



CLSF Latvijas Cilvēktiesību komiteja
FIDH Latvian Human Rights Committee
МФПЧ Латвийский комитет по правам человека

Reg. No. 40008010632, Dzirnavu iela 102a-15, Rīga, LV-1050, Latvia

Tel. +371 29472258, www.lhrc.lv, e-mail: buzvlad@gmail.com

To the Secretariat of the UN Human Rights Committee (143 rd Session)

LHRC written contribution for adoption of list of issues prior to reporting (LOIPR),
concerning Fourth periodic report of the Republic of Latvia

I. Introduction

1. The level of observance of the rights of national minorities, which constitute more than 1/3 of Latvia's population¹, has been the subject of criticism by UN treaty bodies², UN special rapporteurs³, as well as interregional and regional human rights structures such as the OSCE⁴ and Council of Europe structures⁵. The full-scale Russian-Ukrainian conflict, which started on 24 February 2022, was used by the Latvian authorities as a pretext for further catastrophic decline of this level.

Additional questions posed by the UN Human Rights Committee (hereinafter referred to as the Committee) during the consideration of Latvia's periodic report partially addressed this radical tightening of the rules of the game: e.g. question 5 (providing information on the legislative changes made to the Immigration Law requiring Russian citizens to pass a Latvian language test in order to renew their permanent residence permits) or question 23 (request a description of measures taken to prevent the negative impact of the transition of instruction to Latvian on linguistic minorities).

2. However, there are areas of infringement of the rights of national minorities protected by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (hereinafter the Covenant) that are not mentioned at all in the available documents relating to Latvia's periodic report.

¹ This is primarily a Russian linguistic minority that unites a large group of different ethnic groups living in Latvia

² CCPR/C/LVA/CO/3, 11.04.2014, §§ 7, 20; CERD/C/LVA/CO/6-12, 25.09.2018, §§16-21; CEDAW/C/LVA/CO/4-7, 10.03.2020, §§33d, 34f; E/C.12/LVA/CO/2, 30.03.2021, §§22b, 23c, 48,49

³ letters from four UN Special Rapporteurs to the Government of Latvia OL LVA 1/2018, 26.01.2018; OL LVA 3/2018, 08.11.2018; OL LVA 1/2019, 24.09.2019; OL LVA 1/2022, 28.09.2022

⁴ OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities letter to Latvian Parliament on June 20, 2022

⁵ the Venice Commission (CDL-AD (2020) 012-e, 975/2020, 19.06. 2020, Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (ACFC/OP/III(2018)001, 23.02.2018; ACFC/OP/IV(2023)1, n 22 February 2024); ECRI report on Latvia (fifth monitoring cycle). Adopted on 4 December 2018. Published on 5 March 2019, §§54-63; the Committee of Ministers (CM/ResCMN(2021)9, 03.03.2021; CM/ResCMN(2025)3, 02.04.2025)

Article 27 of the Covenant provides that In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language.

In our view, further clarification should also be sought from the Government on the policy of mass destruction of cultural elements of national minorities, such as monuments and toponyms, on the gross interference in the religious life of minorities and on the restriction of minorities' access to the media.

Formulation of relevant questions:

(1) Please provide information on the policy of mass destruction of such elements of national minority culture as monuments and toponyms (Article 27);

(2) Please provide information on state pressure on the Latvian Orthodox Church (Articles 27 and 18);

(3) Please provide information on the targeted restriction of minorities' ability to receive information in their mother tongue (Articles 27 and 19);

In order to justify the need to ask the State the questions formulated above, we provide below the relevant information at our disposal.

We hope to have time to comment on other questions posed to the government as well.

II. Monuments

3. There have been two waves of mass destruction of monuments in Latvia:

- In 2022, about a hundred monuments to anti-fascists - fighters of the anti-Hitler coalition - were destroyed throughout Latvia;

- in 2023-2024 several monuments to world-famous Russians were dismantled in Riga: academician Mstislav Vsevolodovich Keldysh (03.11.2023), poet Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin (30.05.2024), commander Mikhail Bogdanovich Barclay de Tolly (31.10.2024).

II.1. Monuments to anti-fascists

4. The demolition of anti-fascist monuments was carried out by municipal decisions adopted on the basis of a special law of 16.06.2022. and according to a minimum list of 69 monuments (see §8 below) approved by the Government on 14.07.2022, which municipalities were obliged to demolish by 15.11.2022.

The Committee is familiar with the situation regarding the demolition of monuments to anti-fascists because of the five individual communications about the dismantling of 10 monuments from four of Latvia's largest cities, which are currently in the final stages of consideration (table 1): Riga (No. 4203/2022, 4226/2022), Daugavpils (No. 4234/2022), Liepaja (No. 4235/2022) and Rēzekne (No. 4236/2022). All communications resulted in decisions on interim measures, which Latvia refused to honour.

