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To the Secretariat of the UN Human Rights Committee (144 rd Session)

SOME ASPECTS OF THE RIGHTS OF NATIONAL MINORITIES IN LATVIA
concerning Fourth periodic report of the Republic of Latvia

1. Introduction

1. This document is, to a certain extent, a supplement to document INT_CCPR_CSS_LVA_63061_E (1) submitted on 23 April 2025. While the first document concerned aspects of minority rights that were not mentioned at all in the correspondence with the Committee, the second document supplements the information contained in the list of issues addressed to Latvia (CCPR/C/LVA/Q/4) and the replies thereto (CCPR/C/LVA/RQ/4).

2. The following information is provided below

- education in minority languages (CCPR/C/LVA/Q/4, §23; CCPR/C/LVA/RQ/4, §§ 80,81);
- participation of minorities in the electoral process (CCPR/C/LVA/Q/4, §22; CCPR/C/LVA/RQ/4, §76);
- the situation with the cancellation of permanent residence permits for Russian citizens (CCPR/C/LVA/Q/4, §5; CCPR/C/LVA/RQ/4, §§15, 16);
- examples of how the principles of freedom of information and guarantees of criminal proceedings are not respected in relation to dissidents (CCPR/C/LVA/Q/4, §§ 10,13,18, 21).

3. In addition to section II.1 of document INT_CCPR_CSS_LVA_63061_E (1), we would like to inform you that between 1990 and 2025, 263 monuments to soldiers of the Red Army who liberated Latvia were dismantled¹.

II. Destruction of education in minority languages

1. On September 29, 2022, the Parliament of Latvia adopted the amendments to the Education Law, providing for the complete elimination of the education system in the languages of national minorities.

¹ Снесённые советские воинские памятники в Латвии: 265 за 35 лет. Александр Ржавин, блог, [Demolished Soviet military monuments in Latvia: 265 in 35 years. Alexander Rzhavin, blog] 07.05.2025: <https://rzhavin77.livejournal.com/264948.html>

In brief the law provides for the introduction of teaching exclusively in the state (Latvian) language for both preschool and basic school education (up to grade 9 inclusive), and for all types of educational institutions, including private. Pre-schoolers, as well as students of the 1st, 4th, 7th grades will switch to the teaching solely in the Latvian language as from September 01, 2023, and the process of switching to the Latvian language for the other grades of the basic school has to be fully completed by September 01, 2025.

Thus, for the first time in a quarter of a millennium (from 1789), the Russian-language education system in Latvia will be abolished, having coexisted with the Latvian-language education system under all political regimes over the last century.

2. During the public discussion of the draft law before its introduction into Parliament out of approximately 4,000 individuals and legal entities participating in the initial discussion of the bill, 97% were against the bill.

In parliament, only MP elected on the list of the Harmony party voted against the bill. All their proposals to mitigate the negative consequences of the bill, for example, not to extend language restrictions to private schools or children with disabilities, to extend the transition period, etc., were rejected.

The 20.06.2022 letter of the OSCE Commissioner for Human Rights sent to parliament, in which he pointed out the non-compliance with the generally accepted OSCE standards of education in minority languages, was not taken into account either.

Also ignored was a collective letter from UN special rapporteurs addressed to parliament the day before the crucial vote².

In February 2024, the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities recognised that the 2022 reform did not comply with Articles 13 and 14 of the Framework Convention and urged Latvia to revise it³. In April 2025, the Advisory Committee's opinion was confirmed by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe⁴.

3. According to the Reform 2022, for students of national minorities is left the only option to study their native language and cultural-historical subjects outside the school curriculum as part of optional interest-related education programmes. According to the law, the government regulations for conducting and financing these programmes should have been adopted by 31.12.2022. In reality, they were approved only on 28.08.2023, i.e. three days before the start of the school year under the new conditions. Classes are envisaged for no more than three school hours per week, and funding is calculated on the assumption that every fifth pupil will choose the programme.

In a number of educational institutions (especially pre-schools), such interest-related education programmes are completely unavailable or are offered 1-2 times a week⁵. A number of Russian

² OL LVA 2022, 28 September 2022: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/02/latvia-un-experts-concerned-about-severe-curtailement-minority-language>

³ Fourth Opinion on Latvia, adopted on 9 October 2023, Published on 22 February 2024 (ACFC/OP/IV(2023)1)

⁴ CM/ResCMN(2025)3, 02.04.2025

⁵ Мнение: скоро дети нацменьшинств сами перестанут учить русский язык [Opinion: soon children of national minorities will stop learning Russian themselves], Otkrito.lv, 15.09.2023:

<https://rus.iauns.lv/article/novosti/576461-mnenie-skoro-deti-nacmensinstv-sami-perestanut-ucit-russkii-yazyk>

Заявление правления ЛАШОР о программе языка и истории культуры национального меньшинства в образовании по интересам, сайт организации [LASHOR Board Statement on the National Minority Language and Cultural History Programme in Special Interest Education, website of the organisation], 26.09.2023:

https://www.lashor.lv/rus/Zajavlenie_LAShOR_o_programme_v_obrazovanii_po_interesam_4.php

teachers are forced to quit their jobs or are dismissed after tests for knowledge of the state language. 32% of schools have long-term vacancies for teachers⁶.

For a significant number of children from ethnic minority families, attending official school has become an empty but compulsory formality, and they acquire knowledge with the help of private tutors hired by their parents⁷.

4. The legislation aims to prohibit the possibility of studying Russian as a second foreign language in primary⁸ and secondary⁹ schools.

On May 15, 2025, with 69 votes in favor and 16 against¹⁰, the parliament referred to the commission a draft document "On the use of the language of the aggressor state in Latvian schools". The document contains assignment for the government to develop regulations on a complete ban on communication in Russian in educational institutions outside school hours¹¹.

III. Participation in the electoral process

1. Main factors limiting the participation of national minorities in the electoral process:

- widespread statelessness;
- language requirements for elected deputies;
- prohibition on paid campaigning in minority languages.

2. Persons with non-citizen status in Latvia are almost exclusively representatives of ethnic and/or linguistic minorities who were born in Latvia or have lived there for at least 33 years.

The last political action in which future non-citizens had the right to vote was a referendum (poll) on Latvian independence on March 3, 1991.

⁶ Растет число учителей, уволенных из-за незнания государственного языка [The number of teachers dismissed for not knowing the state language is growing], Delfi, 12.03.2024:

<https://rus.delfi.lv/57860/latvia/56396486/rastet-chislo-uchiteley-uvolennyh-iz-za-neznaniya-gosudarstvennogo-yazyka>

⁷ Более 40% родителей в Латвии нанимают детям репетиторов; многим сделать это не позволяют финансы [More than 40% of parents in Latvia hire tutors for their children; many are unable to do so due to financial constraints], Press.lv, 14.04.2025: <https://press.lv/post/bolee-40-roditelej-v-latvii-nanimayut-detyam-repetitorov-mnogim-sdelat-eto-ne-pozvolayut-finansy>

⁸ Учащиеся основной школы смогут отказаться от изучения русского языка [Primary school students will be able to opt out of Russian language classes]. BB, 09.04.2024: https://bb.lv/statja/nasha-latvija/2024/04/09/uchashchiesya-osnovnoy-shkoly-smogut-otkazatsya-ot-izucheniya-russkogo-yazyka#google_vignette

⁹ Поправки об отказе от русского как второго иностранного в средней школе прошли первое чтение [Amendments to remove Russian as a second foreign language in secondary schools passed first reading]. LSM, 08.05.2025: <https://rus.lsm.lv/statja/novosti/politika/08.05.2025-popravki-ob-otkaze-ot-russkogo-kak-vtorogo-inostrannogo-v-srednei-skole-prosli-pervoe-ctenie.a598254/>

¹⁰

https://titania.saeima.lv/LIVS14/SaeimaLIVS2_DK.nsf/0/C85E05C8599424F1C2258C8C000AFD1A?OpenDocument

¹¹ Нацобъединение: общение по-русски в школах недопустимо [National Association: Russian language communication in schools is unacceptable]. GRANI, 21.05.2025: https://www.grani.lv/latvia/151174-nacobedinenie-obschenie-po-russki-v-shkolah-nedopustimo.html#google_vignette

By 2013, 37 attempts had been recorded to grant non-citizens at least the right to vote in municipal elections¹². The most recent bill of this kind (936/Lp14) was rejected on May 15, 2025, with 10 members voting in favor and 75 against¹³.

Non-citizens are also not allowed to participate in local referendums¹⁴ or even sign collective proposals for consideration by municipalities¹⁵.

3. Municipal deputies are required to have C1 proficiency in the official language (the fifth level of six), while members of parliament, mayors, and deputy mayors of municipalities are required to have C2 proficiency.

There is a procedure in place for revoking mandates for failure to comply with these requirements. With regard to municipal deputies, the procedure is known to the Committee on Communication No. 3021/2017.

With regard to the deputy mayor of Daugavpils, Alexei Vasilyev, where the Russian-speaking population constitutes the overwhelming majority, the State Language Center imposed a fine (the initial stage of dismissal from office), but Vasiliev won the case in court (judgment of July 7, 2023, case No. 01631000259922.1).

Viktor Puchka, a member of parliament from the only faction currently represented in parliament, elected by votes from national minorities, has been sent by parliament for a language test¹⁶.

4. Mass statelessness and linguistic pressure mean that the proportion of municipal deputies from national minorities is significantly lower than their share not only among the population but also among citizens (Table 1)¹⁷.

Table 1

Percentage of national minorities in the population, among citizens, candidates for office, and elected municipal officials in the year of the election

year	population	voters	candidates	Elected officials
1997	43.4	21.7	6	
2001	42.3	23.2	7.9	7.5
2005	41.7	25.4	11.1	9.7
2009	41.2	27.8	12.2	9.3

¹² Список различий в правах граждан и неграждан Латвии, ЛКПЧ [List of differences in the rights of citizens and non-citizens of Latvia, LHRC], 2013, §3.2: http://lhrc.lv/biblioteka/svod_razl_2013_rus.pdf

¹³

https://titania.saeima.lv/LIVS14/saeimalivs2_dk.nsf/0/26794979133371D8C2258C8C000AFCDB?OpenDocument

¹⁴ Local Government Referendum Law, Adoption: 17.03.2022, section 7: <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/331194>

¹⁵ Local Government Law, Adoption: 20.10.2022, section 56: <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/336956>

