



UNITED NATIONS  
**HUMAN RIGHTS  
TREATY BODIES**

HAUT-COMMISSARIAT DES NATIONS UNIES AUX DROITS DE L'HOMME • OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS  
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5 May 2026

Excellency,

I write to inform you that the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (“the Committee”) received information under its early warning and urgent action procedure in relation to the impacts of recent amendments to the legislative framework on the situation of Indigenous Peoples and the situation of human rights defenders, members of civil society organizations and activists working on the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

According to the information received:

- The recently adopted Federal Law “On Amendments to the Federal Law ‘On Environmental Expertise’ of 25.12.2023 N 681-FZ, which entered into force in September 2024, significantly restricts Indigenous Peoples’ ability to engage in the Civic Environmental Expert Review processes. As result, public environmental impact assessments can now only be conducted by organizations employing State-certified experts registered with the Federal Service for Supervision of Natural Resources (*Rosprirodnadzor*). This creates a mechanism to deny accreditation to independent specialists, effectively weakening one of the few remaining avenues through which Indigenous Peoples could challenge harmful projects affecting their lands and resources.
- The State Duma is considering amendments to further weakening the participation mechanisms with Indigenous Peoples by proposing to allow regional authorities to decide whether public hearings are required for urban development projects. Originally introduced in 2022 as a temporary measure to support the construction sector, this exception was meant to expire in 2025. However, in December 2024, the State Duma Committee on Ownership, Land and Property Relations endorsed at the second reading amendments to the Urban Planning Code (UPC) that would make these provisions permanent. Under the revised UPC, regions would be free to determine when public hearings are not needed for drafting or amending general plans. This discretion would also extend to municipal territory planning and land-rezoning projects, as well as to the development or revision of land-use and

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development rules. As a result, the participation of Indigenous Peoples in public hearings connected to environmental and ethnological expertise would depend entirely on regional and municipal officials.

- Since the adoption of a 2020 law establishing a new national “register of Indigenous persons”, access to many fundamental rights of Indigenous Peoples—especially rights related to land, territories, resources, and traditional livelihoods—has increasingly been restricted to those whose names appear on this list. Registration is not automatic: members of Indigenous communities must apply, prove their Indigenous identity, and await approval through a slow, bureaucratic, and often error-ridden process. This new register adds to a series of existing lists governing “recognized” Indigenous Peoples, traditional territories, and permitted economic activities. As a result, Indigenous Peoples can be denied key rights protected under the domestic legislative framework, such as fishing, if they are not included in the new register of Indigenous Peoples.  
Two years after the law’s adoption, out of the nearly 300,000 Indigenous Peoples in the State Party only about eight percent are included in the new register. A draft law tying fishing rights to inclusion in this register would therefore prevent roughly 91% of Indigenous Peoples from legally practicing customary subsistence fishing, placing their food security and livelihoods at serious risk.
- Suspension of several local and international human rights organizations working to promote and protect the human rights of Indigenous Peoples and that human rights defenders, members of civil society organizations and activists working on the rights of Indigenous Peoples are increasingly subjected of intimidation, surveillance, harassment, threats, arbitrary detention and reprisals as a consequence of their work due to the restrictive legislative framework, particularly the Federal Law No. 114-FZ of 25 July 2002 on Combating Extremist Activity, the Federal Law No. 129-FZ of 20 May 2015 (in respect of undesirable activities of foreign and international non-governmental organizations), and Federal Law No. 121-FZ of 20 July 2012 (in respect of foreign agents) and the amendments thereto.

The Committee is concerned that the allegations concerning the situation of Indigenous Peoples in the State Party, if verified, would infringe their rights protected under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD). Specifically, the Committee is concerned that adopted and proposed amendments to the legislative framework would restrict and lead to an inadequate of consultation with Indigenous Peoples regarding environmental impact assessment studies and on issuing permits for economic and development projects on their lands, territories and resources. Furthermore, the Committee is concerned that the implementation of the “register of Indigenous persons” denies Indigenous Peoples their right to self-identification and limits their enjoyment of human rights protected under the Convention. Lastly, it is concerned about the restrictions resulting from the implementation of the Federal Law No. 114-FZ of 25 July 2002 on Combating Extremist Activity, the Federal Law No. 129-FZ of 20 May 2015 (in respect of undesirable activities of foreign and international non-governmental organizations), and Federal Law No. 121-FZ of 20 July 2012 on the enjoyment of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, to freedom of expression and right to security of person and protection of human rights defenders, members of civil society organizations and activists working on the rights of Indigenous Peoples.



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In this regard, the Committee recalls its previous concluding observations concerning the Russian Federation ([CERD/C/RUS/CO/25-26](#)) and its General Recommendation [No. 23 \(1997\) on the rights of Indigenous Peoples](#).

In accordance with Article 9 (1) of the Convention and Article 66 of its Rules of procedure, the Committee kindly requests the State party to provide information on the above-mentioned allegations, particularly impacts of recent amendments to the legislative framework on the situation of Indigenous Peoples and the situation of human rights defenders, members of civil society organizations and activists working on the rights of Indigenous Peoples, by 3 August 2026.

Allow me, Excellency, to reiterate the wish of the Committee to continue to engage in a constructive dialogue with the Government of the Russian Federation with a view to ensuring the effective implementation of the Convention.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Gün Kut'.

Gün Kut  
Chair

Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination