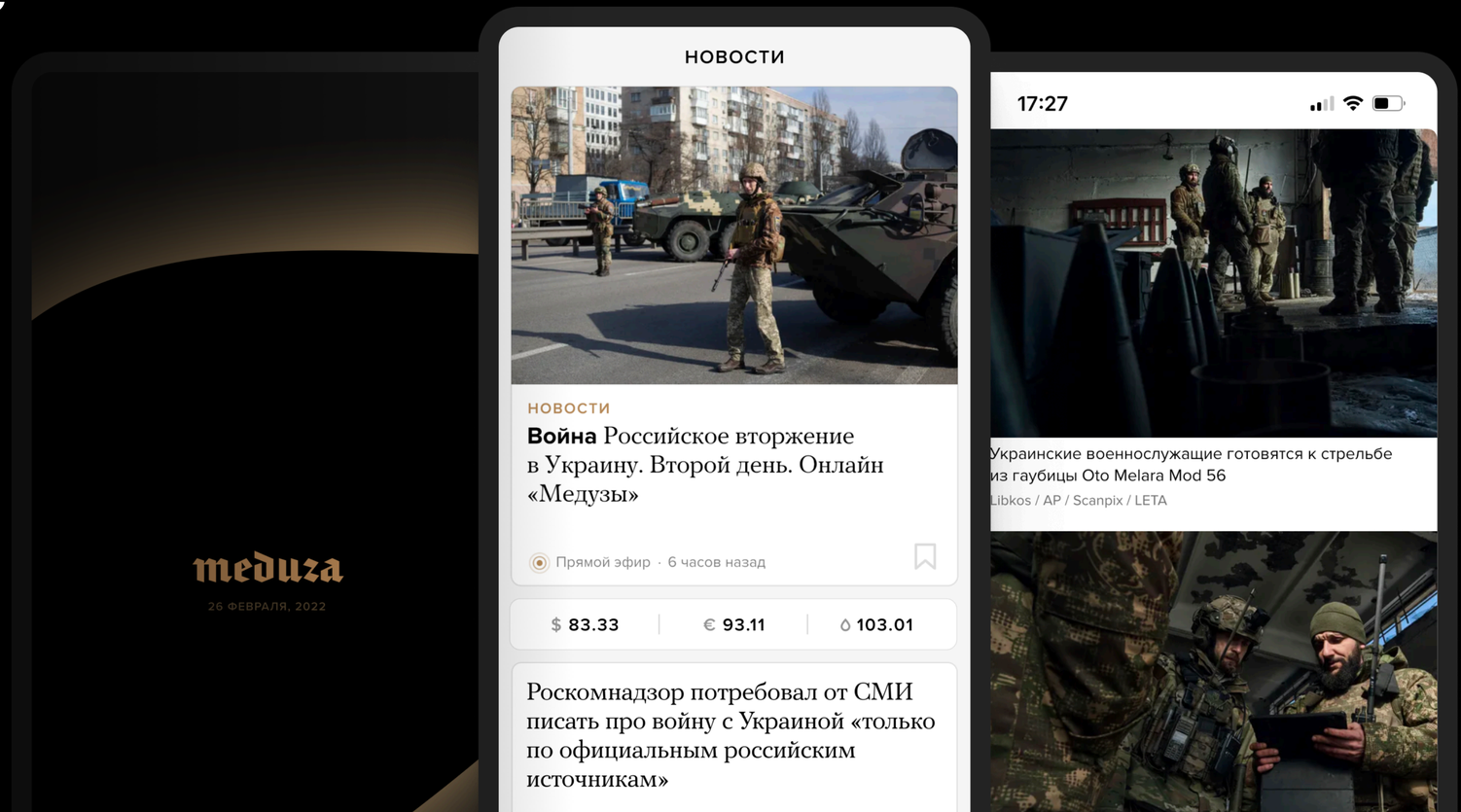
Lite version - p2p in the future?

Emergency mode - cloud storage

Version w/o Firebase

Mac Version

Etc.

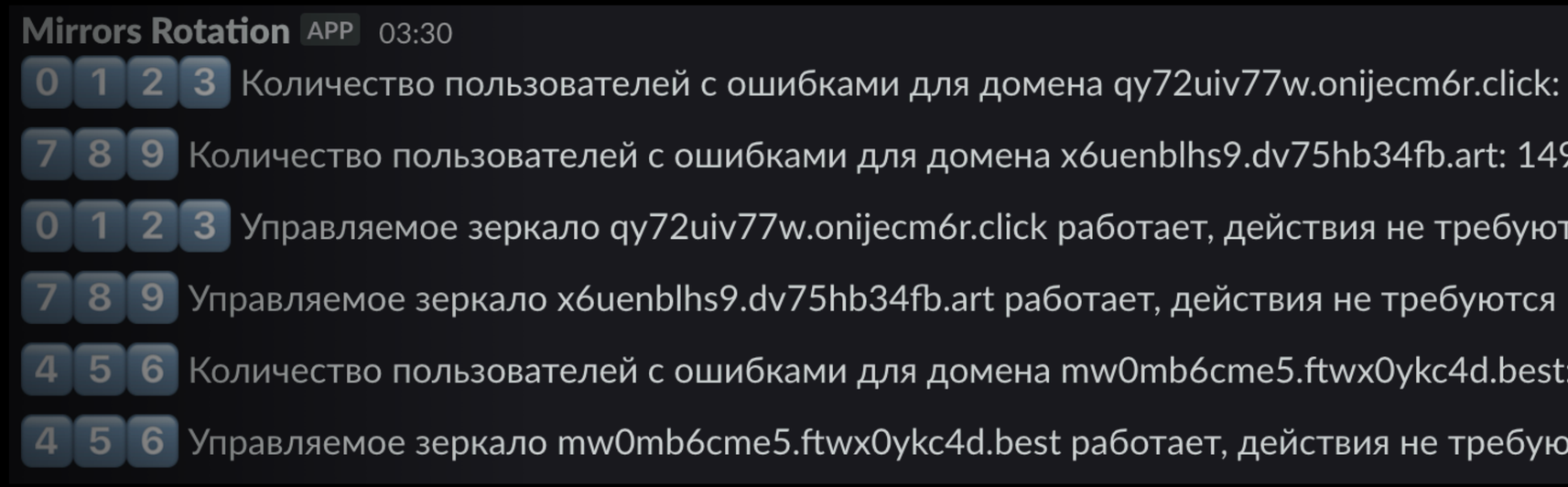


Automated mirror rotation

Monitoring of blockings (3 times a day now)

