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**IN THE UNITED NATIONS COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND  
CULTURAL RIGHTS**

**Alternative Report in relation to the Seventh Periodic Report of the Russian Federation under  
the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**

**Submitted by**  
European Prison Litigation Network

*For the consideration by the Committee in the framework of its 78<sup>th</sup> Session  
(8 – 26 September 2025)*

**8 August 2025**

## **I. Introduction**

1. The present parallel report is submitted to the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (“the Committee”, “CESCR”), in the context of the seventh periodic review of the Russian Federation.
2. The report is submitted by the European Prison Litigation Network (“EPLN”), a French international NGO that brings together 30 national civil society organisations from 20 countries defending the fundamental rights of prisoners in Europe. EPLN defends and promotes the fundamental rights of prisoners across the continent and works to reduce the use of imprisonment. It researches and analyses changes in legislation and their impact on prisoners’ rights and life in prison, and seeks to give a voice to prisoners and their advocates. EPLN has participatory status with the Council of Europe.
3. This report aims to address issues nos. 11-13 (right to work (art. 6) and right to just and favourable conditions of work (art. 7)) of the List of Issues (the “LoI”) in relation to the seventh periodic report of the Russian Federation.<sup>1</sup>

## **II. Right to work and right to just and favourable conditions of work (Articles 6 and 7 of the ICESCR)**

4. The Committee invited the Russian Federation, in particular, to provide information on measures taken, and their impact, to ensure employment opportunities alternative to the military and the armaments industry; on the impact of those measures on disadvantaged and marginalized groups (issue no. 11 of the LoI); on measures taken, and their impact, to regularize the status of persons in vulnerable situations and to guarantee the access of persons working in the informal economy to basic services, social protection and the enjoyment of the rights under the Covenant (issue no. 12 of the LoI); on any extraordinary measures taken, and their impact, to ensure the effective application of labour legislation protecting the rights of employees to just and favourable conditions of work; on steps taken to strengthen the legislative and administrative framework to prevent forced labour and trafficking in persons, including steps taken to create a national action plan to prevent trafficking in persons (issue no. 13 of the LoI).
5. In connection with issues nos. 11-13 of the LoI, related to the right to work, EPLN would like to draw the Committee’s attention to the ongoing practice of mass recruitment of prisoners into the armed forces and their deployment in Ukraine. Given the modalities of recruitment, which render free and informed consent impossible, and the state of complete dependence of prisoners on the authorities and recruiters, this practice, which is formalised, supported, promoted and implemented by the Russian authorities, can be characterised as predatory recruitment.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> E/C.12/RUS/Q/7

<sup>2</sup> A/HRC/54/29, para. 30.

6. The massive recruitment campaign among convicted prisoners in numerous correctional facilities across Russia, as well as in the occupied territories in Ukraine was launched shortly after the start of the Russian full-scale invasion in Ukraine in February 2022, and was initially implemented by the Russia-backed private military contractor known as the Wagner Group and later – by the Russian Ministry of Defence.
7. Between January 2022 and August 2023, the Wagner Group visited dozens of correctional colonies across the country and recruited at least 48,000 prisoners. Of these, 17,000 were confirmed dead, mostly in Bakhmut. Two-thirds of the colonies visited by the Wagner Group were maximum-security facilities. Mediazona and the BBC Russian Service published an interactive map showing the locations of the recruitment visits, the dates of the visits and the number of prisoners recruited from each colony.<sup>3</sup>
8. This data was corroborated by the US National Security Council, which reported that, by the end of December 2022, Wagner had deployed around 50,000 personnel in Ukraine. Of these, an estimated 40,000 were convicts recruited from Russian prisons, some of whom suffered from “serious medical conditions”. Ukrainian authorities estimated that around 20 per cent of the recruited prisoners deployed in Ukraine were HIV positive, based on the infection rate among those captured.<sup>4</sup>
9. Furthermore, according to publicly available prison statistics, the number of convicted prisoners in Russian prisons decreased by 23,000 between October and November 2022, falling from 349,000 in August to 325,000 in November. No similar decrease has been observed since 2010, not even during the amnesty of 2015. This decrease was only observed in correctional colonies with general and strict regimes for men.<sup>5</sup> In 2023, the prison population decreased even more dramatically – by 58,000.<sup>6</sup>
10. Recruited prisoners were offered amnesty or pardon after six months of service, the extinguishment of their criminal records, and a monthly allowance ranging between RUB 100 and

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<sup>3</sup> Mediazona, “The price of Bakhmut. We reveal the staggering toll of Russia’s bloodiest battle since WW2 and Wagner’s inmates recruited to fight it”, 10 June 2024, available at: <https://en.zona.media/article/2024/06/10/wagner>.

