



**Alternative Report
on Russian Federation's Implementation
of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination**

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Preface

The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination evaluates Russia's compliance with the Convention at a time when almost 10 years have passed since the annexation of Crimea and the creation of puppet "people's republics" in eastern Ukraine, and more than a year since the beginning of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine. An open military attack on a neighboring country did not cause mass public protest in Russia despite many Russians have family, friendly, business ties with Ukraine. It became possible, among other things, because over the past decade the Russian state propaganda has formed a discourse about Russia's exclusivity, its "unique historical path" and "traditional values", its superiority in ownership of natural resources and, accordingly, the dependence of the whole world on Russian fossil fuels.

At the same time, propaganda skilfully played the card of "internationalism" and "anti-fascism", convincing the Russian population that a "neo-Nazi regime" supported by the West prevails in Ukraine, which infringes on Russian-speaking citizens of Ukraine and threatens Russia. This argument was used to justify the invasion of Ukraine, along with pseudo-historical constructions that a significant part of the Ukrainian territories actually belongs to Russia.

By 2022, civil society and opposition movements were practically suppressed, independent media were closed and/or expelled from Russia. Anti-war protest actions are brutally suppressed, any civil activity criticizing the actions of the authorities and expressing support for Ukraine is persecuted. The toughened law on the so-called "LGBT propaganda" has made it impossible even to mention LGBTI+ in public space; the repressive legislation on "foreign agents" has affected dozens of organizations and individuals. Leading human rights organizations have been liquidated or restricted in their work, including those who used to communicate with the UN CERD. In particular, the Sova Center for Information and Analysis, a leading expert organization on the issues of racism and extremism and a partner of ADC Memorial in preparing alternative reports to the Committee, has had the status of a "foreign agent" since 2016, and in March 2023, the Ministry of Justice filed a lawsuit for its liquidation.

All of the above is directly related to the issue of discrimination, since the gradual degradation of Russian society under the influence of the state propaganda and the tightening of the regime took place in an atmosphere of escalating hatred and discrimination against various vulnerable groups.

According to sociologists of the reputable Levada Center, the xenophobic sentiments were weakly expressed at the time of the collapse of the USSR, but gradually increased by the end of the 1990s and peaked in 2013. The annexation of Crimea reduced their level and intensity and redirected hostility towards the images of the "Russophobic West", "Ukrainian neo-Nazis", "Bandera" constructed by propaganda (at the same time, no stable negative attitudes towards Ukrainians were observed until that time). In 2015–2018 . the level of xenophobia increased again, and then slightly decreased, but remained quite high, at least in relation to some representatives of ethnic or racial groups. Thus, data from the end of 2021 show that more than a half of the respondents (51-52%) do not want to let Roma, Africans, labor migrants from Central Asia into the country, 45% say the same about Chinese, 41% about Chechens, 32% about Ukrainians (Levada Center, "[Xenophobia and Migrants](#)", assessment of the level of xenophobia and racism, 24.01.2022). The escalation of anti-Ukrainian propaganda after February 2022 led to a sharp increase in hostility towards Ukraine and Ukrainians: up to 70% (November 2022, [data](#) from the Levada Center).

The massive propaganda of national exclusivity and xenophobia inevitably legitimizes direct violence and permit aggressive nationalists to move from words to deeds. Hate-motivated conflicts, including among children and youth, occur all the time (for example, the recent [attack](#) by nationalist-minded teenagers on a school in Chelyabinsk, 8.02.2023). There is every reason to expect an increase in the number of ideologically motivated attacks against foreigners, migrants, and representatives of minorities, although the number of violent incidents has been decreasing in recent years (data from the Sova Information and Analytical Center: 22 victims in [2022](#), 68 in 2021; in [2020](#), 41 people in 10 regions of the country suffered from such violence, one of them was killed; in [2019](#), 45 victims, at least 5 of them were killed, the rest were injured or beaten). This decrease can be explained by total state repression against any manifestations of civic activism, including radical nationalism.

The Russia's migration policy remains extremely strict, and numerous migrant workers from Central Asian and Caucasian countries face racial profiling, police and judicial arbitrariness. The structural discrimination of the Roma population has not been overcome; in recent years, there have been massive interethnic conflicts that turned into violent pogroms, thousands of Roma were forced to flee from their places of residence. The Russia's repressive policies has spread to the newly occupied territories: Crimean Tatars are now being persecuted not only in Crimea, but also in the South of Ukraine. Recruiting and the imposition of contract army service mostly affected the poorest regions of Russia – right those where ethnic minorities live, thus they disproportionately suffer from mobilization. For the indigenous peoples, participation in war threatens their physical survival, while environmental risks caused by the destruction of their traditional territories by mining companies also take place.

The situation of Roma in Russia

According to the census of 2021, the Roma population of Russia is estimated at 173,400 people. According to the information of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation, given in the [Report](#) of the Federal Agency for Nationalities Affairs (FADN) on the implementation of a Comprehensive plan of measures for the socio-economic and ethno-cultural development of Roma in the Russian Federation for the second half of 2020 (20.01.2021), as of 25 In December 2020, 6,718 places were recorded in Russia, where 189,135 residents identify themselves as Roma.

For many years, the majority of the Roma population of Russia has been systematically confronted with various forms of racism and discrimination both by state and non-state actors. The vicious circle of structural discrimination cannot be considered overcome: it includes poor education, unemployment, poverty, police arbitrariness, accusatory bias and ethnic profiling in the judicial and law enforcement system, the inability to register land and housing, risk of demolitions and lack of documents.

As a positive aspect, it should be noted that the FADN regularly collects information on the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan in the regions and publishes summary monitoring data; in addition, the Government adopts updated versions of the Plan (the last one was adopted in October 2022). The FADN operates a State Information Monitoring System in the Field of Interethnic and Inter-religion Relations and Early Warning of Conflict Situations (established in 2017), and in its reports critically assesses the actions of local authorities in such situations. At the same time, the FADN reports incompletely recognize the problems of the Roma population, and the Russian authorities often embellish the situation presenting it to international bodies (cf., for example, the report of the Russian Federation on the implementation of the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (2021)).

Racism and prejudice against Roma are widespread, and public statements by officials play a significant role in this. Thus, at a meeting of the Council on Interethnic Relations (October 26, 2018), the President of the Russian Federation [justified](#) the mass demolitions in the Roma settlement of Plekhanovo (Tula Province, Central Russia) by the fact that their residents were allegedly engaged in drug trafficking:

"The thing is that we missed the moment to influence on these [Roma] people, who, unfortunately, are very often involved in criminal activities. They are professionally involved in drug distribution. [Other] People just don't want to live nearby, that's the problem."

The assumption of the President of the state that collective responsibility for unproven crimes of individuals can be imposed on Roma as a whole, and even in a form not provided for by law (demolitions of houses, eviction of their residents), is perceived by the authorities at the local level, if not as a guide to action, then at least as a possible way to get rid of Roma settlements in their regions, districts, or cities. After the interethnic conflict in Chemodanovka (Penza Province, June 2019) and the mass forced flight of the Roma population, the head of the Chemodanovka Village Council [told](#) local residents that all Roma were forcibly evicted to the Volgograd Province, and they would never return (later, representatives of the Investigative Committee and the Prosecutor's Office said that the forced eviction was illegal and the Roma left the village voluntarily).

The official position on the situation of Roma can be illustrated by an excerpt from the FADN report "On the results of the implementation of a Comprehensive plan of measures for the socio-economic and ethno-cultural development of Roma in the Russian Federation" dated 18.09.2020, which states that "*despite the small number, Roma participate in the formation of deep problems in the field of interethnic relations resulting in maintaining social distance with other peoples, which is a significant source of social tension.*"

Interethnic conflicts with the involvement of Roma

One of the consequences of anti-gypsism in the Russian society is a large number of interethnic conflicts involving the Roma population. This problem is well recognized by the Russian authorities. The FADN have noted "*a high level of conflict potential in places of dense residence of Roma in a number of regions of the Russian Federation*": in the second half of 2020, 48 conflicts of different degree of severity happened in the Bryansk, Novgorod, Kemerovo and Samara Provinces, Stavropol Krai, Yekaterinburg and other places. The rapid resolution of such conflicts is hindered by the fact that local authorities, trying to avoid criticism and sanctions from higher officials, conceal information, present interethnic conflicts as "routine incidents", obstruct the work of journalists. The most negative impact has the non-recognition of the problem of racism as one of the causes and permanent background of the long-term structural discrimination of Roma.

The conflicts involving Roma easily acquire an interethnic dimension and cause aggressive mass actions of the non-Roma population. A typical example is the conflict happened on August 13, 2020 in the village of Kochubeyevskoye, Stavropol Krai. As a result of a traffic accident, a 15-year-old local girl died. Despite the alleged perpetrators of the accident were detained as soon as possible, (among them a 16-year-old Roma suspect), several dozen local residents gathered in front of the district administration building and demanding punishment of the perpetrators and eviction of the Roma living in Kochubeyevsky. In their statements in social networks, the residents indicated that they "can no longer tolerate Gypsies" and are ready to commit "lynching". The full-scaled conflict was fortunately prevented due to the efforts of local authorities.

Below the most serious interethnic conflicts of recent years involving the Roma population of different regions of Russia are described.

The conflict in Khakasia, South Siberia (2018)

On May 5, 2018 in the settlement of Ust-Abakan (Republic of Khakasia, South-Western Siberia) a domestic conflict happened between Roma and three Russian men, which escalated into a fight and ended with the death of a Russian young man. Right immediately after the incident, the residents of the Roma settlement (more than 500 people) had to leave their homes and flee the village due to harassment. They were threatened by friends of the young man who died as a result of the fight, unknown people were shooting at the Roma houses, unknown masked men came to the village on motorbikes and scattered funeral wreaths near the Roma houses. After the escape of the Roma, the local residents, individually and in groups, looted their homes: they stole household appliances, furniture, dishes, double-glazed windows and heating batteries. All 64 houses were almost completely ruined – some even had the tiles removed from the roof.

All 5 days of the looting, the police did not intervene, and reacted only after local journalists published shocking footage of the consequences of the pogrom. According to one of the victims, the police initiated only one criminal case under Part 3 of Article 158 of the Criminal Code ("Theft"), but no criminal was found. Moreover, the police refused to qualify the pogrom as mass riots, or at least as hooliganism – allegedly due to the absence of applicants.

At the end of August 2018, most of the Roma community returned to Ust-Abakan to rebuild their homes, but the village administration opposed their intention. At the end of September 2018, the Ust-Abakan District Court received a civil lawsuit of the administration for the demolition of the houses "arbitrarily built" on 10 sites, but the lawyer, with the support of ADC Memorial, managed to defend the rights of the Roma, and the claim of the administration was not satisfied. Soon after, the Roma community again was threatened by unknown persons. On the night from 05.11.2018 to 06.11.2018, two houses in the settlement burned completely down; the Ministry of Emergency Situations officers confirmed the case of arson. Later, the decision of the Ust-Abakan District Court on the claim of the administration was appealed to the Supreme Court of the Republic of Khakasia, which on May 30, 2019 recognized 13 Roma houses as unauthorized buildings and decided to demolish them within a month. The administration of the Roma community did not offer an alternative housing option.

The conflict in Chemodanovka, Penza Province (2019)

One of the most serious interethnic conflicts occurred on June 13, 2019 in the village of Chemodanovka (Bessonovsky district of the Penza Province, Central Russia). It started with a mass brawl of villagers resulted in death of a male neighbour of the Roma. The authorities of the Penza Province insisted that the fight occurred on the ground of domestic disagreements and the conflict was artificially inflated. Thus, the governor of the Penza Province, in his [speech](#) addressed to the residents of Chemodanovka on June 16, 2019, said that the "West and the United States" are to be blamed in the conflict, as they financed provocateurs spreading false information on social networks. However, the villagers claim that the conflict came up on the interethnic ground while its causes were for a long time ignored by law enforcement agencies.

After the fight, anti-Roma demonstrations of the locals took place, with the demands to punish and evict all Roma from the village. Under the threats, the Roma inhabitants of Chemodanovka and the neighbouring village of Lopatki – about 900 people – had to leave their homes and flee to other regions of Russia. Their personal belongings, pets and livestock remained in abandoned households.