¹⁶ Впервые в истории Сейм отправил депутата на экзамен по госязыку [For the first time in history, the Seimas sent a member of parliament to take an exam in the state language]. LSM, 31.10.2024: <https://rus.lsm.lv/statja/novosti/politika/31.10.2024-vpervye-v-istorii-seim-otpravil-deputata-na-ekzamen-po-gosyazyku.a574676/>

¹⁷ Представительство меньшинств в муниципалитетах Латвии. ЛКПЧ, 2021, табл.6 [Representation of minorities in Latvian municipalities. LCHR, 2021, Table 6]: <http://lhrc.lv/biblioteka/predstavitelstvo2021.pdf>

2013	38.9	28.7	13.7	10.6
2017	38.0	27.6	12.5	9.4
2021	37.5	27.6	14.2	9.9

5. Due to the proportional electoral system, parties that rely on the votes of national minorities tend to be well represented in parliament, and for several electoral cycles have formed the largest political group in the parliament. However, in the 34 years since the restoration of independence, they have never been included in the ruling coalition and consequently have not been represented in the government.

In the last elections in October 2022, amid massive pressure from the authorities on national minorities, their representation was significantly reduced to 10 deputies out of 100.

6. However, in such places of compact residence of national minorities as the cities of Riga, Daugavpils and Rēzekne, national minority parties have dominated governance: in Riga from 2009 to 2019, in Daugavpils and Rēzekne - currently.

The government is putting pressure on such municipalities.

On 5 April 2019, the long-time mayor of Riga, Nils Ušakovs, was removed from office¹⁸, and the Riga City Council itself was dissolved by the Parliament on 13 February 2020. The pretext for the dissolution was non-compliance with rubbish collection procedures¹⁹. In the snap elections of 29 August 2020, the parties that rely on the votes of national minorities were defeated²⁰. Since then, the issue of demolishing monuments to anti-fascists and renaming streets associated with Russian cultural figures has been on the Riga City Council's agenda ever since.

The municipalities of Daugavpils and Rēzekne vigorously resisted the government-imposed dismantling of monuments to anti-fascists. The authorities openly threatened these municipalities with dissolution and external administration.

On 2 November 2023, the mayor of Rēzekne, Aleksandrs Bartasevics, was removed from office²¹. By a decision of parliament dated June 24, 2024, the Council itself was dissolved, and on May 21, 2025, the Constitutional Court recognized the dissolution of the Council as lawful²².

7. Municipal elections scheduled for June 7, 2025, will be held for the first time under a ban on paid campaigning in minority languages. The corresponding proceedings in the Constitutional

¹⁸ Пуце отстранил Ушакова от обязанностей председателя Рижской думы [Putses suspended Ušakovs from the duties of Riga City Council Chairman]. LETA, 05.04.2019

¹⁹ Главные события недели в Латвии и мире. Рижская дума распущена, выборы запланировали на 25 апреля [Main events of the week in Latvia and the world. Riga City Council dissolved, elections scheduled for 25 April]. «Чайка», 16.02.2020: <https://chayka.lv/2020/02/16/rospusk-rizskoj-dumi/>

²⁰ Прошли выборы в Рижскую думу. Рассказываем, чем всё закончилось [The Riga City Council elections have taken place. Let's tell you how it ended]. «Чайка», 30.08.2020: <https://chayka.lv/2020/08/31/vyborny-v-rizhskuyu-dumu/>

²¹ Мэр Резекне Александр Барташевич отстранен от должности [Rēzekne mayor Aleksandrs Bartaševičs has been suspended from office]. LSM.lv, 02.11.2023: <https://rus.lsm.lv/statja/novosti/samoupravlenija/02.11.2023-mer-rezekne-aleksandr-bartasevic-otstranen-ot-dolznosti.a530119/>

²² Роспуск думы Резекне признан законным — Суд Сатверсме [The dissolution of the Rezekne City Council has been declared lawful — Satversme Cour]., LSM, 21.05.2025: <https://rus.lsm.lv/statja/novosti/samoupravlenija/21.05.2025-rospusk-dumy-rezeke-priznan-zakonnym-sud-satversme.a599889/>

Court, initiated by the Consensus Party, which relies on the votes of national minorities, were lost²³, and a complaint was filed with the ECHR²⁴.

It should be noted that the activities of Yelizaveta Krivtsova, a lawyer for the Consensus party and the main author of lawsuits concerning election campaigning and Russian citizens, have not gone unrecognized. The Sworn Bar Council refused to allow her to take the exams to become a sworn lawyer due to her insufficient loyalty²⁵. In turn, all nine members of the Council, judging by the spelling of their names and surnames, are ethnic Latvians²⁶.

8. Also, for the first time since the current elections, amendments to the law on local government will be tested, requiring municipal leaders and their deputies to have access to state secrets²⁷, controlled by the ruling coalition.

9. The ban on former communists running for local government and parliament was applied for the first time also to the 2024 European Parliament elections. As a result, the national minority party Russian Union of Latvia lost its seat in the European Parliament, which had been held by party leader Tatiana Zhdanok for the past 20 years.

Since February 2022, the party itself has been warned twice by law enforcement agencies for its allegedly pro-Russian stance, and it has been deprived of the state funding to which it is legally entitled²⁸.