<sup>4</sup> CNN, “US believes Wagner mercenary group is expanding influence and took delivery of North Korean arms”, 22 December 2022, available at: <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/12/22/politics/russia-wagner-group/index.html>; The New York Times, “A Quick Death or a Slow Death’: Prisoners Choose War to Get Lifesaving Drugs”, 21 April 2023, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/04/21/world/europe/russia-wagner-group-hiv-prisoners-ukraine.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Mediazona, “За два месяца число заключенных в мужских колониях сократилось на рекордные 23 тысячи человек. Это происходит на фоне вербовки в «ЧВК Вагнера»” (In two months, the number of prisoners in the male colonies decreased by a record 23 thousand people. This happens against the background of recruitment by the Wagner PMC), 18 November 2022, available at: <https://zona.media/article/2022/11/18/navoynu>; Yardelo.org, “На фоне СВО в России резко сократилось тюремное население” (Russia’s prison population has fallen sharply in the face of [special military operation], available at: [https://yardelo.org/2022/11/19/на-фоне-сво-резко-сократилось-т/?fbclid=IwAR3XEDOIjrhLXbg1Qp5Q5FLkQ-jrYvKnB72d\\_WTF7YKgxtVHRibHJoLjRnQ](https://yardelo.org/2022/11/19/на-фоне-сво-резко-сократилось-т/?fbclid=IwAR3XEDOIjrhLXbg1Qp5Q5FLkQ-jrYvKnB72d_WTF7YKgxtVHRibHJoLjRnQ).

<sup>6</sup> Radio Liberty, “There were significantly fewer prisoners in Russia last year” (Заключенных в России за прошлый год стало значительно меньше), 23 May 2024, available at: [https://www.svoboda.org/a/kolichestvo-zaklyuchennyh-v-rossii-rekordno-umenjshilosj-za-proshlyy-god/32961208.html?utm\\_source=lentach&utm\\_medium=sn&utm\\_campaign=telegram](https://www.svoboda.org/a/kolichestvo-zaklyuchennyh-v-rossii-rekordno-umenjshilosj-za-proshlyy-god/32961208.html?utm_source=lentach&utm_medium=sn&utm_campaign=telegram).

200 thousand (EUR 1,600 – 3,200).<sup>7</sup> Recruiters were also offering compensation of up to RUB 5 million to the families of prisoners if they were killed in action, and 300 thousand roubles if they were injured.<sup>8</sup>

11. Recruiters managed to persuade at least 20% of the inmates at each of the correctional colonies they visited to join Wagner. An additional 10% agreed to go to war later, often under pressure from “activists” – prisoners who cooperate with the administration. The recruiters were particularly interested in prisoners with experience of law-enforcement service,<sup>9</sup> who had been convicted of murder or robbery, and who were in good physical shape.<sup>10</sup> Subsequently, the “invitations” were extended to other prisoners.<sup>11</sup> In some cases, Wagner recruiters were accompanied by the officers of the Federal Penitentiary Service (the FSIN) or the Federal Security Service (FSB), and were openly carrying firearms during meetings with inmates.<sup>12</sup>
12. Some prisoners who had agreed to join the Wagner Group but later refused were placed in disciplinary wards. In a number of colonies, there were reports of the forceful recruitment of prisoners

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<sup>7</sup> CNN, “Russia dangles freedom to prisoners if they fight in Ukraine. Many are taking the deadly gamble”, 9 August 2022, available at: <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/08/09/europe/russia-recruits-prisoners-ukraine-war-cmd-intl/index.html>.