The head of Chemodanovka Village Council said the locals that by the decision of the authorities, all the Roma from Chemodanovka and Lopatki were forcibly evicted from their homes and deported to the Volgograd Province, where, allegedly, the local "Gypsy diaspora" agreed to accept them. Subsequently, his words were refuted by the press secretary of the Governor of the Penza Province, who [told](#) a Novaya Gazeta journalist that the Roma had left their homes voluntarily. Field data show that the Roma left on their own, but they obviously were forced to do it forced, as there were threats for their lives.

A few days later, acts of vandalism and robbery were recorded by law enforcement agencies in the abandoned houses; one house was set on fire, windows were broken in some others, and a slogan appeared on fences: "Get out."

The Police and the Investigative Committee officers detained 174 people – all of them were Roma – while they were trying to move out of the Penza Province. Most of the detainees were released in a few hours, but criminal cases were initiated against 28 Roma under various articles of the Criminal Code. Not a single non-Roma resident of Chemodanovka was persecuted by law enforcement agencies, despite the Roma were also injured in the fight.

The trial lasted 2 years, but it cannot be called fair and unbiased. The court didn't take into account an active

participation of other ethnic groups representatives in the conflict, nor crimes against Roma property, nor ill-treatment of Roma during detentions and interrogations, as well as serious injuries sustained by Roma during the fight (some of them were hospitalized). On July 14, 2021, the court issued a verdict. 2 Roms were sentenced to substantial terms of imprisonment (10 years for the Rom found guilty of murder and 7 years for another Roma for serious harm to health caused to a Chemodanovka local). The other 25 defendants were released right in the courtroom due to the actual serving of their sentences during the investigation and court hearings (9 defendants received a 2 years term, 16 defendants received a 3 years term).

The problem of inadequate state response to interethnic conflicts is well recognized by the FADN: *"local authorities often take active measures only after information about the aggravation of the situation becomes public and goes beyond the regions, and sometimes they secretly try to "squeeze out" Roma communities from their territory. At the same time, regional measures for the socialization of Roma are often superficial, declarative in nature; they do not contribute to the elimination of the main causes of social tension. To a large extent, this is aggravated by the one-side and often biased presentation of information in the media, as well as the insufficient involvement of representatives of the ethnic group in measures to harmonize interethnic relations"* (report of the FADN on the implementation of the Comprehensive plan of measures for the socio-economic and ethno-cultural development of Roma in the Russian Federation for the second half of 2020. 20.01.2021).

Field research of ADC Memorial in the conflict areas confirm the long-standing unresolved problems of the Roma population. Thus, in Chemodanovka, long before the pogrom – back in 2017 – local Roma complained that it was difficult to find an employer who would agree to give them even lowest-paid jobs. The Roma were engaged in cow, pig and poultry farming and small-scale trading on the market, as well as worked in private car services. Most of the Roma in Chemodanovka lived poorly, some suffered from extreme poverty. In the local school segregated "Gypsy classes" were organized from 1st to 5th grade, and only 1-2 Roma children studied in the 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th mainstream classes, while there were no Roma pupils in high school. In 2017, the school could not accept 10 Roma children in the 1st grade due to the overcrowding (classes were organised in two shifts, the construction of a new school was promised to begin only in 2020). The parents were recommended to apply to a school in a nearby village; they were not refused but the director warned that "we have Mordovians here [an ethnic minority], they will conflict with you." As a result, these ten children did not go to school at all, hoping that next year there would be places in the Chemodanovka school.

The situation before the pogrom in Ust-Abakan was almost identical. Residents of the Roma settlement were not included in the social life of the area, many of them are semiliterate. Adults were mainly engaged in collecting and reselling scrap metal or trading on the local market. Due to unemployment, many families were in need. In 2018, 28 Roma children attended primary school in the 1st and 2nd segregated "Gypsy classes" and the 4th mixed class. Due to the poor quality of education in primary school, many children could not reach the secondary level and, in fact, dropped out.

The authorities of the regions where the serious conflicts occurred, as in Chemodanovka and Ust-Abakan, did not take any special measures on overcoming the consequences of the conflict and reconciliation of the parties, nor general integration measures. Right after the conflict in Chemodanovka, answering journalists' questions, the governor of the Penza Province [denied](#) the need for such measures: *"A separate state program for the integration of Roma in the region is not needed. People get along anyway, and the story in Chemodanovka is just an exception."*

In Ust-Abakan, immediately after the mass flight of Roma from the village, the acting head of the Ust-Abakan village council said to an expert of ADC Memorial: *"I would not like the Roma to return."* Later, the village authorities, presumably in coordination with higher authorities, actively – with the help of the police – prevented the return of Roma to their homes.

Ethnic profiling and police brutality

Instead of positive measures to improve the situation of Roma and prevent conflicts, the authorities practice repressive measures: police raids in places of dense Roma residence, mass detentions, rude and degrading treatment.

For example, a Roma settlement in the village of Verkhniye Oselki (Leningrad Province) in recent years has been repeatedly subjected to so-called "preventive raids" by the police and special military forces (OMON).

In March 2020, the police conducted a raid in Verkhniye Oselki – 70 Roma houses were checked, 110 people were taken to police stations. According to the press service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia in St. Petersburg and the Leningrad Province, the police reacted to complaints from neighbors and a report on the theft of

tools from a household in a nearby village.

At 6 a.m. on March 23, 2021, jail-vans, minibuses and other police vehicles arrived in the village of Verkhniye Oselki. During the raid, the security forces massively detained and took away Roma male residents of the village; about 150 people received summonses to come at the police station later. The reason for the raid was the reported theft of metal objects that occurred a few days earlier in a neighboring village, where, according to [journalists](#), one of the Roma residents of Verkhniye Oselki was arrested red-handed. After his detention, a fight took place between Roma and Russians. About 5 Roma took part in the fight, but this caused the detention of almost all Roma residents of the village.

A similar raid occurred on August 18, 2021. Security forces checked more than 150 houses and detained 155 people. A [video](#) taken by the police during the raid shows that security forces unreasonably break down doors and furniture. Several men complained that during the detention their passports were taken away from them, they were held for several hours first on the bus and then at the police station without explanation, while they were not allowed to drink and eat. After the long detention, with fingerprinting, photographing and recording their passport data, they were released.

At the end of December 2021, OMON raids took place in Roma houses in several settlements of Vsevolozhsky and Gatchina districts of the Leningrad Province. As a result of the raids, several hundred people were [detained](#) and taken to police stations. They were checked against police information databases and fingerprinted. According to the police, the raids were carried out as part of investigation of a number of criminal cases of theft and fraud.

Large-scale raids in Roma settlements often take place also in other regions of Russia.

On September 4, 2021, the OMON cordoned off the central street of the Roma settlement in Yekaterinburg — the Shakespeare Street — and forbade residents to leave the cordon. A lot of police cars and vans arrived on the territory, the faces of the armed policemen were hidden by balaclavas. Local residents claimed that they were neither warned about the raid nor received any explanation; the police massively checked their documents and collected fingerprints. The media [quoted](#) a source in the Interior Ministry about a "preventive raid": "*Such a raid suggested itself for a long time. This area has become heavily criminalized — a lot of theft and fraud. OMON and police officers decided to carry out a preventive raid and recorded the data of the residents of the settlement. If someone is identified with the wanted lists, he will be taken to the police station.*"

The problem of regularization of housing in Roma settlements

In Russia, there are at least one hundred dense Roma settlements, with the population from dozens to thousands inhabitants. They appeared after 1956 as a consequence of the state policy on the transition of Roma to a settled lifestyle, but the ownership of land and houses was not formally granted and properly documented. The population of the so-called "tabors" is constantly growing, and, unable to buy land or take it for long-term lease, many residents of Roma settlements have to build new houses on the same plots without notifying the state authorities and without obtaining a construction permit. These houses are considered "unauthorized construction" and are subject to demolition; it is impossible to formalize ownership backwards; in case of demolition a compensation is not provided. It is impossible to legally provide water, electricity and gas supplies to an unregistered house and pay for them individually; residents cannot be officially registered at their address and receive post correspondence. In turn, without registration at the place of residence, there are obstacles for being documented; there is no access to social benefits and medical care, children have difficulties in enrolling in school.

Instead of a systematic solution to this historical problem, the Russian authorities practice repressive measures against residents of the dense Roma settlements: they turn off gas, water and electricity, demolish houses, evict Roma without offering any housing alternative. With such measures against "irregular construction", the authorities try to find a reason to expel Roma from the village, district, city under their jurisdiction.

For example, at a meeting with the population of Chemodanovka, the governor of the Penza Province [promised](#) to check whether the land plots were allocated to Roma legally or not, as well as permits for construction, connection to water, electricity, gas to identify debts.

In Ust-Abakan, the municipal authorities, with the assistance of the police officers, required documents confirming the ownership of the houses from Roma returning to their looted and destroyed homes after the pogroms. Later, the administration of Ust-Abakan asked Roma to leave the village "voluntarily". After the representatives of the Roma community did not agree with this requirement, on September 24, 2018, the administration applied to the Ust-Abakan district Court with a claim for demolition of the houses built on 10 plots. The right to use the land allocated to the Roma in the early 2000s, was disputed as, according to the authorities, the land was "occupied illegally". The District Court sided with the Roma and [banned](#) the demolition, but the administration of Ust-Abakan appealed this decision, and on May 30, 2019, the Supreme Court of the Republic of Khakasia ruled to demolish 13 houses recognized as "unauthorized buildings".

Currently, most of the Roma settlements throughout Russia are under threat of demolition. One of the

many examples is the "tabor" of Roma from the Vlach sub-ethnic group, located in the village of Mashkovo (Borovsky district, Kaluga Province), where only 3 out of 20 houses have been legalized. At the beginning of 2022, the municipal commission revealed "facts of unauthorized construction" in Mashkovo, in the near future all 17 houses may be demolished. The residents of the village appealed to the state authorities for clarification, but no assistance was provided.

Another large Roma settlement under threat of demolition, is located in the VIZ (or Vizovski) district of Yekaterinburg. The Roma village has been existed here since the 1950s, but the local authorities decided to provide the plot to a private firm for the construction of multi-storey housing. Although the Roma have been living on this territory for more than 60 years, their repeated attempts to legalize land and houses have not had any result – ADC Memorial [informed](#) the Committee about this settlement back in 2008. In case of demolition, more than 800 people from 80 houses will remain homeless.

The most massive demolition in recent years occurred in the Plekhanovo Roma settlement (Tula Province, Central Russia). In 2016-2018, the residents of more than 120 destroyed houses turned out to be homeless.

The problem of segregation of Roma children in schools

Despite the principle of non-discrimination in education enshrined in the Law "On Education in the Russian Federation", segregated education of Roma children in so-called "Gypsy classes" is still widely practiced being presented as a "positive measure" applied at the request of parents. Again, on the parents, all responsibility for the violation of the rights of Roma children to education is usually shifted.

Thus, the report of the FADN on the implementation of a Comprehensive plan of measures for the socio-economic and ethno-cultural development of Roma in the Russian Federation for the second half of 2020 (20.01.2021) states that *"a significant part of the Roma community does not have common values and is poorly involved into public institutions. This is often aggravated with low competence in legal issues, the widespread archaic traditions and parasitic attitude, mass violations of children's rights to education."* As measures for the socio-economic and ethno-cultural development of Roma, the FADN proposes *"monitoring the observance in Roma families of the rights of children to receive continuous preschool, primary, basic and secondary education."*

Unfortunately, Roma communities still apply harmful traditional practices that violate children's rights, including the right to education, such as early marriages, exploitation in begging, domestic work, work outside the home (scrap metal collection, market trading, etc.), multi-discrimination of girls, etc. However, the situation cannot improve by itself, while the education authorities and the FADN demonstrate insufficient understanding of the fact that monitoring the transition from primary to secondary school as such is not enough. Roma children and parents should be provided with systematic support and protection against discrimination in schools, and the segregated education is undoubtedly a form of discrimination.