Another (see also section V below) criminal case has been initiated against Zhdanok. According to Zhdanok herself “The Latvian Security Service has brought formal charges against me for committing the following crimes:

- consolidating and self-organizing the Russian-speaking community in Latvia;
- informing people in Russia about the situation of their compatriots living in Latvia;
- discrediting Latvia's image internationally, including by using my status as a member of the European Parliament²⁹”

IV. Russian citizens

²³ Требование об использовании госязыка в предвыборной агитации легитимно — суд [Requirement to use official language in election campaigning is legitimate, court rules]. LSM, 13.02.2025: <https://rus.lsm.lv/statja/novosti/politika/13.02.2025-trebovanie-ob-ispolzovanii-gosyazyka-v-predvybornoi-agitacii-legitimno-sud.a587692/>

²⁴ «Согласие» подает иск в ЕСПЧ из-за запрета русского языка на выборах [“Consent” files a lawsuit with the ECHR over the ban on the Russian language in elections]. LSM, 13.05.2025: <https://rus.lsm.lv/statja/novosti/politika/13.05.2025-soglasie-podaet-isk-v-espc-iz-za-zapreta-russkogo-yazyka-na-vyborax.a598798/>

²⁵ Защитнице прав русскоязычных Латвии не дали стать адвокатом из-за “плохой репутации” - она будет судиться [Defender of Russian-speaking rights in Latvia denied license to practice law due to “bad reputation” — she will appeal]. Jauns, 11.05.2025: https://rus.jauns.lv/article/novosti/653817-zashhitnice-prav-russkoiazycnyx-latvii-ne-dali-stat-advokatom-iz-za-ploxoi-reputacii-ona-budet-suditsia#google_vignette

²⁶ Padomes sastāvs un kontaktinformācija [Composition and contact details of the Council]: <https://www.advokatura.lv/lv/par-mums/padome/sastavs-un-kontaktinformacija>

²⁷ Local Government Law (op. cit.). Section 17, part 7.

²⁸ Партия Центра: без Жданок и под другим названием [The Center Party: without Zhdanok and under a different name]. Delfi, 04.06.2024: <https://rus.delfi.lv/51164891/latvija/120029388/partiya-centra-bez-zhdanok-i-pod-drugim-nazvaniem>

²⁹ Zhdanok's Facebook account, 21.05.2025:

https://www.facebook.com/tatjana.zdanoka/posts/1130197308912258?ref=embed_post

1. According to the data of the Population Register of 1st July 2012 out of 62,245 registered foreigners 41,262 (66.3%) were Russian citizens.

This does not mean that Latvia is friendlier to Russia than to other countries of the world. Most of these foreigners are former or might-have-been non-citizens of Latvia who did not want to put up with such an exotic legal status. Russian citizenship was granted to these people without any checks or fees, and without having to leave Latvia. After obtaining Russian citizenship, permanent residence was also granted to former Latvian non-citizens without any conditions.

The number of Russia's citizens residing in Latvia was growing rapidly: 1996 – 8149. 2000 – 19,236. 2005 – 23,251. 2010 – 31,113, 2013 - 43,586.

The growth in Russian citizens' numbers is usually explained by the difference in retirement age which is lower in Russia. The pension age for men and women in Latvia was 62 years with further gradual (from 2014 to 2025) increase to 65 years. The retirement age in Russia has remained unchanged since the Soviet times and until 2019: 55 years for women and 60 for men³⁰.

In 2025, problems arose with the transfer of money for the payment of Russian pensions to residents of Latvia. The number of pensioners receiving pensions through Latvian services (i.e., those who applied for a pension after the relevant agreement came into force in 2011) amounted to 9,700 people³¹.

2. On 23.09.2022, i.e. a week before the parliamentary elections, amendments to the Immigration Law were urgently adopted, significantly limiting the rights of citizens of Belarus and especially Russia residing in Latvia. For these citizens there is a shorter (compared to citizens of other countries) list of grounds for obtaining a residence permit³².

For example, citizens of these countries are no longer covered by the right to reunification with their closest relatives provided for in §1 of part 1 of Article 23 of the Immigration Law. (if he or she is a relative of a Latvian citizen or of a non-citizen of Latvia or of a foreigner who has received a permanent residence permit, up to the third degree in direct line or third degree in a collateral line, or also affinity to the third degree).

With these same amendments to the law, Latvia suddenly imposed new requirements on the Russian citizens mentioned in §1 above in order to retain their permanent residence permits, which had previously been issued without any conditions or restrictions on their duration.

§58 of the transitional rules stipulated that their permanent residence permit remains valid only until 01.09.2023, unless they submit a certificate of knowledge of the state language for category A2 (the second most difficult of the 6) before that date. The certificates issued before 01.01.2001, i.e. in the period when the mass language certification of the Russian-speaking population had already ended³³, were not suitable for the procedure under discussion.

§58 of the Transitional Rules was challenged in the Constitutional Court (Joint Case No. 2023-04-0106). On 15.02.2024 the court found this legal provision as well as the resulting possibility of deportations to be in conformity with the Constitution³⁴.