<sup>8</sup> Verstka, “Новые солдаты российской армии: ЧВК Вагнера завербовала больше тысячи заключённых в 17 колониях страны” (New Soldiers of the Russian Army: Wagner PMC recruited more than one thousand prisoners in 17 colonies across the country), 5 August 2022, available at: <https://verstka.media/vagner-verbovka-zakluchennyh-iz-17-koloniy/>; Important Stories, “ЧВК «Вагнера» вербует заключённых колоний Петербурга для поездки на Донбасс «идти в авангарде, помогать обнаруживать нацистов»” (PMC Wagner is enlisting inmates from the St Petersburg’s colonies to travel to Donbas “to lead the way helping to detect Nazis”), 4 July 2022, available at: <https://istories.media/reportages/2022/07/04/chvk-vagner-verbuet-zaklyuchennikh-kolonii-peterburga-dlya-poezdki-na-donbass-idi-v-avangarde-pomogat-obnaruzhivat-natsistov/>.

<sup>9</sup> Verstka, “Новые солдаты российской армии: ЧВК Вагнера завербовала больше тысячи заключённых в 17 колониях страны” (New Soldiers of the Russian Army: Wagner PMC recruited more than one thousand prisoners in 17 colonies across the country), 5 August 2022, available at: <https://verstka.media/vagner-verbovka-zakluchennyh-iz-17-koloniy/>.

<sup>10</sup> “Activists” are convicts who are used by the prison administration to enforce the internal regime and discipline of other prisoners. Activists often torture other inmates and extort money from them, at the direct order or with tacit consent of the administration (see, e.g. Novaya Gazeta, “«Активисты» на службе ФСИН” (“Activists” at the FSIN service), 29 October 2017, available at: <https://novayagazeta.ru/articles/2017/10/29/74384-aktivisty-na-sluzhbe-fsin>; Important Stories, “ЧВК «Вагнера» вербует заключённых колоний Петербурга для поездки на Донбасс «идти в авангарде, помогать обнаруживать нацистов»” (PMC Wagner is enlisting inmates from the St Petersburg’s colonies to travel to Donbas “to lead the way helping to detect Nazis”), 4 July 2022, available at: <https://istories.media/reportages/2022/07/04/chvk-vagner-verbuet-zaklyuchennikh-kolonii-peterburga-dlya-poezdki-na-donbass-idi-v-avangarde-pomogat-obnaruzhivat-natsistov/>; Important Stories Telegram Channel, 6 July 2022, available at: [https://t.me/istories\\_media/1293](https://t.me/istories_media/1293).

<sup>11</sup> Verstka, “Секс с малолетней и групповое изнасилование. За какие преступления сидели заключённые, которых ЧВК Вагнера завербовала для войны в Украине” (Sex with a minor and gang rape. What crimes were the prisoners that the Wagner PMC recruited for the war in Ukraine imprisoned for?), 16 September 2022, available at: <https://verstka.media/za-cto-sideli-zeki-kotorye-seychas-na-voynе/>.

<sup>12</sup> Important Stories, “Нужны добровольцы на грязную работу: убивать по приказу, не задавая вопросов” (“We need volunteers for the dirty work: to kill on command, without asking questions”), 20 July 2022, available at: <https://istories.media/investigations/2022/07/20/zk-i-vagner/>.

(IK-4 Mari El Republic,<sup>13</sup> IK-37 Kemerovo Region,<sup>14</sup> colonies in Sverdlovsk Region).<sup>15</sup> In IK-37 Kemerovo Region, inmates who refused to join Wagner were beaten, handcuffed to radiators, and threatened with new criminal charges against them in other colonies. In Yakutiya (IK-7 and IK-6) prisoners were threatened with extension of their prison terms if they refused to join the Wagner Group.<sup>16</sup>