Even in cases of successful education in segregated primary classes, a full transition to secondary school does not actually occur. For example, a primary school located on the territory of the Roma settlement of Plekhanovo (Tula Province, Central Russia) in a former private house hosts about 150 children from grades 1 to 4 who demonstrate good results and attendance. The graduates are proposed to continue education in the 5th grade in the other schools, but in the absence of support for their integration into a new environment, the children quickly drop out. The same happens at many schools that are much less successful on the primary level (a secondary school in the village of Nizhniye Oselki, Leningrad Province; schools No. 140 and No. 15 of the Maxim Gorky village in Volgograd; in Ovsyannikovo secondary school in Orel, and in many others).

Low-quality school education of Roma children remains an acute problem. Teachers often do not have the necessary competence and supportive methodological materials for the work with children who are not native Russian speakers and don't have preschool training. Besides, the teachers lack time and motivation to deal with "difficult" students, being loaded with exorbitant paperwork and instructions from the administration, which should not be included in their professional duties (a common practice in Russian schools). Often the teachers and school administrations are sceptical about teaching Roma children (there is a widespread idea that *"Roma will anyway drop out of school"*), which in practice results in low requirements for children and for themselves as teachers.

There are documented cases when schools refuse to accept Roma children and even exclude them en masse – being based on false considerations about the prestige of the school and under the influence of parents of other children who do not want to see Roma in school. At the same time, no one controls the arbitrariness

of school administrations, and it is difficult for often semiliterate Roma parents to overcome the resistance of directors and education officials.

Mass exclusion of children from school (Samara, 2018). In August 2018, right before the beginning of the school year, 78 Roma children were excluded from school No.33 of the Krasnoglinsky district of Samara. Previously, the education process also left a lot to be desired: since 2013, Roma children have been studying there in four segregated "Gypsy classes", under supervision of only one teacher. The Roma children have no communication with other students except during breaks; they were allowed to the dining room after the non-Roma pupils finished their meal.

When human rights activists intervened in 2020, the director of school No. 33 explained the reasons for the exclusion as follows: *"Even if I wanted to, I can't find a teacher who would like to work with Roma children now. With them [Roma], we had a low enrolment, as parents did not want their children to study in the same school with gypsies, so they sent them to other schools. It damaged our rating very hard"* (interview, archive of ADC "Memorial").

The Roma were advised to apply to school No. 156, but were not accepted there, with the explanation that the school has lack of places and the Roma village geographically doesn't belong to the school.

It was possible to enrol the children to school only after months of negotiations between the Department of Education of the Samara Administration, school directors and Roma parents with the participation of a lawyer and a representative of the Prosecutor's office. First, the Roma were offered with options located far from the village, since there were allegedly no places in the school No.156, where children should go according to the territorial division. Finally, on August 30, 2021, 42 children were enrolled in the school No.171, located near the school No.156, in segregated "gypsy classes". The school administration demanded that most of the children passed evaluation of a psychological- medical-pedagogical commission, presuming their mental retardation. It should be noted that only the most motivated parents insisted on the admission of their children to school, while a much more children from this village remain out of school education.

The children missed three school years, and many dropped out of school forever or never go there – this is the price of the arbitrariness of school directors and the lack of proper control by the Department of Education.

Discrimination against the Crimean Tatar people: Escalation in the annexed Crimea and the spread of repressions in the newly occupied territories of Ukraine

The policy of the Russian authorities in the annexed Crimea has led to a serious infringement of the civil, political, linguistic and cultural rights of the Crimean Tatar people. The Mejlis, the highest representative body of the Crimean Tatar people, was declared “extremist” and banned, and its leaders were forced to leave Crimea. Instead, the Russian authorities created controlled bodies, such as the “National-cultural autonomy of the Crimean Tatars.” All public organizations, mass media and religious associations were obliged to re-register themselves, and a number of them, including the Crimean Tatar ones, failed to re-register. The Crimean Tatar media were closed or turned into an instrument of Russian propaganda. The Crimean Tatar language was pushed out of the education system and the public sphere.

Due to the incessant persecution, hundreds of Crimean Tatars were forced to leave Crimea. For those who have stay but can't accept the Russian authorities' policy, criminal cases, kidnappings, tortures, and long prison terms have become a grim reality. After Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, terror in Crimea intensified and spread to new territories occupied by Russia.

Violation of linguistic and cultural rights of the Crimean Tatars

The school education system in Crimea is under severe pressure of the Russian authorities. In 2019, the Ministry of Education made an attempt to introduce a new textbook on the history of Crimea for the 10th graders in Crimean schools. The textbook contained statements that during the Second World War the Crimean Tatars more than other ethnic groups in Crimea welcomed the Nazi army and more than other ethnic groups collaborated with the occupation administration. Under pressure from the Crimean Tatar community, textbooks were withdrawn from schools for examination. ([report](#) of the Crimean Human Rights Group, 18.02.2019).

Learning and teaching the Crimean Tatar language is increasingly problematic. In 2021, 218,974 children studied in Crimea, of which 212,090 students studied in Russian, and only 6.7 thousand children studied in Crimean Tatar, despite the fact that according to the Russian census of 2014, there are 232,340 Crimean Tatars in Crimea. According to our [data](#), in most schools, Crimean Tatar lessons are only optional, often at late hours or on weekends. At the same time, school administrations often refuse to open new elective courses in the Crimean Tatar language.

For example, in March 2019, at secondary school No. 8 in Simferopol, the school administration asked the parents of Crimean Tatars to refuse to study their native language. In June 2018, in the village of Tsvetochnoye,

Belogorsk district, the principal of a school refused to accept applications from parents to study the Crimean Tatar language. In August 2018, the director of school No. 46 in the village of Orlovka in the Nakhimovsky district (Sevastopol) refused to open a class with the Crimean Tatar language of instruction. All these situations were resolved only after the intervention of human rights activists, lawyers and with the active participation of the parents.

In 2017, the de-facto Crimean authorities adopted a local bill “On the state languages of the Republic of Crimea and other languages of the Republic of Crimea”, which provides for the possibility of obtaining secondary (not higher) education in any of the three state languages, but language training is organized by an educational institution depending on opportunities of the education system. It would seem that the adoption of this law should have approved the equality of languages both in the educational and the public sphere. However, now, based on this provision of the law, educational institutions can refuse to study the language due to a lack of resources or opportunities, and school administrations are already using this argument to refuse to study the Crimean Tatar language.

Crimean Tatars suffer not only from violation of linguistic rights. The cultural sphere is also under serious attack from the Russian authorities. Since the annexation of Crimea, the Crimean Tatars were actually forbidden to celebrate memorable dates.

Thus, since 2014, on the eve of the mourning date – the Day in Memoriam of the Victims of the Deportation of the Crimean Tatar People on May 18, 1944 – representatives of the prosecutor's office have been handing warnings to activists and human rights defenders about the ban of unauthorized meetings and processions. In 2020, the warnings were handed out on the eve of May 3 (the planned but postponed "March of Dignity"), May 18 (the Deportation Memorial Day) and the Day of the Flag of the Crimean Tatar People on June 26 (evidences from the Soviet district); In Sudak, in the districts with compact residence of Crimean Tatars, the local police inspectors conducted "conversations" on the eve of May 3.

Crimean Tatar national symbols, images and heritage of historical figures, attributes of the Crimean Tatar identity are used in the development of the pro-Russian propaganda discourse. At the same time, the authorities demonstrate a disdainful attitude towards the Crimean Tatar cultural heritage and memorable places. For example, they [want to create](#) a recreation area in Bakhchisaray on the territory of the ancient Muslim cemetery Sauskan, despite the protests.

Other Crimean Tatar shrines are also desecrated and destroyed – these are monuments and tombstones in cemeteries, memorial plaques dedicated to the Crimean Tatars who died in World War II, or the ones that have Crimean Tatar symbols on them. In just six years after the annexation, 23 such cases were recorded in Crimea – a little less than in 20 years before the annexation of Crimea. As a rule, acts of vandalism become more frequent on the eve of memorable dates associated with the deportation of the Crimean Tatars in 1944. Fixing the destruction and damage of cultural monuments, the activists are trying in vain to get a reaction from law enforcement agencies.

In 2019, a [cemetery identified as Crimean Tatar by the nature of the burial site was uncovered](#) during excavation work at the location of the former village of Ungut in Kirov District. Activists thought that it was sacrilegious to store the remains in plastic baggies and cardboard boxes under the open sky, even though it was announced that the remains could be reburied following Muslim traditions after they were examined in a laboratory. After this situation was publicized, the remains were taken away. Their fate is unknown.

In 2019, human remains were found during repair work in Simferopol's city garden. Local historians say that an old Crimean Tatar cemetery used to be located at this site. Construction was temporarily suspended, but the fate of the remains is unknown.

Unprofessional repair work that compromised the authenticity and integrity of the 16th century Bagçesaray Palace of the Crimean Khans, which is on UNESCO's tentative World Heritage list, is cause for serious concern.

Discrediting the Crimean Tatars in the Russian media

During the occupation of Crimea, the narrative about Crimean Tatars as “terrorists”, “extremists” and “agents of foreign special services” began to spread in the public space through the Russian state media and politicians. Again, as in Soviet times, politicians and journalists began to speculate on historical myths about the Crimean Tatars as “collaborators and traitors to the Soviet people” during the Second World War; such theses as “Crimean Tatars are not an independent people”, “Crimean Tatars need to be evicted again”, “Crimean Tatars are not respectable, they must be avoided” are widely circulating. Officials of various levels have made such statements more than once, which resulted in growing Tatar-phobic sentiments in Crimea and their popularisation within Russian society.

Against the backdrop of discriminatory and offensive rhetoric, which is openly broadcasted by Russian politicians and Russian media outlets, cases of harassment and other discriminatory practices of Crimean Tatars by both ordinary people and civil servants have become more frequent in Crimea. According

to the testimonies of the Crimean Tatars living in Crimea, after the annexation, their close friends, neighbors, colleagues and clients began to treat them worse.

Statements that defame Crimean Tatars are made by high-level Russian officials and broadcasted by Russian state media. Among them, for example, is the [statement](#) by the Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation Nikolay Patrushev (July 9, 2018) that the political, social and economic situation in Crimea remains unstable due to the government of Ukraine, Ukrainian nationalists and the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people. During the investigation into the case of the gas pipeline explosion in the village of Perevalnoye, the head of Crimea appointed by the Kremlin, Sergey Aksyonov, [named](#) (September 15, 2021) a leader of the Mejlis, N.J., as an agent of the US intelligence services, although his guilt in the incident was not proven, and the connection with foreign intelligence services was not even considered by the investigation.

Escalation of repressions since the beginning of the war

The full-scale war unleashed by Russia against Ukraine on February 24, 2022, opened a new phase of repression against the Crimean Tatars. Almost immediately after it began, a [law](#) was passed in the Russian Federation that provides for up to 15 years in prison for disseminating false information about the actions of the Russian military, which made dissent in Crimea even more dangerous. According to the [Crimean Tatar Resource Center](#) (CTRC), between February and September 2022 alone, Russian security forces conducted 25 searches, 108 detentions, and 124 interrogations, interviews, or “conversations” in Crimea. For 9 months of 2022, 138 people were arrested in Crimea, 104 of which are Crimean Tatars who oppose Russian occupation and military aggression. Employees of the CTRC note that most of the other violations by the security forces affect representatives of the Crimean Tatar people and that this practice has become systematic in Crimea.

With the beginning of the active phase of the war and the occupation of Kherson, where many Crimean Tatar settlements are located, the persecution of the Crimean Tatars began outside Crimea.

On June 22-24, raids were carried out in the houses of Crimean Tatars in the Genichesk district of the Kharkiv region, with their subsequent detention. Bus driver R.A., cultural worker, choreographer S.I., and IT specialist R.I. were taken by the Russian military officers to the basement of school No. 17 of Genichesk and accused in supporting the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people. The brothers E. and R. K. disappeared. On June 28, after a house search, R.S. disappeared. Later it became known that he had been in the basement of vocational school No. 17 of Genichesk for a long time, then replaced to one of the pre-trial detention centers in Kherson. He was accused in preparing sabotage. On July 23, A.K., a 20-year-old teacher of the Crimean Tatar language from Novoalekseevka, was detained at the Chongar checkpoint. He was trying to go to Crimea to join his mother. Later, he was found in SIZO-1 in Simferopol, where he ended up on charges of transferring money, allegedly to finance the Islamic battalion “Crimea”.