Segmentation

Automated mirror issuing



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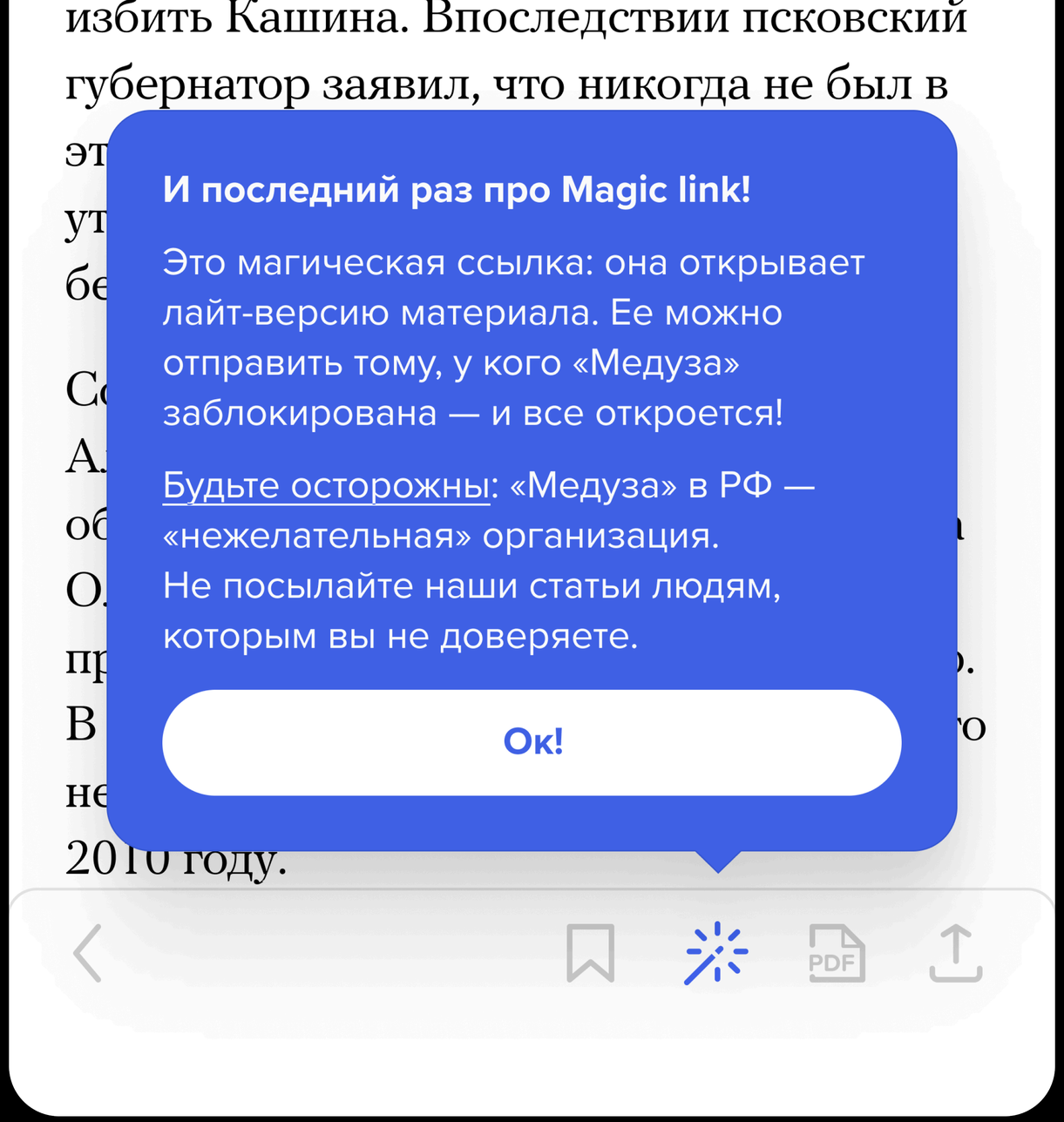
Magic-links =)