13. Recruited prisoners were mainly used by the Wagner Group at the front lines in the Donetsk and Luhansk Regions of Ukraine,<sup>17</sup> including the fights near Bakhmut, frequently forming the first wave in attacks and taking the heaviest casualties, as high as 80%.<sup>18</sup> Reportedly, 10,000 prisoners recruited by Wagner Group were killed in Ukraine by May 2023.<sup>19</sup>
14. Several prisoners reported that they and their fellow inmates were regularly threatened and ill-treated by their superiors; a number of prisoners were executed for attempted escapes, many prisoners had their fingers publicly cut off as a warning to the others.<sup>20</sup>
15. By February 2023, the recruitment campaign was entirely overtaken by the Russian Ministry of Defence. By September 2023, the MoD recruited over 30,000 prisoners. The geography of recruitment was extended to all regions of Russia (except for the Chechen Republic). Prisoner recruitment was also carried out in the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine. Conditions offered to

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<sup>13</sup> Sota Telegram Channel, 17 September 2022, available at: <https://t.me/sotaproject/46266>.

<sup>14</sup> Tayga Info, “Родственники кузбасских заключенных заявили о принуждении вступать в ЧВК и ехать на «спецоperation»” (Relatives of Kuzbass prisoners said that they were forced to join the PMC and go to the "special operation"), 15 November 2022, available at: <https://tayga.info/179795>.

<sup>15</sup> Mediazona, “По второму кругу. Вербовщики «ЧВК Вагнера» снова объезжают колонии, откуда уже забирали эков – но теперь им почти не верят” (A second round. Wagner PMC recruiters are once again touring the colonies from which they have taken prisoners - but now they are hardly trusted), 6 February 2023, available at: <https://zona.media/article/2023/02/06/verbovka>

<sup>16</sup> Currenttime, “Те, кто отказался, сильно избиты, ходить не могут”. Родные заключенных из Сибири подтвердили, что тех массово отправляют на войну (“Those who refused are badly beaten, they can't walk.” Relatives of prisoners from Siberia confirmed that they were being sent to war en masse), 23 November 2022, available at: <https://www.currenttime.tv/a/te-kto-otkazalsya-silno-izbity-hodit-ne-mogut-rodnye-zaklyuchennyh-iz-sibiri-rasskazali-cto-ih-massovo-otpravlyayut-na-voynu-v-ukraine/32142742.html>.

<sup>17</sup> Novaya Gazeta Europe, “Thieves, swindlers, criminals, outlaws, killers – all are welcome”, 24 August 2022, available at: <https://novayagazeta.eu/articles/2022/08/24/thieves-swindlers-criminals-outlaws-killers-all-are-welcome>; Verstka, “Военный-отказник рассказал, что его с сослуживцами заставляют воевать в Украине вместе с бойцами ЧВК и осужденными” (A military objector said that he and his comrades were forced to fight in Ukraine together with PMC fighters and convicts), 7 September 2022, available at: <https://verstka.media/otkaznikov-uderzhivayut-na-fronte-s-vagnerovcami-i-zakluchennymi/>.

<sup>18</sup> CNN, “Deadly and disposable: Wagner’s brutal tactics in Ukraine revealed by intelligence report”, 24 January 2023, available at: <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/01/23/europe/russia-wagner-tactics-report-ukraine-intl/index.html>; The New York Times, “Our Losses Were Gigantic”: Life in a Sacrificial Russian Assault Wave”, 13 February 2023, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/02/13/world/europe/ukraine-russia-prisoners.html>.

<sup>19</sup> DW, “Ukraine updates: Wagner Group reports 10,000 prisoner deaths”, 24 May 2023, available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/ukraine-updates-wagner-group-reports-10000-prisoner-deaths/a-65714776>.

<sup>20</sup> The Insider, “«Один подстрелил командира, с него кожу сняли». Заключенным из ЧВК Вагнера отрезают пальцы, командиры скрывают пытки с помощью крематория” (“One shot the commander, they skinned him”. Wagner PMC prisoners have their fingers cut off, commanders cover up torture with crematorium), 1 November 2022, available at: <https://theins.ru/news/256593>.

the prisoners were similar to those proposed by Wagner (amnesty or pardon after six months or one year of service, financial remuneration of 150-200 thousand roubles). In addition, the State Bailiffs' Service exempted recruited prisoners from paying court-imposed debts – fines and damages in favour of the state or private debtors. Recruited inmates were considered of lesser value than “ordinary” troops, and were usually deployed at the most exposed parts of the front, sustaining the heaviest casualties, and being used as expendable infantry. Since September 2023, recruited prisoners were offered to sign contracts for one year of service, extended automatically and indefinitely. Some prisoners recruited under the previous scheme (with 6-month contracts) were forced to sign contracts for another six months of service, and those who refused were taken to an illegal prison in Zaytsevo (Luhansk Region of Ukraine).

16. By February 2023, the Russian Ministry of Defence had taken over the entire recruitment campaign. By September 2023, the Ministry had recruited over 30,000 prisoners,<sup>21</sup> extending the geography of recruitment to all regions of Russia except the Chechen Republic. Prisoners were also recruited in Russian-occupied Ukrainian territories. The conditions offered to prisoners were similar to those proposed by Wagner: amnesty or pardon after six months or one year of service and financial remuneration of 150-200 thousand roubles. Additionally, the State Bailiffs' Service exempted recruited prisoners from paying court-imposed debts, including fines and damages in favour of the state or private debtors.<sup>22</sup> Recruited inmates were considered less valuable than “ordinary” troops and were usually deployed to the most exposed areas of the front line, where they sustained the heaviest casualties and were used as expendable infantry.<sup>23</sup> Since September 2023, recruited prisoners have been offered contracts for one year of service, which are extended automatically and indefinitely. Some prisoners who were recruited under the previous scheme (with six-month contracts) were forced to sign another six-month contract, and those who refused were taken to an illegal prison in Zaytsevo in the Luhansk region of Ukraine.<sup>24</sup>

17. In February 2024, the first cases of recruitment by the Ministry of Defence from a correctional colony for women (IK-2 Leningrad Region) were reported.<sup>25</sup> Other instances followed, including recruitment from IK-3 Ivanovo Region, IK-1 Vladimir Region, an unidentified colony for women in

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<sup>21</sup> Important Stories, “В отряды «Шторм Z» могли завербовать до 29 тысяч заключенных” (Up to 29,000 prisoners may have been recruited into Storm Z units), 6 February 2025, available at: <https://istories.media/stories/2025/02/06/v-otryadi-shtorm-z-mogli-zaverbovat-do-29-tisyach-zaklyuchennikh/>.

<sup>22</sup> Verstka, “Война всё списала” (The war wrote it all off), 11 August 2023, available at: <https://verstka.media/pristavy-spisyvayut-dolgi-zaklyuchennykh-kontraktnikov>.

<sup>23</sup> Reuters, “‘They’re just meat’: Russia deploys punishment battalions in echo of Stalin”, 3 October 2023, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/theyre-just-meat-russia-deploys-punishment-battalions-echo-stalin-2023-10-03/>.

<sup>24</sup> Astra Telegram Channel, 16 October 2022, available at: <https://t.me/astrapress/40468>.

<sup>25</sup> Important Stories, “«Важные истории» узнали о вербовке на войну женщин-заключенных” (“Important Stories” learnt about the recruitment of women prisoners for the war), 19 February 2024, available at: <https://storage.googleapis.com/istories/news/2024/02/19/vazhnie-istorii-uznali-o-verbovke-na-voinu-zhenshchin-zaklyuchennikh/index.html>.

Perm Region, IK-2 Mordovia Republic. In all cases, the MoD recruiters offered inmates to join the medical personnel or troop squads.<sup>26</sup>