In 2022, the persecution of Crimean Tatars intensified for participation in the “Crimean Tatar Volunteer Battalion named after Noman Çelebicihan”, a military formation banned in the Russian Federation as a terrorist organization. Belonging to the battalion is often attributed by the Russian investigating authorities to those who participated in the actions of the civil blockade of Crimea in September-October 2015. Many detainees complained on [torture](#) and other severe violations aimed at obtaining confessions; there is good reason to believe that the majority of those detained and convicted have nothing in common with the activities of the battalion. Currently, according to [human rights activists](#), the at least 10 Crimean Tatars ended up in the Simferopol pre-trial detention center on this charge. Since the beginning of the war, many detainees have already been sentenced to the terms from 5 to 8.5 years in prison.

On September 21, 2022, the defendants in the case of blowing up a gas pipeline in the village of Perevalnoye (August 23, 2021) were sentenced. N.J., a leader of the Crimean Tatar national movement, vice-chairman of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people, was sentenced to 17 years with a fine of 700,000 roubles and further restriction of freedom for a period of 1.5 years. Brothers A. and As. A-s were sentenced to 15 years and fined 500,000 roubles each.

After the annexation, N.J. stayed in Crimea being engaged in peaceful civic activities in the interests of the Crimean Tatars. During the trial, it became known (a [report](#) of the Crimean Solidarity, 25.08.2022) that the witnesses, who confirmed the involvement of the accused in the case, gave their testimony under torture. The searches of the suspects, according to the lawyers, were carried out with multiple violations: without giving the accused copies of the decisions, without drawing up detention protocols, in violation of the right to contact a lawyer. The charges against N.J. were based on the testimony of three hidden witnesses and files found on his mobile phone. The A-s also alleged numerous violations by the investigation, threats and torture. In particular, A.A. claimed that the security forces beat his brother, As., took him to the forest, threatened him with execution and tortured him with electric shocks in order to force him to confess. A.A. himself, according to him, spent almost a day after his arrest with a bag on his head in a cell in the FSB building. All this time he did not sleep, could not move freely and leave the building, he was not allowed to drink and eat. The A-s’ lawyer also [stated](#) that the brothers were tortured with electric current by connecting electrodes to their heads.

Political persecution of Crimean Tatar activists, human rights defenders and lawyers

On May 26, 2022, in Simferopol, employees of the Department for Countering Extremism detained the lawyer E.S. The reason was a tag on E.S.'s Facebook account in a post by another user of the social network, allegedly discrediting the Russian army. On the same day, the lawyer was found guilty and fined 75,000 rubles.

After the trial of E.S., his lawyer N.S. was detained right outside the court building. According to the protocol, the reason for his detention was his violation of public order on the night of October 25-26, 2021, when several Crimean Tatars gathered near the Central District Police Station in support of the detained activists. On May 27, 2022, the Central District Court of Simferopol sentenced N.S. to eight days of administrative arrest.

On the same day, two more lawyers who were supposed to defend E.S. in court, E.A. and A.A., were detained. The same accusations were imposed (organizing a massive simultaneous meeting in public places which led to a violation of public order on October 25, 2021). Later, E.A. was arrested for 5 days, and A.A. for 8 days.

On July 15, 2022, three lawyers: L.H., R.K. and N.S. were deprived of their status and the opportunity to practice law, and on August 11, during numerous searches in the homes of Crimean Muslims, at least 9 lawyers faced targeted blocking of their mobile phones.

The mass mobilization of Crimean Tatars in the occupied territories into the Russian army

The “partial mobilization” carried out as part of Russia’s military aggression in the territory of Ukraine is an element of the repressive policy against the Crimean Tatars. The representative of the President of Ukraine in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Tamila Tasheva, [said](#) that during the first days of mobilization, the Crimean Tatars received about 1.5 thousand summons.

The mass conscription provoked a wave of emigration of the Crimean Tatars from the peninsula. Those who leave Crimea, in a number of thousands, according to [Suspilne](#), call their departure “self-deportation.” Many leave for the countries of Central Asia, where in 1944 their relatives were deported by the Soviet authorities and where many still have relatives or acquaintances. Some of the emigrants don’t have valid Ukrainian foreign passports issued before 2014. The others, mostly young people, have never had such a document. Those who were able to leave are trying to restore or issue Ukrainian passports in the Ukrainian embassies of the countries of emigration to be able to travel to Europe and avoid the return to the territory occupied by Russia.

The mobilization in the occupied Crimea seriously violates the IV Geneva Convention and is recognised as a war crime by international law. Especially cynical is the mobilisation of the Crimean Tatars, who from the very beginning of the Russian aggression opposed the occupation; now they are being forced to participate in a war against their country, their relatives and compatriots.

Migrants in Russia: strict migration policy, racism, the risk to life related to involvement in war

Millions of migrants come to Russia for work, mostly from Central Asian countries (Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan). The pre-war labor migration from Ukraine was also significant, and after the invasion on February 22, 2022, at least 2.8 million residents of the war-affected regions of Ukraine arrived in Russia (UNHCR [data](#), early October 2022; Russian sources estimate their number as more than 4 million people).

Xenophobia towards migrants from Central Asia dominates public opinion. In 2017-2021, the share of supporters of limiting the number of migrants increased from 58% to 68-73%. Although the opinions about the "excessive" presence of migrants at the areas where the respondents live have decreased since 2013 from 69% to 57%, they remain predominant. The number of those who consider the work of migrants useful for the country and the society has grown from 41% (2013) to 50% (the end of 2021), but the share of those who disagree with them remains very significant and amounts to 45% (Levada Center [data](#), the survey was conducted in December 2021).

The escalation of anti-Ukrainian propaganda has led to a quick increase of hostility towards Ukraine and Ukrainians. If before February 2022, the share of negative attitudes was approximately 32%-33%, then after the outbreak of the war, their sharp increase to 70% was recorded (November 2022, Levada Center [data](#)).

The Russia's migration policy is constantly being tightened, both at the level of strategic documents and in legislation and practice. It resulted, inter alia, in [adoption](#) of a new Concept of the State Migration Policy for 2019-2025 in October, 2018.

The previous Concept criticized Russia’s extremely complicated procedures for obtaining various types of migration status and acknowledged that the huge amount of “illegal migration” into Russia was a result of imperfect laws and practices. It prioritized protection of the rights and liberties of migrants and a

social safety net for migrants and devoted a great deal of space to the integration and adaptation of various categories of migrants.

The focus has shifted in the new Concept: instead of simplifying procedures and creating new migration programs (like seasonal migration for students), it addresses combating phenomena which, in view of the intensity of the migration flow, “*may become a threat for the Russian Federation and its bordering countries.*” In particular, it highlights threats including negative socioeconomic processes and the danger that members of criminal structures, terrorists, and extremists will penetrate Russian territory.

The Concept’s text abounds with the terms “security,” “extremism,” and “combatting illegal immigration,” while it mentions next to nothing about human rights, the fight against discrimination, and the social guarantees that most foreigners arriving for work need. It also gives a clear indication of the kind of people considered “desirable” migrants: these are primarily compatriots (Russians, Russian speakers, people fluent in Russia), who make up just a small number of migrants to Russia.

Two recent waves of emigration of the Russian population after the outbreak of a full-scale war in Ukraine forced the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation to propose an [amendment](#) to the Concept of the State Migration Policy for 2019-2025, which state: “*In 2022, under the changed socio-economic conditions, the migration outflow of the Russian population abroad increased. Against this background, the intensive process of compensation of the natural and migration loss of the country's population with foreigners creates risks of aggravation of social conflicts in certain regions of the Russian Federation.*” The draft also notes that the rapidly growing number of immigrants from abroad, including those who have been granted with Russian citizenship, as well as their preferences in living as dense communities isolated from the local population, provokes formation of ethnic enclaves: “*Non-state authorities and informal jurisdiction are being established in the areas of such settlements, the criminogenic situation is deteriorating, the shadow economy and market are being formed, interethnic and inter-religion conflicts arise, the social landscape and cultural environment change.*”

In early December 2018, the [Strategy of State National Policy](#) was also updated. Its policy contains some provisions about countering discrimination and equality of human rights and freedoms, but it still calls “illegal migration” a threat to national security. The core idea behind the text is the endorsement of the concept of a [common Russian identity](#). As the policy states, this identity is “based on the preservation of the Russian cultural dominant inherent in all peoples populating the Russian Federation.

In line with this concept, migrants pose a danger to the “Russian dominant”. This approach can be illustrated by the statement made by the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Kirill, about the threat of migrant culture to Russia (his [report](#) at the Diocesan Meeting of Moscow, 12/22/2022):

“Our people have always demonstrated openness to people of various backgrounds, who are ready to respect the country that sheltered them. ... The arrival of a significant number of followers of other traditions can seriously change the life of our people, including threatening the preservation of its spiritual values and traditions — as it happened, for example, in Kosovo. In this regard, many rightly ask questions: what values, what way of life do migrants carry? ... Isn't it time to talk about the need to save the people not only in quantitative dimension, but also to take care of preserving their identity? Yes, perhaps the needs of the economy can partly explain the mass attraction of foreigners. However, firstly, today more and more native inhabitants of our country cannot find work, and secondly, it is more and more often visible that an overabundance of low-skilled migrants leads to increase of crimes and conflicts not only on domestic, but also on ethnic and religious grounds, formation of shadow economy and even autonomous social regime in isolated enclaves inhabited by people who are often hostile to the native population. It must be said openly: in the conditions of constant pressure on our country from the outside, all listed above is a significant threat.”

Anti-migrant rhetoric remains a constant part of public political discourse and content of pro-government media and social networks. Statistical data is often manipulated, with the allegations of a high level of crime among migrants, despite the fact that the proportion of crimes committed by foreigners has been stable relative to all crimes in recent years (about 4%).

The authorities use any incidents involving migrants as an excuse to tighten migration policy. Thus, the leader of the “Spravedlivaya Rossia” party, Sergei Mironov, after the conflict of migrants in the Moscow region, made a populist statement on Facebook (08/19/2020):

“Introducing a visa regime with southern neighbors is the only way for Russia to avoid a migration catastrophe! Almost every day, information about mass fights of migrants appears in the media. ... In fact, migrants take jobs away from millions of our citizens because they work for low salaries, which is beneficial to employers. While we have almost 4 million unemployed. To restore order within the country, we must start by restoring order at the border. The introduction of a visa regime for Central Asian countries is the surest step. I have repeatedly proposed this measure, but today it has become a hundred times more relevant.”

Proposals for mandatory genomic registration of migrants (taking a DNA from them) are being made with a certain regularity; the most recent (November 2021) came from the head of the Investigative Committee, Alexander Bastrykin, who [explained](#) the initiative by "an increase in the number of particularly dangerous crimes committed by newcomers."

Xenophobic statements are often made due to politically motivated reasons; for example, an increase in the number of migrant-phobic publications in the state and pro-government media has been recorded since July 2021, right before the elections to the State Duma of the Russian Federation, which took place on September 17-19, 2021 (a [research](#) of the media project "Important Stories" and "Novaya Gazeta", 23.11.2022).

The anti-migrant agenda is broadcast by pro-government nationalist bloggers and media, in particular, the Internet TV channel "Tsargrad" with an audience of more than a million subscribers. Its founder, businessman and nationalist Konstantin Malofeev, is known for his active participation in coordinating and supporting Russian and Western far-right groups and lobbying politicians in Western Europe. The channel finds support of the Russian authorities: Thus, the official representative of the Russian Foreign Ministry Maria Zakharova reacted to its blocking on Youtube (2020); she made an official protest and called Google's actions "political censorship" (28.07.2020). The "Tsargrad" takes information from the sources spreading intolerance and hate towards migrants, for instance the from a popular telegram channel "Multinational", one of many social media channels of this kind.

At the same time, it is not propaganda pro-government channels that are accused of "criminalizing the image of a migrant" and inciting discord, but the media recognized as "foreign agents" (cf. a [statement](#) of the Head of the Main Migration Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia, Valentina Kazakova, 29.09.2021).

During the reporting period, a number of serious incidents involving migrants occurred in Russia, followed by hate crimes, police raids, mass anti-migrant demonstrations demanding collective responsibility of migrants and tightening of migration policy.