³⁰ Vladimir Buzayev. Legal and social situation of the Russian-speaking minority in Latvia, Rīga, LCK, 2013, §4.1.6: http://www.russkije.lv/files/images/text/PDF_Files/Legal-and-social-situation.pdf;

³¹ Власти – старикам о пенсиях: «Ждите ответа...» [Authorities tell seniors about pensions: "Wait for a response..."]. МК Латвия, 09.04.2025: <https://www.mklat.lv/zhizn/9058-vlasti-starikam-o-pensiyakh-zhdite-otveta.html>

³² Immigration Law, section 23¹: <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/68522>

³³ Legal and social situation (op. cit.), §2.3

³⁴ Judgment: https://www.satv.tiesa.gov.lv/web/viewer.html?file=https://www.satv.tiesa.gov.lv/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2023-04-0106_Judgement.pdf#search=2023-04-0106

Amendments to the Immigration Law of September 22, 2022 affected 25,316 permanent residence permit holders who received their permits before May 1, 2002. For those who received their permanent residence permits earlier, similar amendments were adopted on June 20, 2024, affecting an additional 4,650 people.

3. In addition to language proficiency at level A2 a special multi-page questionnaire, including political questions, was required to confirm the residence permit: for example, do you approve of the dismantling of Soviet monuments? The State Security Service (SSS) checked 15643 such forms in 2023 and in 399 cases applicants were refused renewal of their residence permits³⁵.

Filling out such a questionnaire requires a much higher level of language proficiency and basic computer skills. At the same time, the average age of those subject to checks is extremely high.

Of the 25317 Russian citizens affected by paragraph 58 of the Transitional Rules, 5100 are over 75 years of age, 43 under 15 (i.e., exempt from the obligation to present a language proficiency certificate but not from the obligation to complete the other documents). The remaining are distributed by age as follows. In the group from 15 to 29 years old there are only 232 people. From 30 to 54, the number does not exceed a few hundred, gradually increasing (if Russians from 30 to 34 years of age number 226, then from 50 to 54 years - 650). The number of Russians takes off sharply after 55 years: from 55 to 60 years - 1420 people, from 60 to 64 years - 5346 and from 65 to 69 years - 7329 people. In the group from 70 to 74 years - 3,734 people³⁶.

4. At the beginning of 2025, approximately 16,500 people from the 25,316 mentioned in §2 above managed to retain their permanent residence permits. 2,000 left Latvia without attempting to obtain documents, and the remaining 4,600 have temporary residence permits, which in most cases will expire in 2026. Decisions on expulsion have been taken in respect of 81 persons³⁷.

5. There are possibilities for expulsion from Latvia of permanent residents without observing the guarantees described by the government.

The heads of the two largest public organisations of Russian citizens with more than 1,000 members each were also expelled from Latvia:

- 10.10.2020 Vladimir Norvind (76 years old at the time of expulsion), Chairman of the Organisation of Russian Military Pensioners³⁸;
- 12.01.2024 Boris Katkov (82), Chairman of the Russian-Latvian Cooperation Association.³⁹

Separate opinion: https://www.satv.tiesa.gov.lv/web/viewer.html?file=https://www.satv.tiesa.gov.lv/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2023-04-0106_Opinion-of-the-Judge.pdf#search=2023-04-0106

³⁵ SSS annual report 2023, p. 19

³⁶ Успеть до конца года. Россияне в Латвии торопятся сдать латышский. Радио «Свобода» [Make it to the end of the year. Russians in Latvia are in a hurry to pass Latvian. Radio Liberty], 19.04.2023:

<https://www.svoboda.org/a/uspelj-do-kontsa-goda-rossiyane-v-latvii-toropyatsya-sdatj-latyshskiy/32368355.html>

³⁷ Граждане РФ в Латвии: «Власти ожидали больше исков...» [Russian citizens in Latvia: "The authorities expected more lawsuits..."]. МК Латвия, 31.03.2025: <https://www.mklat.lv/zhizn/8870-grazhdane-rf-v-latvii-vlasti-ozhidali-bolshe-iskov.html>

³⁸ Как жестоко обошлись с главой Общества военных пенсионеров Латвии (Дмитрий Март) [How the head of the Latvian Society of Military Pensioners was treated cruelly (Dmitrij Mart)], SOOL, 27.10.2020:

<https://www.sool.lv/kak-zhestoko-oboshlis-s-glavoju-obschestva-voennyh-pensionerov-latvii-dmitrij-mart/>

³⁹ Выдворенный из Латвии председатель Латвийско-Российской ассоциации сотрудничества Катков прибыл в Россию [Chairman of the Latvian-Russian Co-operation Association Katkov, who was expelled from Latvia, arrived in Russia], Delfi, 12.01.2014: <https://rus.delfi.lv/57860/latvia/56260592/vydvorennyy-iz-latvii-predsedatel-latviysko-rossiyskoy-associacii-sotrudnichestva-katkov-pribyl-v-rossiyu>

Both veterans, who had lived in Latvia for several decades, were blacklisted by a decision of the Minister of the Interior and deported immediately without the right to appeal against the deportation decision until expulsion. Both of them still have families in Latvia. A total of 8 people were blacklisted in 2023 at the initiative of the State Security Service⁴⁰.

V. Criminal prosecution of dissidents

1. Politically motivated criminal proceedings (under such sections of the criminal law as crimes against humanity, peace, war crimes, genocide and crimes against the state⁴¹) are initiated against persons who dare to publicly express a position that does not coincide with the opinion of the authorities, rigorous proceedings involving lengthy pre-trial detention are conducted and real prison sentences are imposed. We do not have statistics on the ethnic background of those accused in these trials, but based on visual assessment, the overwhelming majority belong to the Russian-speaking linguistic minority.