18. On 4 November 2022, the Russian authorities amended the Mobilisation Act (Federal Law “On Mobilisation Preparations and Mobilisation in the Russian Federation of 26 February 1997 No. 31-FZ), lifting the restriction on mobilising persons convicted of serious crimes (except for certain offences, such as terrorism and extremist offences).<sup>27</sup> On 24 June 2023, the authorities amended the Military Service Act (Federal Law no. 53-FZ of 28 March 1998), allowing persons with a criminal record to sign military service contracts during the mobilisation period and the state of war (except for certain offences). The amendments further allowed to exempt convicts who signed military service contracts from criminal liability.<sup>28</sup>
19. These amendments were complemented by another law, also adopted on 24 June 2023 (“On the specifics of criminal liability of persons involved in a special military operation”) which provided for the exemption from criminal liability, including conditional release from sentence and expungement of criminal record, for persons charged with and convicted of criminal offences, who joined Russian armed forces (either as “mobilised”, conscripted during the time of war, or through signing a military service contract).<sup>29</sup> In March 2024, the new law was incorporated into the Criminal Code of Russia.<sup>30</sup> Initially applicable only to convicted prisoners and persons against whom criminal proceedings were at the pre-trial stage (i.e. criminal cases against them have not been sent to court with bill of indictment), in October 2024 the mechanism was extended to the defendants whose criminal cases are pending trial.<sup>31</sup>
20. As part of the implementation of the new amendments, the MoD was planning to recruit and deploy in Ukraine about 100 accused persons from each of 210 pre-trial detention centres in Russia (i.e. a total of over 20,000 people), eventually sending up to 40% of all accused persons to war. Investigators and the police were reportedly instructed to persuade accused persons to join the armed

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<sup>26</sup> Important Stories, «Важные истории» нашли еще четыре колонии, в которых заключенных женщин вербуют на войну в Украине ("Important Stories" found four more colonies where female prisoners are being recruited for the war in Ukraine), 9 April 2024, available at: <https://importantstories.media/news/2024/04/09/vazhnie-istorii-nashli-yeshche-chetire-kolonii-v-kotorikh-zaklyuchennikh-zhenshchin-verbuyut-na-voynu-v-ukraine/>.

<sup>27</sup> Federal Law of 4 November 2022 No. 421-FZ, available at: [http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons\\_doc\\_LAW\\_430555/](http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_430555/).

<sup>28</sup> Federal Law of 24 June 2023 No. 269-FZ, available at: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202306240007>.

<sup>29</sup> Federal Law of 26 June 2023 No. 270-FZ, available at: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202306240008>

<sup>30</sup> Federal Law of 23 March 2024 No. 64-FZ, available at: <https://www.consultant.ru/cons/cgi/online.cgi?req=doc&base=LAW&n=472777&dst=100001#X0VZWQUodyobSmmS1>

<sup>31</sup> Federal Law of 2 October 2024 No. 340-FZ, available at: <https://www.consultant.ru/cons/cgi/online.cgi?req=doc&rnd=TdKJIA&base=LAW&n=487085&dst=100009&field=134#K G2j7XU6Fg5N0bMs>.

forces. In correctional colonies and pre-trial detention centres, the authorities were using poor conditions of detention as a means of forcing prisoners to join the army.<sup>32</sup>

21. Since autumn 2024, prisoners in at least three correctional colonies have been regularly subjected to mass beatings and forced to sign contracts with the Ministry of Defence to join the army.<sup>33</sup>
22. The Committee reaffirmed the need for States parties to abolish, forbid and counter all forms of forced labour as enunciated in article 4 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 5 of the Slavery Convention and article 8 of the ICCPR (General Comment no. 18, para. 9).<sup>34</sup> “States parties are under the obligation to *respect* the right to work by, inter alia, prohibiting forced or compulsory labour and refraining from denying or limiting equal access to decent work for all persons, especially disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups, including prisoners or detainees, members of minorities and migrant workers.” (ibid., para. 23) “The obligation to protect the right to work includes the responsibility of States parties to prohibit forced or compulsory labour by non-State actors.” (ibid., para. 25).
23. The practice of prisoners’ recruitment was condemned by a group of UN experts and special procedure mandate holders in a joint statement on 10 March 2023. The experts emphasised that the Russian Government “obligation to exercise the utmost vigilance to protect detainees from violence, exploitation and intimidation,” as well as “to prohibit private individuals and companies from exploiting the vulnerability of prisoners for profit.”<sup>35</sup> The recruitment of prisoners was further criticised by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation.<sup>36</sup>
24. The Nelson Mandela Rules provide that “prison labour must not be of an afflictive nature. Prisoners shall not be held in slavery or servitude.” (Rule 97). The CCPR has stated that “for [detainees’] labour not to be forced or compulsory, it must, at a minimum, not be an exceptional measure... *and it must be provided for by law in order to serve a legitimate purpose under the Covenant.*<sup>37</sup>
25. The recruitment of prisoners cannot be considered voluntary. The recruiters (both Wagner and, subsequently, the Ministry of Defence) exploit the extreme vulnerability and complete dependence