In March 2019, a local woman was raped by a migrant from Kyrgyzstan in Yakutsk (the capital of the Sakha Republic). The alleged criminals were quickly arrested under an opened criminal case, but an anti-migrant campaign was immediately unleashed. An unprecedented rally "against illegal migration" took place in the city (7 thousand people gathered in the stadium), being attended by the Mayor of Yakutsk and the Head of the Sakha Republic, who actually supported the protesters. It was followed by pogroms of food stores, snack bars and markets, attacks on sellers and taxi drivers. Humiliations of migrants were filmed and distributed on social networks. In one of such videos, a man threatens a migrant with a gun, and the migrant asks for mercy. A lot of publications immediately appeared about violations of sanitary standards at catering and food production enterprises where migrants work; the media covered police raids presented as "operational and preventive measures" and titled "Illegal migrant". The Head of Yakutia initiated inspections of entrepreneurs and issued a ban for migrants working under patents (i.e. from Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and other countries outside the Eurasia Economic Union) in 33 economic areas, including retail and wholesale trade, education, public transport, and many others.

In September 2021, a 67-year-old woman was raped and killed in the village of Buzhaninovo near Moscow. Suspected migrants from Central Asia were quickly arrested, but more than 200 residents gathered in front of the hostel where the migrant workers lived. The suspects had no relations with this hostel and its inhabitants, but xenophobic speeches demonstrations led to the evacuation of the workers by the employer.

Xenophobic statements made by high state officials and subsequent anti-migrant campaigns concerned incidents not only inside Russia, but also abroad. For example, in the summer of 2021, an incident occurred in one of the shopping centers in Bishkek, a capital of Kyrgyzstan: a man hit a Russian-speaking employee for not speaking Kyrgyz. This information quickly spread in the Russian media and caused a wave of hatred against migrants from Kyrgyzstan in Russia. A discussion titled "All Russians were spat in the face" was held on the Tsargrad TV-channel; the leader of the LDPR party Vladimir Zhirinovskiy and his supporters held a rally in front of the Embassy of the Kyrgyz Republic in Moscow demanding to take measures against Kyrgyzstan citizens living in Russia (August 10, 2021).

Racial and ethnic profiling by law enforcement officials remains an unrecognized problem in Russia. Raids and roundups, detention of dozens and hundreds of people are a common way of responding to crimes and incidents involving migrants:

In the summer and autumn of 2021, on the eve of the elections, mass anti-migrant raids were carried out throughout Russia; this was a police reaction to conflicts between migrants: a mass brawl of migrants from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan on July 13, 2021 in the Moscow district of Kuzminki; on August 27, 2021 on Baumanskaya Street in Moscow, about 50 migrants participated in the fight, many more were taken to the police – 170 people; mass fights of migrants also occurred in St. Petersburg, Nizhnekamsk and other places. The state media published panicked

reports; the number of participants of such incidents was exaggerated; there were no productive discussion and analysis of the causes of conflicts. It was about.

On November 5, 2021, a group of "presumably newcomers", as the media wrote, young people attacked a man with a child in Novye Votutinki (New Moscow area). Four attackers – natives of Azerbaijan – were quickly detained, three of them turned out to be citizens of the Russian Federation. The police conducted demonstrative raids in the area, detaining and fingerprinting hundreds of foreigners – workers of nearby construction sites and the market.

In all above-mentioned cases, the actions of the police were supported by anti-migrant statements of the authorities. In particular, after the mass brawl on Baumanskaya Street, the Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin [said](#): *"That's not good. We are not happy with such guests. Therefore, the police have carried out tough raids in recent months. 800 criminal cases were initiated, about 200 people were deported, 17.5 thousand were banned from entering the country. This may seem excessive measures. But we will continue like this. Moscow is a hospitable city. But please behave appropriately being our guests."* At the same time (September 3, 2021), [hearings](#) on migration issues were held in the Public Chamber, with the participation of the leader of the nationalist foundation "Tsargrad" Konstantin Malofeev. At this meeting, the Vice-Speaker of the State Duma, Pyotr Tolstoy, proposed to "move from words to deeds" and "take tough measures", namely, to expel all migrants who violated the law within 24 hours. Besides, there were proposals to adopt *a law protecting the Russian people* and to recognize all human rights organizations that help migrants as foreign agents.

Sometimes anti-migrant raids presented as "preventive measures" have no apparent reason. As a result, migrants cannot feel safe anywhere – not only in workplaces or at home, but even in mosques and leisure venues:

On August 20, 2021, during Friday prayers, security forces came to a mosque in Kotelniki (Moscow) and checked the documents of all those present, without any explanation of the reason of the raid. It was [reported](#) about the extortion of bribes by the police, about the beating of one of the detainees in the police station and his hospitalization.

In St. Petersburg, on New Year's Eve 2023, during the festivities in the city center, about 2,000 labor migrants from Central Asia were [detained](#) as part of a "preventive raid"; later court decisions were issued only against 69 foreign citizens (mostly they were charged with a fine and ordered with voluntary departure from the Russian Federation for violation of migration rules).

On January 30, 2023, it became [known](#) about mass inspections of migrant workers in Tula at markets, construction sites, and in their places of residence. It is reported that about 250 people were checked, very few violations were revealed.

The impact of the war on migrants

Russia's economic dominance in the region over the past decades has led to the dependence of the economies of the former Soviet republics on labor migration. However, migrants face various risks due to the harsh migration legislation of the Russian Federation, often and unpredictable changes in migration rules, widespread police arbitrariness. Therefore, many residents of the region, who had to choose for themselves and their families labor migration as a life scenario, prefer to acquire Russian citizenship in order to avoid bureaucratic difficulties. The benefits of their new status were nullified after Russia unleashed a war against Ukraine, as the price of Russian citizenship is the risk of becoming a war criminal and dying in the war.

The Russian authorities are faced with the massive emigration of Russian men escaping from mobilization. The Head of the Investigative Committee, Alexander Bastrykin, [said](#) that "it is logical to decide on the priority for naturalized citizens to participate in the implementation of tasks of the special military operation [in Ukraine]" (interview with Rossiyskaya Gazeta 13.01.2023). In other words, new citizens of the Russian Federation must "pay" their citizenship. In the same interview, Bastrykin recalled that military service under a contract is a condition for a simplified procedure of obtaining Russian citizenship. Indeed, there are cases of voluntary participation in the war of migrants who expect to obtain Russian citizenship following the simplified procedure.

However, foreigners are recruited both for contract service and for illegal armed formations of the "Wagner" Private Military Company. Moreover, there are attempts to mobilize foreigners to the regular army within a general procedure, although their conscription is prohibited by the law "On the Legal Status of Foreign Citizens in the Russian Federation".

On October 26, 25 citizens of Uzbekistan working at a waste recycling plant in Oryol received military summons. In total, 50 employees of the enterprise received the summons. Foreigners recorded a video message in which they asked for help from the President of Uzbekistan. The director of the enterprise criticized the actions of the

military registration and enlistment office and called on law enforcement agencies and the prosecutor's office to intervene in the situation. The Agency for External Labor Migration of the Ministry of Labor of Uzbekistan responded to the appeal. It said that representatives of the embassy established contact with the workers and management of the enterprise and went to the scene. A day later, the Oryol administration published a statement by the military commissar of the city. He blamed the enterprise itself, which, according to him, did not properly keep military records, and also said that all foreign citizens were released after an identity check.

On October 12, 2022, an Uzbekistan citizen living in Moscow [reported](#) that he had received a summons to the military enlistment office: *"I live in Moscow, but I have never been a citizen of the Russian Federation. Accordingly, I cannot be registered in any military service. I have already applied to the Embassy of Uzbekistan, they told me to come and write a statement; they also warned me that I should not react to the summons."*

In Moscow, [leaflets](#) were disseminated among migrants with the recruitment proposals; the text of contained the following expressions: "opposing the Nazis in Ukraine within the framework of the CSTO", the opportunity to "gain invaluable military experience", "become a hero of Russia", "revive and remember the bonds of two congenial peoples of Russia", "take a direct part in the revival of Great Russia and the peoples of the friendly Republics." Among the requirements for candidates are support for the "special operation" and the absence of anti-war publications on social networks.

According to [a journalistic investigation](#) by MediaHub, the "Wagner" private military company recruits citizens of Central Asian countries for the war in Ukraine via the employment web-sites. They promise a high salary and assistance in obtaining Russian citizenship for "performing tasks in the special operation zone in Ukraine." The contact person indicated in the ads asked candidates to come to Molkino (Krasnodar Krai) where the "Wagner" military camp is presumably located.

There are reports of the relatives of convicted foreigners who serve their terms in Russian prisons and colonies on recruitment of the prisoners to the Russian army and the "Wagner" PMC. They report torture and other illegal actions used to force the prisoners join the military formations. Such cases were recorded in a colony in Bashkortostan ([interview](#) with Radio Ozodlik, 18.10.2022); in penitentiaries in the Yaroslavl Province ([information](#) from the organization "Russia Behind Bars", 12.10.2022).

Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, the deaths of at least 22 natives of Tajikistan and at least 6 natives of Kyrgyzstan who fought on the side of Russia have been confirmed. These were both citizens of these countries or naturalized citizens of the Russian Federation.

Russia recruits migrants not only for war, but also for construction work in the occupied territories of Ukraine, which should be qualified as illegal border crossing and violation of labor rules, at risk of shelling. For example, Russian construction companies affiliated with the authorities recruit migrant workers from Central Asia to work on the restoration of Mariupol, which was almost completely destroyed during the war.

A migrant from Tajikistan said that he was sent to Mariupol in a group of more than 100 people by a construction company Restoration based in Moscow. According to him, other companies, both large and small, are also engaged in recruiting migrant workers to the restoration of the destroyed Mariupol. During the first month of work, according to him, the workers were paid more than 130 thousand roubles (\$ 2,350) – twice as much as they received in Moscow ([interview](#), Radio Ozodi, 3.10.2022)

There is [information](#) about the recruitment of migrant construction workers from Kazakhstan for a "shift work" under a certain state program; several sources of the publication [confirmed](#) to Azattyk journalists that dozens of Kyrgyzstanis work in Mariupol occupied by Russia.

Migrants [report](#) violations of agreements which is common to Russian employers: late and incomplete wages, expropriation of migration cards from the workers on the way to Mariupol. They were interrogated on the way back when entering the Russian Federation.

Detention of stateless persons and migrants for deportation that cannot be carried out

According to the population census of 2020-21, about 95,000 stateless people live in Russia. Human rights activists [estimate](#) the number of stateless persons up to 400-500 thousand people.

Russian migration legislation treats migrants with citizenship and stateless persons as a similar group, including the laws regulating expulsion/deportation. Violation of the migration regime refers to administrative proceedings with the time limit for their execution up to 2 years – for this period, undocumented stateless persons might be deprived of their liberty, despite they cannot be expelled anywhere. After the release, they are not provided with identity documents, which becomes a ground for repeated detentions.

Foreign nationals find themselves in the same situation if their expulsion cannot be carried out (it might be lack of effective communication with the diplomatic missions of the countries of their origin, errors in documents, closed borders due to the pandemic or the war against Ukraine etc.).

During the Covid-19 pandemic, expulsions could not be carried out due to closed borders; therefore, despite the risk of infection, the deportation centers were overcrowded. The same applies to the citizens of Ukraine: the war unleashed by Russia interrupted the diplomatic relations of the two countries, the consulates of Ukraine stopped service, the borders were closed.

The Russian legislation doesn't impose judicial control over the reasons and duration of the detention, therefore, those who have nowhere to be expelled or deported are detained for indefinite term without access to legal aid, in conditions that are worse than prison.

Back in 2014, the European Court of Human Rights issued an important [decision](#) in the case of the stateless person Roman Kim; it recognized the long-term detention of apatrides, as well as inhuman conditions in the detention center as violation of the Convention. As the general measures requested by the ECHR were not implemented, it took a [ruling](#) of the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation in a similar case of the stateless Noe Mskhiladze to recognize unconstitutional the immigration detention of apatrides. These two strategic decisions played an important role in the fight for the rights of stateless persons in Russia. Based on the case of Mskhiladze, the lawyers managed to release dozens of foreigners and stateless persons, but the legislation has only partially changed for the better.