In July 2023, the country's president summoned the attorney general for a special meeting, during which he noted that Society needs to be confident that the penalties imposed for criminal offences are proportionate and fair and take equal account of all the objectives of punishment, including the need to deter crime. This is particularly important in cases involving criminal offences against national security in the context of hybrid warfare⁴².

On December 30, 2023, amendments to the Criminal Code came into force, sharply tightening penalties for such crimes. For example, a new Article 74⁴³ was added to the law, providing for up to 8 years' imprisonment for such a vague act as "assisting a foreign state in activities against another state."⁴³

At a meeting with members of parliament in March 2025, the Attorney General stated that the only effective punishment for a criminal offense that threatens national security is imprisonment for a term of not less than half of the maximum term prescribed by law for the specific offense⁴⁴.

2. While in 2019-2021 the Latvian State Security Service (SSS) initiated 20-30 politically motivated cases per year, in 2022-2024 their number fluctuated between 47 and 64. In 2024, half of such cases were initiated under far-fetched pretexts of Russia's assistance in the fight against Latvia and Ukraine, which was expressed mainly in publicly expressing disagreement with the actions of the authorities⁴⁵.

⁴⁰ SSS annual report 2023, p. 34

⁴¹ Criminal Law, chapters IX and X: <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/88966>

⁴² VIDEO| Rinkēvičs: Prokuratūrai jāspēj skaidrot sava nostāja sensitīvās un sabiedrībai nozīmīgās lietās [The Prosecutor's Office must be able to explain its position in sensitive and socially significant cases]. BNN, 18.07.2023: <https://bnn.lv/video-rinkevics-prokuraturai-jaspej-skaidrot-sava-nostaja-sensitivas-un-sabiedribai-nozimigas-lietas-22732>

⁴³ Bargāki sodi par noziegumiem pret valsti un kara noziegumu attaisnošanu [Harsher penalties for crimes against the state and justification of war crimes]. LV, 29.12.2023: <https://lvportals.lv/skaidrojumi/358816-bargaki-sodi-par-noziegumiem-pret-valsti-un-kara-noziegumu-attaisnosanu-2023>

⁴⁴ Stingra nostāja soda noteikšanā ir būtiska, pauž ģenerālprokurors [A strict stance on sentencing is essential, says Attorney General]. TVNET, 05.03.2025: <https://www.tvnet.lv/8204031/stingra-nostaja-soda-noteiksana-ir-butiska-pauz-generalprokurors>

⁴⁵ SSS annual report 2023, §7.1: <https://vdd.gov.lv/en/useful/annual-report-2023>

SSS annual report 2023, §7.1: <https://vdd.gov.lv/en/useful/annual-report-2024>

The use of measures such as searches, detention, confiscation of office equipment, restriction of access to bank accounts, pre-trial detention and/or various police restrictions during the investigation period are in themselves a sensitive means of punishing and intimidating those who share the views of these victims of arbitrariness.

Below are some examples that are widely known in Latvia, such as the trial of 14 journalists, as well as the cases of Vladimirs Lindermans, Aleksandrs Gaponenko, and Tatjana Andriječa.

3. In April 2023, court hearings began against 14 Latvian journalists who cooperated with the Rossiya Segodnya MIA holding company. Pressure on journalists has been going on since December 2020, when SSS representatives came to some of them (seven), searched them and seized documents linking them to the Rossiya Segodnya news agency, data carriers (computers, mobile phones, flash drives) and bank cards. The data carriers were later returned to them. After a year, they were removed from their non-suspension signatures and the seizure of bank accounts was cancelled.

In the winter of 2022, the prosecutor's office completed the pre-trial investigation of the case, divided it into 14 separate cases and brought it to trial. At the moment, the trials are still ongoing and the prosecutor's office is charging the journalists under Article 84 of the Criminal Law for violating the sanctions regime, considering that the Rossiya Segodnya news agency is subject to sanctions imposed personally on the agency's general director Dmitry Kiselyov in 2014, although the news agency itself was not sanctioned by the EU until February 2023.

The article prescribes a penalty of a fine or community service or short-term imprisonment followed by probation supervision or imprisonment for up to four years.

As of May 2025, the court of first instance had fined two unemployed journalists €7,700 and €14,400, sentenced two other journalists to 200 hours of community service, and sentenced one journalist to two years in prison⁴⁶.

4. Vladimirs Lindermans is a Russian-speaking opposition publicist, a non-citizen of Latvia.

In 2018, the SSS opened a criminal case on possible offences during the All-Latvian Parents' Meeting. The case involved several people, including the leader of the Latvian Russian Union party, MEP Tatjana Zdanoka, Vladimirs Lindermans, Aleksandrs Gaponenko and Ilja Kozirevs, as well as two mothers of schoolchildren⁴⁷.