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<sup>32</sup> Important Stories, “Russian Authorities Plans to Send 40% of Accused Persons to War”, 1 October 2024, available at: <https://importantstories.media/en/news/2024/10/01/40-percent-of-accused-persons-to-war/>; Crew Against Torture Telegram Channel, post of 6 February 2025, available at: [https://t.me/no\\_torture/3507](https://t.me/no_torture/3507).

<sup>33</sup> Sibreal.org, ““Очень нужно мясо”. Российских зэков избивают, вынуждая заключать контракты (‘We really need meat.’ Russian prisoners are beaten and forced to sign contracts.), 21 July 2025, available at: [https://www.sibreal.org/a/ochen-nuzhno-myaso-rossiyskih-zekov-izbivayut-vynuzhdaya-zaklyuchat-kontrakty/33459897.html](https://www.sibreal.org/a/ochen-nuzhno-myaso-rossiyskih-zekov-izbivayut-vynuzhdayut-vynuzhdaya-zaklyuchat-kontrakty/33459897.html).

<sup>34</sup> E/C.12/GC/18.

<sup>35</sup> OHCHR, “Russian Federation: UN experts alarmed by recruitment of prisoners by “Wagner Group””, Press-release, 10 March 2023, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/03/russian-federation-un-experts-alarmed-recruitment-prisoners-wagner-group>.

<sup>36</sup> A/HRC/54/54.

<sup>37</sup> CCPR/C/125/D/2556/2015.



of the Russian prison population on the authorities, and often on the recruiters themselves. The domestic authorities actively support and promote the recruitment, create the legal basis for it, in breach of their obligation to ensure safety, security, and rehabilitation of prisoners. Joining the Russian army in Ukraine is widely promoted by the authorities as a viable alternative to criminal prosecution, conviction and imprisonment.<sup>38</sup> Most of the prisoners have lived for a long time under psychological and physical pressure, without prospects of early release.<sup>39</sup> Their social ties become severed or damaged, and they are willing to make extreme choices.

26. Being included in an environment that promotes and engages in pure violence can lead to a loss of touch with reality, frequent perpetration of war crimes and higher rates of reoffending upon return to society.<sup>40</sup> Instead of protecting inmates, the prison administrations expose them to recruitment as an easily accessible and obedient labour force, which diminishes their human dignity and subjects them to forced labour, in breach of their obligations stemming from Article 6 of the ICESCR (as interpreted by the Committee in General Comment no. 18, paras. 23 and 25).

### **III. Conclusion**

27. EPLN respectfully ask the Committee to consider these matters when examining the seventh periodic report of the Russian Federation, to condemn the existing practice of the mass recruitment of prisoners into the armed forces and to urge the Russian Federation to abandon it altogether, given its incompatibility with the prohibition of forced labour.

Respectfully submitted.

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<sup>38</sup> The Bell, “Kremlin says criminals are “atoning with blood” on the battlefield in Ukraine”, 16 November 2023, available at: <https://en.thebell.io/kremlin-says-criminals-are-atoning-with-blood-on-the-battlefield-in-ukraine/>.

<sup>39</sup> See, e.g., EPLN Report to the CCPR concerning prison violence in Russia, available at: [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CCPR/Shared%20Documents/RUS/INT\\_CCPR\\_CSS\\_RUS\\_50031\\_E.pdf](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CCPR/Shared%20Documents/RUS/INT_CCPR_CSS_RUS_50031_E.pdf)

<sup>40</sup> Kommersant.ru, “Рецидивист распространил СВО на Россию” (Recidivist extends [Special Military Operation] to Russia)” 7 December 2022, available at: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/5707820>; <sup>40</sup> Kommersant.ru, “«Музыкант» принял полицейских за врагов” (‘Musician’ mistook policemen for enemies), 9 December 2022, available at: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/5718312>.