As for the documentation of apatrides, the amendments to the Law on the Legal Status of Foreign Citizens, which [entered into](#) force in August 2021, have already allowed hundreds of stateless persons to obtain a temporary ID-card giving the right to live and work in Russia legally (Art.52). The document is valid for 10 years; documented apatrides cannot be expelled or deported; decisions on their undesirability, expulsion or deportation must be cancelled. A limited time is allowed for the identification of a stateless person and the issuance of an ID. Documented stateless persons cannot be brought to administrative responsibility for violation of the migration regime or "illegal labor".

However, the documentation procedure is still working poorly. Law enforcement agencies often delay or sabotage the identification procedure. Amendments on the legalization of stateless persons have not been made to all related laws – for example, it is necessary to introduce stateless persons into the Law on Acts of Civil Status so that they can marry, be the official parent of their children, receive social benefits, education, health services, etc.

As for judicial control over the terms and grounds of detention, it has not yet been introduced into the legislation. The relevant amendments to the Administrative Code have been under consideration since 2017 and have not yet been adopted. The courts continue to decide on the expulsion of stateless persons and their detention in deportation centers. Human rights defenders continue registering a lot of cases of detention of apatrides throughout Russia and even [deaths](#) in detention which is directly caused by unlimited term and extremely hard conditions of detention. Many are imprisoned several times – this applies even to those who [won](#) cases in the ECHR and received compensation.

A native of Tajikistan, Kh.M., like many former citizens of the USSR, did not become a citizen of any country in the 1990s. Since 1993, he has lived in Russia. In 2014, Kh.M. was detained in a deportation center first in Arkhangelsk, and later in St. Petersburg, where he spent 9 months in terrible conditions and then [released](#) with the assistance of a lawyer. After his release, Kh.M.'s lawyers filed a complaint with the ECtHR for unlawful prolonged detention in inhuman conditions. On January 29, 2019, this complaint [was upheld](#). In its decision, the European Court again found Russia guilty of violating the right to liberty and security of a stateless person, and the applicant was awarded a compensation.

During the time that he was out of detention center, Kh.M. did not manage to get even a temporary identity card, he remained an "illegal immigrant", and 2 years and 10 months after his release, he was again found guilty of violating the rules of stay in the Russian Federation and again was detained in the deportation center. After 1 year and 1 month in custody, in December, 2022, thanks to the efforts of a lawyer, Kh.M. was again released, but during the time of detention, serious changes took place in his life. His sister with whom he had lived before his imprisonment had died. Due to the lack of documents, he was never registered in her apartment, and therefore, after his release, he appeared to be homeless. He could not find neither a job, nor an opportunity for accommodation. Homeless way of life affected his psychological and physical condition, socialisation and health. Being undocumented, he cannot even receive stable medical care.

The lawyers of ADC Memorial twice managed to release a stateless person A.H. from the deportation center (in 2017 and in 2019), and each time his case required appeals in several judicial instances. Again in December 2021, the St. Petersburg City Court refused to release A.H. from the deportation center, where he was

imprisoned despite the impossibility of expulsion, the amended law on documenting stateless persons, and the risk of COVID19 infection in the deportation center.

The lack of judicial control over the reasons and terms of detention in deportation centers has had the most dramatic effect on the situation of Ukrainian citizens: for violating the migration regime, the courts sentence them to expulsion and deprive them of their freedom, although Ukrainian citizens cannot leave for their homeland during the war. Mass detentions of Ukrainians took place in February – May 2022.

On August 27, 2022, there was adopted and introduced a decree of the President of the Russian Federation on temporary cancellation of expulsion/deportation of Ukrainians and on the lifting restrictions on their stay in the Russia ([Decree No. 585](#) — "On temporary measures to regulate the legal status of citizens of the Donetsk People's Republic, Lugansk People's Republic and Ukraine in the Russian Federation", August 27, 2022). It has eased the situation of many, but by no means all, Ukrainian citizens who cannot leave Russia due to military actions. For example, those who have served a criminal sentence in Russia and should be deported continue to be detained "before deportation" which is obviously impossible. In fact, they receive a new term of imprisonment, although they have already served time for a criminal offense.

They risk spending 2 years in a deportation center (the maximum term of administrative detention) in conditions that are often even worse than in a prison, although it is just as impossible to deport "undesirable" former prisoners as to expel administratively convicted.

Even after the adoption this decree, Ukrainians who have been ruled to an impossible expulsion are still deprived of their liberty in the deportation centers:

O.K., a native of Ukraine, spent 1 year and 2 months in a deportation center in St.Petersburg for the purpose of expulsion — from December 2021 to February 2023. While working in Russia for years, she lost her documents just before the Covid-19 pandemic. She could not issue a temporary identity card in time and leave for Ukraine as the borders were closed, and any transport communications were interrupted. Two months after her imprisonment, a full-scale war broke out in Ukraine, which made it impossible to restore documents and return home.

On January 13, 2023, the Moscow District Court of St. Petersburg refused to release her considering the expulsion possible saying that the lack of air communication with Ukraine is temporary, and that it is possible to expel her to a third country. All arguments of the lawyer were ignored. To release O.K. from the deportation center, it required an appeal to the St. Petersburg City Court and a new hearing of her case by the same Moscow District Court, which cancelled its own decision on expulsion.

Nationality stripping as a repressive measure

Recently, there have been several remarkable cases of stripping Russian nationality; all related to former citizens of the USSR who acquired citizenship of the Russian Federation, which was their only one.

In these cases, Article 22 of the Law on Citizenship of the Russian Federation is applied, which allows the deprivation of acquired citizenship if the applicant, when submitting documents, indicated deliberately false information about him/herself (para 1 of Article 22). Conviction under articles related to terrorism and extremism is equated to providing false information (para 2 of Article 22). Legitimacy of paragraph 2 of Article 22 was [confirmed](#) by the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation (the case of Aleksei Novikov, 11.03.2021), despite obvious contradictions to a number of justice principles.

Petrozavodsk resident A.N. was born in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1969 and has been living in Russia since 1987. He never held Ukrainian citizenship, even though he has Ukrainian roots. He had a Soviet passport and was granted Russian citizenship in 2005. In 2017, he was charged with preparing to participate in the activities of a terrorist organization (Part 1 of Article 30 and Part 2 of Article 205.5 of Russia's Criminal Code) for posts he made online. A.N. stated in court that he confessed under torture during the investigation. The Moscow District Military Court ignored this statement and found him guilty, sentencing him to four years in prison in February 2017. A.N. was released in 2019, but in April 2020 the Main Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs for Moscow rescinded his Russian citizenship and required him to leave Russia by June 30, 2020, even though this demand obviously could not be fulfilled: There was not one country that could accept him and it is a crime to cross the border without documents.

Firstly, Article 22 does not take into account how long the given "criminal" lived in Russia from the moment of acquiring citizenship to the commission of the crime. Thus, the law assumes that citizenship was obtained with the original criminal intent, which can be realized years and decades later. This makes the law retroactive, which is prohibited by Article 54 of the Russian Constitution. Secondly, Article 22 contradicts Article 20, which does not allow withdrawal from Russian citizenship if a person would become a stateless

person. Finally, it violates Art. 6 of the Constitution, which asserts equality in the rights of both citizens by birth and those who acquired citizenship later, and proclaims that a citizen of the Russian Federation cannot be deprived of his/her citizenship.

The decision to strip A.N. of his citizenship also contradicts amendments to the law [“On the Legal Status of Foreign Nationals in the Russian Federation”](#) that were adopted in February 2021. These amendments were aimed at legalizing stateless people, including those who are the subject of a decision revoking Russian citizenship; those who were found undesirable (including people who have completed a sentence and people who have outstanding convictions); and those who face expulsion or deportation but do not have a country that can take them.

Deprivation of citizenship is used *inter alia* as a punitive measure against oppositionists, civil activists:

In June 2022, the prosecutor's office demanded that A.M., an environmental activist who actively opposes the war in Ukraine, be stripped of his Russian citizenship. A.M. has been living in Russia since early childhood, has no other citizenship, and is married to a Russian citizen. The reason for the deprivation of citizenship was again called "providing false information" (residential address) in the questionnaire in 2004. In February 2023, the Moscow Oblast court deprived of citizenship not only A.M., but his brothers and father. The father was detained after the court hearing.

The situation of indigenous peoples in the Russian Federation

Lack of mechanisms protecting traditional environment of indigenous peoples

Indigenous peoples of Russia have been suffering from the activities of mining companies – coal and alluvial gold mining, oil spills. The sanctions imposed on the export of Russian coal and other fuel fossils have not led to a reduction in harm to the environment.

Before the war, the coal industry in Southern Siberia faced economic crisis due to a decrease in demand for coal products in the West and the lack of the transport capacity of the BAM and Trans-Siberian Railway to deliver coal to alternative markets (China, India and other eastern countries). The declining production volumes, consequently, led to a decrease in the negative impact on the environment. However, granting coal miners quotas for delivering coal to the East allowed to intensify coal mining again. For example, by the end of 2022, 2.6 million tons of coal were [excavated](#) at the Kirbinsky open pit located in Khakasia (it is a part of the “Russian Coal” Company). This is 500 thousand tons, or 24% more compared to 2021. Since 2022, an open pit “Arshanovski” also increased coal production which affects the settlements of Khakas people.

The ecological situation in Khakasia and the Kemerovo Province is one of the worst in the country. The open method of coal mining prevailing in Southern Siberia, has a complex negative impact on the environment. Unlike mines, pits spew a tremendous amount of dust into the air during the mining and transportation of coal, and also during its processing at coal preparation plants. This dust contains coal particles, unburned explosives, and mine dust (mineral particles and/or debris) that is toxic for animals and people and gives rise to a whole range of oncological illnesses and other respiratory illnesses. At open-pit mines, coal is consistently mined using powerful explosions. During an explosion, about 500 tons of dust rises to a height of 1,500 meters; this dust disseminates within four to six hours within a radius of dozens of kilometers from the pit, falls on soil and vegetation consumed by animals, and pollutes the rivers and wetlands.

The other problematic sources of industrial dust are waste piles, industrial roads, coal loading stations and so called “coal dragons” – separators that discharge a colossal amount of black coal dust containing phenol and other toxic substances.

The alluvial gold mining causes irreparable damage to rivers and surrounding ecosystems. It has been conducted in recent years around the traditional lands of the Shors — the villages of the Askiz district of Khakasia and the Mezhdurechensk Urban District of the Kemerovo Province – despite the fact that these settlements are included in the Federal List of Places of Traditional Residence and/or in the specially protected areas of traditional nature management (TPP) that must be protected from any industrial intervention.

Currently, about ten placer mines are operating in close proximity to Shor villages. All of them are located on the rivers that are the most important form of sustenance for the Shor, because they are the only source of drinking water for Shor villages, livestock, and the wild animals of the taiga, which are the foundation of the Shor economy. The disappearance of fish due to waste discharged into the rivers by the

placer mines deprives the Shor of an irreplaceable element of their diet, and the wild animals that eat the fish have to migrate to remote areas that hunters cannot access.

In Askizki District of Khakasia, the gold miners have been regularly discharging untreated water into the Balyksu river. In 2020, the water of the [Balyksu River was found](#) to exceed the maximum allowable concentration of pollutants like iron, copper, zinc, and petroleum products, as well as baseline indicators, by a factor of five.

In Kemerovo Province, the gold-mining company Novy Bazas, whose licensed plot stretches for 32 kilometers, polluted the Bazas and Orton rivers, as well as their numerous tributaries and streams that supply the villages of Orton, Trekhrechye, and Ilinka with water. Water resources, including many kinds of fish, have suffered greatly from pollution. In one case, in the spring and summer of 2021 some residents of Trekhrechye got food poisoning from eating them. Local residents' complaints to the district administration, supervisory bodies, and the prosecutor's office were ignored.

It is extremely difficult for representatives of indigenous communities to obtain fair compensation for the damage caused by industrial companies to their traditional habitats. An example is the ecological catastrophe that affected the territories of the small indigenous peoples of Taimyr in 2020: the communities of Nganasan (about 700 people), Dolgan (the total number is about 8000 people), and others – Nenets, Ents and Evenks.