⁴⁶ В Риге продолжается суд над 14 журналистами, обвиненными в работе на Россию [The trial of 14 journalists accused of working for Russia continues in Riga]. «ЦентрАзия», 29.08.2024:

<https://centrasia.org/newsA.php?st=1724928180#gsc.tab=0>

Главный редактор "Sputnik Латвия" Валентин Рожентов приговорен к двум годам тюрьмы за нарушение санкций [Sputnik Latvia editor-in-chief Valentin Rozhentsov sentenced to two years in prison for violating sanctions]. Delfi, 06.12.2024: <https://rus.delfi.lv/57863/criminal/120053174/glavnyy-redaktor-sputnik-latviya-valentin-rozhencov-prigovoren-k-dvum-godam-tyurmy-za-narushenie-sankciy-es>

⁴⁷ Пять уголовных дел заведено за участие во Вселатвийском родительском собрании [Five criminal cases have been opened for participation in the All-Latvian Parents' Meeting]. Press.lv, 16.05.2018: <https://press.lv/post/pyat-ugolovnyh-del-zavedeno-za-uchastie-vo-vselatvijskom-roditelskom-sobranii#!>

They were suspected of inciting ethnic hatred for criticising Latvia for converting school education to Latvian. In 2020, the criminal case was dropped by the SSS for lack of corpus delicti⁴⁸. Also in 2020, the SSS closed the case against Zdanoka, who was suspected of inciting ethnic hatred⁴⁹. Lindermans was brutally detained by SSS officers, who threw him to the ground and dragged him to a minibus without police stenciling⁵⁰. He was charged with three criminal articles: "activities against the Latvian state", "incitement of national hatred" and "organisation of mass riots". Linderman then exercised his right to obtain compensation for the material and moral damage caused during the trial, and the SSS immediately reopened the investigation into the previously closed case on the decision of the prosecutor of the General Prosecutor's Office⁵¹. However, the case was eventually permanently dismissed in 2021⁵². Lindermans was detained by the SSS on June 21, 2022⁵³. The court ordered his arrest as remand custody. His lawyer, Jelena Kvjatkovska, stated that Vladimirs Lindermans is a suspect of committing a crime under article 74.1 of the Criminal Code in the part which refers to the crime against peace. In autumn 2022 Lindermans was released on €6,000 bail and in February 2023 his case went to trial⁵⁴. On 23 May 2023, the first hearing in his case took place⁵⁵ and the trial is still ongoing. Lineidman is also a defendant in the case of 14 journalists (see above, §3).

5. Alexander Gaponenko, a non-citizen of Latvia, professor, academic degree holder, author of numerous monographs, and head of several public organizations representing Latvian national

⁴⁸ СГБ закрыла уголовное дело против Жданок, Линдермана и Гапоненко [The SSS has closed the criminal case against Zhdanok, Linderman, and Gaponenko]. Delfi, 22.04.2020:

<https://rus.delfi.lv/57863/criminal/52079751/sgb-zakryla-ugolovnoe-delo-protiv-zhdanok-lindermana-i-gaponenko>

⁴⁹ СГБ закрыл дело против Жданок: состав преступления в ее высказываниях не обнаружен [The SSS has closed the case against Zhdanok: no criminal offense was found in her statements]. Delfi, 02.06.2020:

<https://rus.delfi.lv/57860/latvia/52106075/sgb-zakryl-delo-protiv-zhdanok-sostav-prestupleniya-v-ee-vyskazyvaniyah-ne-obnaruzhen>

⁵⁰ В Риге задержан политический активист Владимир Линдерман [Political activist Vladimir Linderman detained in Riga]. Delfi, 08.05.2018: <https://rus.lsm.lv/statja/novosti/proisshestviya/v-rige-zaderzhan-politicheskij-aktivist-vladimir-linderman.a277686/>

⁵¹ Tikko Lindermans pieprasa kaitējuma atlīdzināšanu, tā izbeigtais kriminālprocess pret viņu tiek atjaunots [As soon as Lindermans demands compensation for damages, the criminal proceedings against him are reopened]. Pietek, 23.07.2020:

https://pietiek.com/raksti/tikko_lindermans_pieprasa_kajtejuma_atlidzinasanu_ta_izbeigtais_kriminalprocess_pret_vinu_tiek_atjaunots/

⁵² Власти Латвии закрыли уголовное дело, возбуждённое против оппозиционера Линдермана [Latvian authorities close criminal case against opposition figure Linderman]. Eadaily, 21.10.2021:

: <https://eadaily.com/ru/news/2021/10/21/vlasti-latvii-zakryli-ugolovnoe-delo-vozbuzhdyonnoe-protiv-oppozicionera-lindermana>

⁵³ Стало известно, за что задержан Владимир Линдерман (дополнено) - PRESS.LV [It became known why Vladimir Linderman was detained (supplemented)]

⁵⁴ В суд передано дело прокремлевского активиста Линдермана [The case of pro-Kremlin activist Linderman has been referred to court]. T VNET, 10.02.2023; <https://rus.tvnet.lv/7710140/v-sud-peredano-delo-prokremlevskogo-aktivista-lindermana>

⁵⁵ В Латвии завершилось судебное заседание по делу оппозиционного журналиста Владимира Линдермана [The trial of opposition journalist Vladimir Linderman has concluded in Latvia]. Baltija.eu, 23.05.2023: <https://baltija.eu/2023/05/23/v-latvii-zavershilos-sudebnoe-zasedanie-po-delu-oppoziczionnogo-zhurnalista-vladimira-lindermana/>

minorities, was detained by the SSS on April 20, 2018, and spent four months in pretrial detention.⁵⁶

In February 2020, the trial started. He was accused of committing an offence under Article 78(2) of the Latvian Criminal Law - incitement of enmity or hatred on grounds of racial, ethnic and national affiliation, including on the Internet. According to the indictment, the incriminated acts manifested themselves mainly as publications on the Internet. In December 2020, the court sentenced him to a one-year suspended sentence followed by two years of probation supervision⁵⁷. The defendant and his lawyer did not agree with the verdict and appealed it to a higher court.

In 2022, the court sentenced Gaponenko to one and a half years of suspended imprisonment in another case. He was found guilty under three articles of the Criminal Law - for inciting ethnic hatred, actions against the state and assisting a foreign state in actions against Latvia. In addition to a suspended sentence, Gaponenko was also given a two-year probation period and one year of probation supervision.

On February 13, 2025, Gaponenko was again detained by the SSS for participating remotely in a scientific conference in Moscow. At the conference, he claimed that Latvia has a regime of ethnocide. and proposed nonviolent methods of combating it⁵⁸.

The 72-year-old professor was in pre-trial detention as of May 2025.

6. In February 2023, Tatjana Andrieca, a 22-year-old Saint Petersburg university student, was arrested. This Latvian citizen was arrested in Riga, where she had come to visit her mother during the winter holidays.

After eight months in prison, she was released on her own recognizance on 4 October 2022⁵⁹.

Formally, Tatiana is accused of participating in the management of the Telegram channel “Anti-Fascists of the Baltic States,” which calls for the fight against the “criminal Latvian regime.” Tatiana denies this connection.

In reality, before leaving to study abroad, she was an activist in the opposition party Latvian Russian Union and was widely known for organizing nonviolent protests in defense of education in her native language and against the demolition of anti-fascist monuments⁶⁰.

Tatjana Andrieca is charged under the second part of Article 89.1 of the Latvian Criminal Law for leading a criminal organisation or participating in crimes committed by such an organisation. This

⁵⁶ Гапоненко обвиняют в разжигании вражды и антигосударственных действиях [Gaponenko is accused of inciting hatred and anti-state activities.]. LSM, 20/08/2018: <https://rus.lsm.lv/statja/novosti/proisshestvija/gaponenko-obvinjayut-v-razzhiganii-vrazhdi-i-antigosudarstvennih-deystvijah.a289338/>

⁵⁷ Суд приговорил политического активиста Александра Гапоненко к условному сроку [Court sentences political activist Alexander Gaponenko to suspended sentence]. Delfi, 17.12.2020: <https://rus.delfi.lv/57863/criminal/52766219/sud-prigovoril-politicheskogo-aktivista-aleksandra-gaponenko-k-uslovnomu-sroku>

⁵⁸ За речь на московской конференции задержан Гапоненко [Gaponenko detained for speech at Moscow conference] — ЛТВ. LSM, 13.02.2025: <https://rus.lsm.lv/statja/novosti/obschestvo/13.02.2025-za-rec-na-moskovskoi-konferencii-zaderzan-gaponenko-ltv.a587747/>

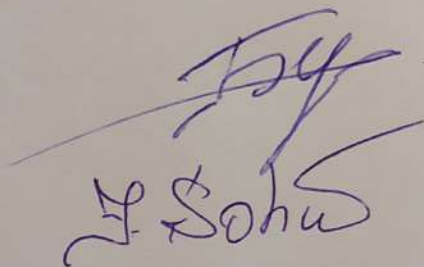
⁵⁹ Спустя восемь месяцев тюрьмы освобождена Татьяна Андриец [After eight months in prison, Tatyana Andriets has been released]. Delfi, 04.10.2023: <https://rus.delfi.lv/57863/criminal/55997402/spustya-vosem-mesyacev-tyurmy-osvobozhdena-tatyana-andriec>

⁶⁰ Татьяна Андриец из рижской тюрьмы: самое тяжёлое — чувство вины за то, что заставила людей волноваться за меня [Tatyana Andriets from Riga prison: the hardest thing is feeling guilty for making people worry about me]. Правфонд, 23.02.2023: <https://www.pravfond.ru/press-tsentr/tatyana-andriets-iz-rizhskoy-tyurmy-samoe-tyazhyeloe-chuvstvo-viny-za-to-cto-zastavila-lyudey-volno/>

article prescribes a penalty of life imprisonment or imprisonment for a term of 10 to 20 years with or without confiscation of property and a probationary period of up to three years.

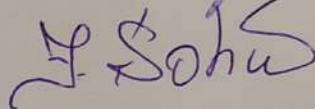
Tatyana's trial began in April 2025 while she was undergoing treatment in hospital for nervous exhaustion. By court order, she was initially forcibly brought to a monitor to participate in the trial remotely, and then released early, interrupting her course of treatment⁶¹.

Riga, 25 May 2025



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⁶¹ Дело Татьяны Андриец: вчера состоялось заседание суда. Рассказываем как прошло [The case of Tatiana Andriets: yesterday, the court hearing took place. We report on how it went]. Press.lv, 15.05.2025: <https://press.lv/post/roslikov-langa-i-delo-tatyany-andriets-vchera-sostoyalos-ocherednoe-zasedanie-suda-rasskazyvaem-kak-proshlo>