Domain fronted links

Can be easily shared via messenger



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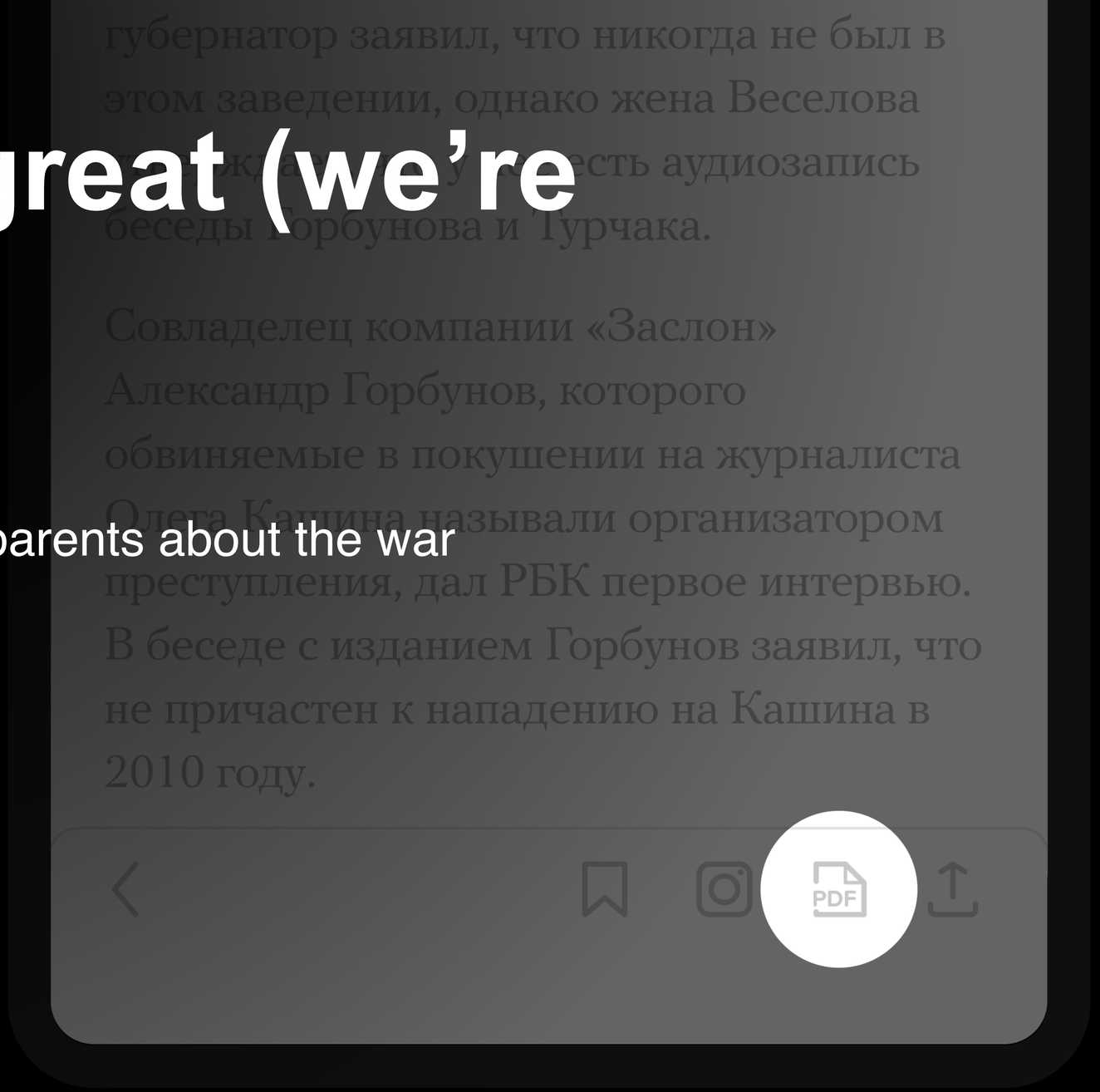
PDFs are also great (we’re surprised too)

Simple, but they work perfectly

Step away from the screen: tell your parents about the war



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Never stop looking for new paths

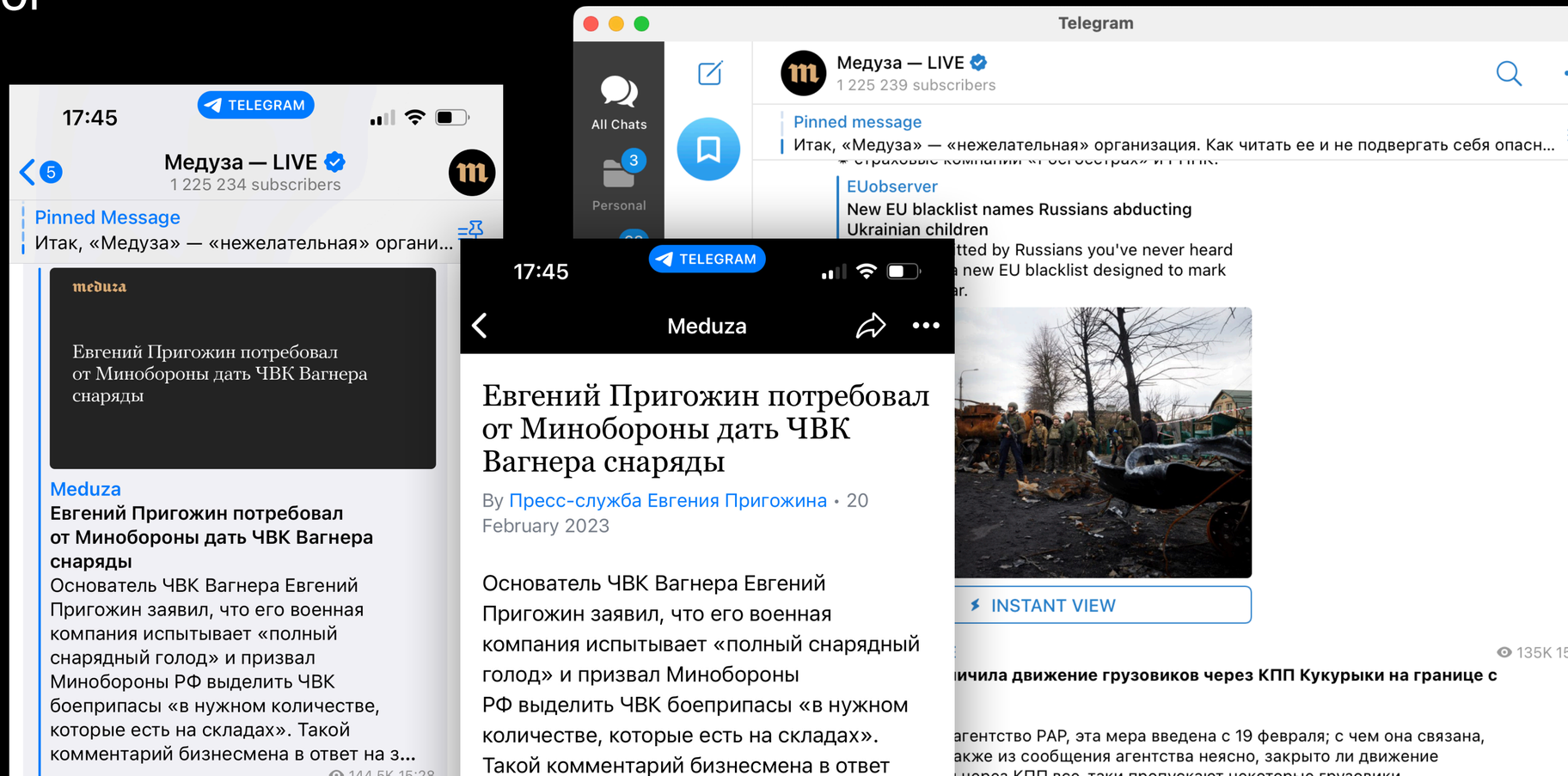
Instagram story generator

Instant View, AMP

Light Meduza

News aggregators

News broadcast



So, what’s the score?

We don’t have resources, but we’re inventive and creative

We trying to be always step ahead

We have a good will, so people help us

We believe that Independent journalism and freedom of information is not a gift — it is an achievement that has to be protected.

And we need your help!

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We’re looking for help with

Bright ideas from clever people

Any kind of support — resources, knowledge, funding

New technologies and expertise

Circumvention tools

We’re open to any collaborations

Read us and spread the word about us http://meduza.io/en

Contact me

alex@meduza.io

Support us



Thank you!

The future of the Internet in Russia — what's next?

Global services totally replaced by Russian services
or those controlled by the state (incl. Google and Apple)

Circumvention tools available only for advanced tech users

More advanced blocking, i.e. automated discovery and blocking of content, including audio-visual content.

Criminalization of reading forbidden materials

Faster discovery and blocking of undesirable content

Sovereign Internet and separation of Russians from outer world

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We expect isolation within 1 year


Russia
Belarus
Kazakhstan
Uzbekistan
Kyrgyzstan
Azerbaijan
Turkmenistan
Tajikistan
North Korea
Syria
Iran
China


I HAVE
SPOKEN

Contact me

alex@meduza.io

Support us



Thank you!