On May 29, 2020, more than 21 thousand tons of diesel fuel leaked at a power station owned by the Russian mining and metallurgical company “Norilsk Nickel” (the Taimyr Peninsula). About 6 thousand tons fell into the ground, while 15 thousand tons poisoned the Daldykan River, then the Ambarnaya River and a large lake Pyasina (735 km²), finally the leak reached the Kara Sea. In the first three days after the leak, it was managed to collect and deactivate only 120 tons of diesel, and the bulk of the fuel, according to Rosrybolovstvo (a state agency regulating fishery) monitoring data, went into Lake Pyasino. The concentration of harmful substances in the water of the Ambarnaya River exceeded the norm by a factor of tens of thousands. On June 3, a federal emergency was officially declared in Russia. Rosprirodnadzor (a state agency carrying out control over the natural environment) estimated the damage from the environmental disaster at 148 billion roubles. The “Norilsk Nickel” paid a fine to the federal budget.

According to a profound [investigation](#) by Novaya Gazeta journalists whose work was obstructed by the “Norilsk Nickel”, a compensation of 250 thousand roubles per person were paid on behalf of the “Norilsk Nickel” to the Nganasans registered as members of fisher's communities, under the condition of signing an agreement that the company had fully fulfilled its obligations. Due to extreme poverty, lack of trust in a fair outcome and in the hope of getting at least some money, 700 people signed agreements that makes it impossible to apply for compensation in court.

In June 2022, the Katyginsky community of indigenous peoples of the North, who had not signed any agreements, filed a 30 million lawsuit against the “Norilsk Nickel”. The compensation was calculated based on the damage to water and lands used by the community, as well as in relation to the violation by the “Norilsk Nickel” of the rights of indigenous residents to traditional way of life. On July 5, 2022, the Arbitration Court of the Krasnoyarsk Krai refused to proceed with the case due to formal reasons.

Arbitrary seizure of indigenous peoples' lands for the needs of the extractive industry

Contrary to international standards, Russian law does not stipulate that Indigenous peoples have collective property rights to their traditional land: Under Article 8 of Russian Federal Law No. 82-FZ of April 30, 1999 “On Guarantees of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples of the Russian Federation,” small Indigenous peoples have only the right to use at no charge the land of various categories of land in areas where they have traditionally lived and been active that are vital to them for pursuing their traditional activities and trades. The Land Code (Article 39.10.13) establishes a timeframe of 10 years for this free land use.

Land rights and the right to property are generally protected as individual rights by the Civil and Land codes. Some additional guarantees that are not related to the special status of Indigenous peoples are granted by environmental protection laws.

Russian legislation does not regulate or enshrine the principle of free prior and informed consent (FPIC), although the authorities inform international bodies that the FPIC applies to indigenous peoples in Russia (in particular, official information on Russia's implementation of the recommendations of the UN CERD (2019)). It is true that individual provisions of FPIC are included in various regulations and legal acts. For example, Article 39.14 of the Land Code establishes that land plots in areas where small Indigenous peoples traditionally reside can only be granted to business entities with account for the results of citizen assemblies and referendums, because this affects these people's legal interests. The need for members and

associations of small Indigenous peoples to participate in the adoption of decisions affecting their rights and interests is mentioned in the Roadmap for the Sustainable Development of Small Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia, and the Far East of the Russian Federation, which was approved by order of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 132-r of February 4, 2009.

Federal Law No. 49-FZ "On Territories of Traditional Nature Use of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the RF" (dated 07.05.2001) creates certain, although limited, opportunities for guarantees of the land right of indigenous peoples, but in the absence of a specific mechanism for its application, the authorities act arbitrarily. Thus, in Khakasia, in the Tashtypski and Askizski districts bordering Kuzbass, the lands of the Shors were included within the borders of the territory of traditional nature use of regional importance. In the Kemerovo Province, on the contrary, the territories of traditional nature use are not being created despite their numerous requests submitted to various levels of government.

The ambiguousness of land rights means that members of small indigenous peoples cannot use the land free of charge even within the boundaries of their territory of traditional residence.

In the Novokuznetsky urban district which is on the list of places of traditional residence and traditional activities of the Teleut people, in 2008, the administration filed a claim demanding payment of a land tax from N., a Teleut. The court did not grant this claim, citing the law "On Guarantees of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples." In 2015, the administration filed a claim regarding unauthorized seizure of a land plot and unjust enrichment and the court took its side, ruling that N. had to pay land taxes covering three years in the amount of 601,000 rubles. The administration filed another claim regarding unjust enrichment over the period of 2015–2017 in 2017; the court granted the claim, this time in an amount of almost 990,000 rubles, and court bailiffs confiscated N.'s property.

Attempts to amend the federal laws 49-FZ "On Territories of Traditional Nature Use of Small Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia, and the Far East of the RF" and 82-FZ "On the guarantees of the Rights of Small Indigenous Peoples in the RF" were sharply opposed by indigenous peoples (sf., for example, (see, for example, [Conclusion](#) of the Standing Committee of the State Assembly (Il Tumen) of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) on the issues of indigenous peoples of the North and Arctic affairs on draft amendments to the Law 49-FZ, June 14, 2017; [Open letter](#) of the informal association "Aboriginal Forum", and [protest](#) of the "Union of Communities of Indigenous Peoples of the Krasnoyarsk Krai" against adoption of Bill No. 332762-7 "On Amendments to Article 8 Federal Law "On Guarantees of the Rights of Indigenous Minorities of the Russian Federation"). In their opinion, the proposed amendments did not eliminate legal lacunae and created new risks for ensuring the rights of indigenous peoples: The law is not compliant with provisions of international documents on indigenous rights or the Russian Constitution; various provisions of the law on territories of traditional nature use are primarily aimed at protecting the interests of businesses and not the population living on them; the participation of members of indigenous peoples in the creation and functioning of territories of traditional nature use is minimal; the distribution of powers between regional and federal authorities during the creation of territories of traditional nature use indicated in the bill does not correspond to the interests of indigenous peoples; the bill does not regulate the status of territories of traditional nature use already created in the region; and the territories of traditional nature use exclude "specially protected territories," which lowers the degree of protection for the traditional living environment of the indigenous peoples.

The so-called "Far Eastern Hectare" law has also complicated the situation of indigenous peoples (Federal Law No. 119-FZ "On the Special Aspects of Granting Land Plots Owned by the State or a Municipality and Located within Constituent Entities of the Russian Federation Comprising the Far East Federal District to Citizens, and on the Introduction of Amendments to Certain Legal Acts of the Russian Federation"; in effect since June 1, 2016 for residents of the Far Eastern Federal District, which was expanded to include Buryatia and Transbaikal in 2019; the Free Hectare Program was opened to all residents of Russia since February 1, 2017).

Indigenous communities were sceptical of this law from the beginning because in a number of cases territories of traditional nature use were transferred as "hectares." In July 2020, there was a proposal to extend this law to "Arctic hectares" in Murmansk Province, Nenets and Yamalo-Nenets autonomous okrugs, and 23 municipal districts in Krasnoyarsk Krai, Arkhangelsk Province, the Komi Republic, and the Republic of Karelia. Under this law, land (one hectare per person) is granted free of charge for five years of use and then registered as property or under a long-term lease. The plot can be used to build a home or conduct any type of economic activity.

The Land Code provides for the seizure of land plots from individuals to further public interests (Article 49). To implement large-scale projects, on April 1, 2015 an addition was made to the Land Code

under which federal, regional, and local government bodies may decide to seize land not just at their own initiative, but also at the petition of agents of natural monopolies, subsoil users, and other organizations (Paragraph 4 of Article 56.3 of the Land Code). During the seizure process, the grounds, terms, and procedure for adopting a decision on seizure must be closely complied with, including advanced compensation for damages and losses; in case of coal mining, an ecological expertise should be provided, together with the change of the status of the land which should be agreed at public discussion.

However, in practice, land is seized in favor of mining companies without necessary approvals or as a result of falsification. Thus, in Khakasia, coal companies, with the full support of the authorities, obtain permission to conduct industrial activities and seize agricultural land for the industrial purposes.

For the first time, residents of Khakas villages faced their property and land rights violated in 2013, when two large coal companies in the Koibal steppe — LLC "Coal Company "Mayrykhsky Open Mine" and LLC "Arshanovsky Open Mine" – started coal mining, despite the lack of permits and protests of the locals.

In 2018, the Mayrykhsky Mine obtained a license to excavate mineral resources at the new Beisky-Zapadny site, where the farms used to be located, with pastures and hay fields, as well as reclamation channels that supply water to the lakes of the Koibal steppe.

In order to legitimize the construction of new mines, from October 2018 to March 2019, representatives of coal companies organized public hearings, as it is required by law. The locals voted almost unanimously against the construction. Being supported by the republican authorities, the miners falsified the votes and managed to obtain permission for construction. Later, the Department of Land Management of the Central Siberian Okrug issued 14 orders on the seizure of more than 50 land plots from 44 owners in favor of coal mines. Besides, the Government of the Republic of Khakasia issued a decree and changed the status of 17 land plots in the Beyski district from agricultural to industrial.

The owners of the land plots have repeatedly appealed to the court and achieved invalidation of the decree of the Government of the Republic of Khakasia (rulings of March 12, 2020, the Fifth Appellation Court of General Jurisdiction). Nevertheless, despite the ruling, coal miners continued to illegally conduct geological work on the 17 expropriated plots.

Similarly, indigenous communities are practically excluded from the decision-making process on issuing licenses for gold mining in their traditional territories.

Thus, the mining began without consent of the locals at of the “Magyzinskaya Ploshchad” and “Balyksinsky” plots owned by the LLC “Artel Starateley Khakasii” and located nearby a Shor settlement in Khakasia,. Both sites belong to the territories of traditional residence and nature management of the Shors and must be protected from any industrial intervention.

The situation became clear for the villagers when heavy machinery appeared near the settlement and for the purpose of the excavation works the forest was exterminated. Many residents of the Neozhidanny village had their agricultural land destroyed, while the only road connecting the village with the forest (the traditional sites for hunting, berries and mushrooms collecting), as well as with the local cemetery, was blocked by a checkpoint accessible for the workers of the artel only.

Similar violation of the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) happens in the Kemerovo Province, where, unlike in the Republic of Khakasia, no territories of traditional land management of indigenous minorities has been ever created on the federal level, although representatives of indigenous communities have been asking the authorities about that over the past five years.

Not being protected under the territories of traditional land management, the Shor settlements affected by gold mining are included in the Federal List of Places of Traditional Residence and Economic Activity of Indigenous Small-numbered Peoples, approved by the governmental Decree No.631-r of 8.05.2009. Nevertheless, in recent years, the Department of Land Management (Sibnedra) has issued at least three licenses for alluvial gold mining in the area of the Shor settlements ignoring the absence of public hearings.

There are very few examples of successful litigation against land seizures for coal mines. An important court decision was issued in 2018; the Belovsky District Court (Kemerovo Province) declared illegal the orders of the Department of Land Management (Sibnedra in the Siberian Federal Okrug) on the seizure of four private plots of land for open mines in the village of Mencherep of the Belovsky district and found no "state need" for the planned expropriation in favor of a private company LLC “StroyPozhService”.

Criminal prosecution of indigenous peoples representatives in the context of traditional lifestyle and fight for their rights

Representatives of indigenous peoples have to defend themselves in court from criminal prosecution related to the conduct of a traditional lifestyle (from accusations of illegal hunting or fishing due to inadequate quotas) and opposition to mining companies.

In September 2021, a criminal case was initiated in the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug against S.K., a Khant, after his conflict with employees of an oil company Surgutneftegaz. He protested against logging and oil production on the traditional lands of the Khanty community. In December 2021, S.K. was sentenced to restriction of liberty under the article "threat of murder or causing serious harm to health." In 2017, S.K. had been sentenced to community service under the same article.

In 2014, the police opened a criminal case against G.Sh., chairman of the Dolgan community and president of the local Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North of the Taimyr Dolgan-Nenets district of the Krasnoyarsk Krai. He was accused of illegal hunting, as the number of hunted reindeers exceeded the individual quota, although G.Sh. was delegated for hunting by those members of the community who could not do it themselves. The proceedings ended in 2019 in the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation, which sided with G.Sh. and on May 28, 2019 [recognized](#) the right of all representatives of indigenous peoples of the North to delegate their hunting quotas / to hunt wild animals for other members of the community.

In the summer of 2019, a criminal case was opened in Yakutia against 71-year-old representative of the Yukagir people, D.B. for "illegal fishing". The case was stopped by the efforts of NGOs of indigenous peoples and thanks to the making the case public.

Since March 2020, S.P. belonging to the Evenk community (Aldan district of the Sakha Republic) has been persecuted for illegal hunting. The Prosecutor's Office insists that S.P. does not follow a traditional lifestyle, although in the similar case of A.D., a Saami from Karelia, the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation recognized special rights of indigenous peoples even if their representatives live out of their ancestral territories and are engaged in non-traditional economic activities ([Resolution](#) No.32-P of 5 July 2021 on the constitutionality of Art 3.1 of the Law on Guarantees of the Rights of Indigenous Minorities of the Russian Federation and of Article 19.1 of the Law on Hunting and on Conservation of Hunting Resources).

Leaders of indigenous communities stress that they are not able to attain protection of their rights on their own lands and in their own regions:

"...the conflicts between the Shor community in Kuzbass and the coal mining companies should be reviewed not at the regional level, but at the level of the United Nations. For example, in 2017 the conflict between residents of the village of Kazas and the Yuzhny coal company (the company simply set fire to the homes of residents who did not want to 'free the space' for coal mining) was reviewed by the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, but not by the district administration or oblast government. This is not surprising: No one in the regions seems to recognize members of small peoples" (Mikhail Todyshev, honorary member of the Council of Shor Elders, expert in laws on the rights of small indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia, and the Far East of the Russian Federation for dedicated committees of the State Duma and the Federation Council. [Interview](#), 28.12.2019).

Members of indigenous peoples often encounter racism but the attempts to report manifestations of racism result in retaliation.

In 2017, L.B., a resident of Abakan, took to social media to express her indignation about an incident that occurred when she and her daughter were entering a game room and the children there said: "Only Russians can enter," while their parents started to attack her verbally. After L.B.'s emotional post, a criminal case under Article 280.2 (public calls to extremist activity online) was opened against her. The case was closed in 2018 for lack of elements of a crime, and the prosecutor's office issued an official apology to L.B. She [believes](#) that she was prosecuted because she was working to popularize the Khakas language and culture.

The catastrophic impact of the war on indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities

Some of 47 indigenous peoples living in Russia are numbering only hundreds or dozens of persons. According to the last census, over the past 10 years, the indigenous population has seriously decreased, and some indigenous peoples have been at risk of extinction. Although the law gives indigenous peoples the right to alternative civil service (Article 2 of Federal Law No. 113-FZ of 25.07.2002), this opportunity does not apply to the period of mobilization.

The "partial mobilisation" to the Russian army started on September 21, 2022 disproportionately affected the poorest regions of Russia – right those inhabited by ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples. This might threaten their physical survival and cause further decrease of the population (a [research](#) "Ethnic and regional inequalities in the Russian military fatalities in the 2022 war in Ukraine").

According to a study conducted by anti-war activists in the Republics of Sakha (Yakutia), Buryatia, Tyva and Kalmykia, just during the first days of mobilization, from September 22 to 25, 2022, almost all young men were mobilized in small settlements in the Far North. The Arctic districts of the Republic of Sakha were mostly affected (Abyiski, Anabarski, Verkhnekolymski, Verkhoyanski, Nizhnekolymski, Srednekolymski, Ust-Yanski), populated by small indigenous communities who are already under threat of extinction. The deputy of the State Duma Sardana Avksentieva also reported on the large number of the mobilized men in Yakutia, compared with other regions of Russia. According to her, it was planned to take 1.66% of male population from Yakutia, 1.415% from Kalmykia, 0.27% from the Novosibirsk Province, 0.9% from Kursk Province.

In the Olenek Evenk National District (Yakutia) populated with 4324 people including 128 young men of 18-35 years old, 50 of them appeared to be mobilised, which is 39% of the total number of young Evenks in the district. In the Kobiai ulus (district, Yakutia) men were taken from deer grazing areas and sent to recruiting stations.

The first wave of mobilization took place on the eve of winter, while two thirds of the territory of the Sakha Republic belong to the Arctic regions. Severe nature conditions require maintenance of infrastructure and efforts of such professionals as stokers, electricians, drivers, - mostly men. They were en mass mobilised, together with male population of indigenous settlements engaged in traditional economic activities (horse breeders, reindeer herders etc.) – [a research](#) Violations of Indigenous Peoples' Rights in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) During Partial Military Mobilization, 30.09.2022).

During the mobilization in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), numerous violations of human rights and specific indigenous peoples rights were documented, as well as violations of Russian legislation on military service postponement and exemption. The number of ethnic and male populations were not taken into account; many of the mobilised people were not applicable to conscription (those who had not military service experience, students, elderly and disable people, fathers of 3 and more children – An open [letter](#) to the President of the Russian Federation from the Chairman of the Congress of the Republic of Sakha I. Shamaeva). Summonses were delivered late at night (1:00-2:00 at night); a short time was given for packing personal belongings (2-3 hours); there were threats of imprisonment for 5 years in case of evading mobilization. Early in the morning (5:00-6:00) the mobilized men were delivered to the military recruitment point in Yakutsk, where sometimes were not enough places to accommodate the soldiers, lack of blankets and bed linen. At temperatures below 0°C, those mobilized from uluses (districts) had to spend the night in tents without heating, covered with mattresses. According to the [statement](#) of the Yakut Pacifist Association, "*the factor of extreme climatic conditions is not taken into account: cities and villages are left without people who are involved in maintaining the normal life of the place. According to the statistics collected by activists, even more people are being taken away from the northern regions, and belonging to indigenous small-numbered peoples, whose representatives are so few, is also not taken into account.*"

In Tyva, [according](#) to the authorities of the republic (29.09.2022), about 700 people were mobilized. On September 29, the wives of the mobilized men, together with anti-war women activists, tried to demonstrate their protest in the city of Kyzyl. The participants of the action chanted "No mobilization", "No genocide", however, minutes after its start, police officers detained most of the participants.

[According](#) to Pavel Sulyandziga, head of the Batani Fund for the Development of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East (13.10.2022), 26 of his fellow villagers from Krasny Yar received summonses including at least 12 representatives of Udege indigenous people. In the Khabarovsk Krai, six men belonging to the Orochi indigenous people were mobilized (the total population of Orochi is less than 600 people).

The mobilization also affected the Veps, a small Finno-Ugric language speaking group (appr. 6000 people), traditionally living in the northwest of the country (Karelia, Vologda and Leningrad Provinces). In the compact settlements of the Veps in Karelia (Sheltozero with a population of 857 people, and Rybreka where 400 people live), 24 men were addressed with summonses, but most of them did not show up at the recruitment station and went away into the forest ([information](#) from an independent journalist, author of the telegram channel "From Karelia with Freedom").

As of February 9, 2023, 118 representatives of the indigenous peoples were died in war, according to the [list](#) updated by the *Indigenous Russia*. Its editor Dmitry Berezhev, a representative of Itelmen people, presumes much more deaths among the mobilized representatives of indigenous peoples.

The statistics updated by the [Free Buryatia Foundation](#) show that the death rate is much higher for soldiers mobilised from the republics populated by ethnic minorities. In particular, from Buryatia (340 died,

however not all of them were ethnic Buryats) and Dagestan (339 died), while 43 from Moscow (data as of mid-November 2022). The activists conclude that the risk to die at war is almost 300 times lower for a resident of Moscow than for a Buryat. The Free Buryatia Foundation appealed to the Prosecutor's office and the Investigative Committee of Buryatia, speaking about the genocide of Buryats (Article 357 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation (genocide)).

Anti-war protests initiated by indigenous activists are being persecuted. Thus, the website of the Free Buryatia Foundation was blocked on July 13, 2022; the leader of the Buryat protest was declared a "foreign agent" and then put on the wanted list.

After speaking in July 2022 at the 15th session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, a Shor activist and a representative of the International Committee of Indigenous Peoples of Russia Yana Tannagasheva was verbally attacked and intimidated by a diplomat from the permanent mission of the RF to the UN. Four UN Special Rapporteurs responded to this incident (Ref.: AL RUS 15/2022, October 6, 2022).

Recommendations

The authors of this report recommend focusing on the following significant problems:

- The Russian government must be pushed to end the aggressive, criminal war, return all the Ukrainian territories it has seized, and cease all hostilities. War crimes – including charges that Russia is committing genocide against the Ukrainian people – must become the subject of proceedings in international courts. Russia must be held accountable, first and foremost, to the people of Ukraine and provide compensation for damages. It must also be held accountable to other peoples who have suffered from the war, both outside of Russia (the people of Belarus, Moldova, the Baltic countries, Poland) and within the country – the Indigenous peoples of Siberia and the Far East, the peoples of the North Caucasus, and other national minorities.

- Members of the population in Crimea, including the Indigenous peoples of Crimea, must have the opportunity to restore their Ukrainian citizenship, their right to live in peace and develop their cultures (Ukrainian, Crimean Tatar, and all the others), and their right to freely exercise their civil and political freedoms (self-government, resumption of the legal activities of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people and cultural centers); activists from national movements who are the victims of political repressions on the part of the Russian government must be released and paid compensation for their illegal arrests.

- The population of previously occupied Ukrainian territories must return to a life of peace and be granted all the rights of Ukrainian citizens, including socioeconomic rights, compensation for lost housing, and the ability to renew their pre-war lives; special attention should be devoted to people vulnerable to discrimination, including the Roma population of the southern and eastern regions.

- Ukrainians removed to occupied territories and Russia during the hostilities must be able to return home; any attempts to assign them Russian citizenship during the war must be considered legally invalid and deemed a practice that violates the rights of Ukrainian citizens (and especially children).

- Citizens from third countries – the countries of Central Asia and the South Caucasus and Belarus – should not take part in this aggressive war on Russia's side; the numerous cases where citizens of these countries have been involved in hostilities should be viewed as a crime and as the recruitment of mercenaries, which contravenes the laws of these citizens' countries.

- The mobilization of a disproportionately high number of members of Indigenous peoples of Russia, who were previously colonized and have faced discrimination for centuries, should be condemned as a form of ethnocide of small ethnic groups.

- The Russian government must be pushed to adopt measures to protect the peoples of the country from racial (ethnic, national) discrimination, which will require major improvements to the law.

- The Russian government must bring national laws in line with international norms relating to Indigenous peoples; accede to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and ratify ILO Convention 169; assign a special status to territories of traditional residence and nature use of Indigenous peoples at the federal level and enshrine a procedure for free and informed consent in relation to any legislative or administrative measures regarding Indigenous peoples; heighten control over oil, coal, and gold companies' compliance with national and environmental laws and human rights norms; take measures to remediate and restore territories destroyed by gold mining and provide restitution to members of Indigenous peoples and local communities whose rights have been violated; re-evaluate priorities in the energy and mining sectors and develop alternative energy sources to minimize the effects of climate change; provide conditions for environmental and human rights organizations to work effectively and freely.

The Russian government must also be pushed to improve support programs for groups vulnerable to discrimination, in particular:

As part of a state program to provide comprehensive support to Russia's Roma population: take positive measures to allocate land plots to destitute Roma families in accordance with current laws; provide assistance to document/regulate their rights to decent housing and access to utilities (water, gas, electricity); end police operations intended to disconnect Roma settlements from gas and other utilities; end the practice of forced evictions and, if resettlement is unavoidable, provide alternative housing with amenities as quickly as possible and pay compensation for material and emotional damages; facilitate the registration of Roma people at their residences, even when their houses are not registered; monitor the media and take measures to stop the dissemination of hatred of Roma people; take measures to fight segregation of Roma children in schools and guarantee their successful integration into the school environment; create opportunities for preschool education for Roma children, along with additional classes in the Russian language as part of preschool and school programs; include the Romani language in school programs, at least to a certain degree; create educational opportunities for adults who did not receive an education.

Protect migrants and refugees from discrimination: end the practice of police raids that contain elements of racial profiling when migrants are arrested en masse; adopt amendments banning the arrest and detention for the purposes of removal/deportation of stateless persons and migrants who cannot be expelled; introduce judicial control over the terms and reasonableness of placing migrants in temporary detention centers.