The applicants' requests (among them a member of the European Parliament, the vice-mayor of Daugavpils and two members of the Riga municipality) to the central and municipal authorities to implement the Committee's decisions were also ignored. The Committee's request for interim measures regarding anti-fascist monuments received minimal media coverage in Latvia.

Table 1

Demolished monuments to anti-fascists who were under the Committee's protection

City	Communication number	Number on the list	Monument name	the local government's decision to demolish	decision on interim measures	the actual demolition
Rīga	4203	no	Monument to the Liberators of Soviet Latvia and Riga from the German Fascist Invaders	13.05	26.08	23.08-05.09
“_“	4226	21	Obelisk of the 374th Rifle Division, which began the liberation of Riga from Nazi invaders	20.07	30.09	11.10
“_“	“_“	26	Memorial sign - a stone at the site of the offensive of the Red Army on the banks of Kishozero	“_“	“_“	10.10
“_“	“_“	25	Monument to the soldiers of the Red Army in Rumbula	24.08	“_“	11.10
Daugavpils	4234	59	Obelisk and memorial stele in Glory square	no	25.10	30.10
“_“	“_“	60	Obelisk dedicated to the 360th Infantry Division, which fought for the liberation of Daugavpils from the Nazis	“_“	“_“	“_“
Liepāja	4235	8	Monument to the defenders of Liepaja	unknown	26.10	25.10
“_“	“_“	9	Memorial stone with a memorial plaque to General Nikolai Dedayev	“_“	“_“	24.08
“_“	“_“	10	Memorial wall of the Middle Fort dedicated to the defenders of Liepaja	“_“	“_“	14.10
Rēzekne	4236	51	Monument to the Liberators of Rēzekne	no	“_“	09.11

5. The country's main anti-fascist monument was Monument to the Liberators of Soviet Latvia and Riga from the German Fascist Invaders (hereinafter the monument, the Monument to the Liberators)⁶.

The monument, which is a memorial complex of several sculptures with a decorative pool, was partly erected with donations from the public and was opened in 1985.

In the period preceding the destruction of the USSR and the whole period after the restoration of independence, the Day of Victory over Fascism was widely celebrated at the monument on the

⁶ See for example Monument to the Soldiers of the Soviet Army in Riga (Text and pictures by Mark R. Hatlie): <http://www.sites-of-memory.de/main/rigasovietyictory.html>

initiative of public representatives, with the participation of up to 100 -200 thousand people, according to the Soviet tradition - 9 May.

The crowded festive events took place annually in memorial places in many other localities in Latvia, including all the cities mentioned in §4 above ^{7 8 9 10}.

6. The Soviet tradition of celebrating Victory over Nazism in general, and even more so on 9 May, has always met with opposition from the authorities and certain social groups.

For example, on 29 September 2017, the collection of signatures for a petition to demolish the monument to the Liberators began. By March 2019, the 10,000 signatures of Latvian citizens needed to submit the petition to Parliament had been collected.

On 26 March 2019, political party's Latvian Russian Union (LRU) co-chair, member of the European Parliament (2004-2024) Tatyana Zhdanok organised the collection of signatures under a petition demanding that Parliament draft a law on the protection of monuments and memorials and include a section on the preservation of monuments to the victors of Nazism. Already on 2 April, the petition, under which more than 20,000 signatures had been collected within only three days, was submitted to parliament, but was rejected by it¹¹.

7. Sociological surveys show that in May-June 2022 50% of the population were in favour of the demolition of the monument, 36% - against¹². Among Russian-speaking residents only 9% supported the demolition of the monument, 55% definitely did not support it and 21% of respondents rather did not support it¹³.

Thus, members of the Russian-speaking minority themselves consider anti-fascist monuments to be an element of national culture within the meaning of article 27 of the Covenant.

⁷ See for example «Сносить не будем никогда? Историк и политолог о том, как принести мир в главное "русское место" Латвии» [Will we never demolish? Historian and political scientist on how to bring peace to the main "Russian place" in Latvia]. Portal Delfi, 09.05.2019: <https://rus.delfi.lv/news/daily/story/snosit-ne-budem-nikogda-istorik-i-politolog-o-tom-kak-prinesti-mir-v-glavnoe-russkoe-mesto-latvii.d?id=51065501>

⁸ «Через Киш-озеро под Георгиевским флагом!» [Through Kish-lake under the flag of St. George!], Press.lv, 26.10.2014: <https://press.lv/post/cherez-kish-ozero-pod-georgievskim-flagom>

⁹ Опрос Gorod.lv: в мероприятиях 9 мая желали участвовать больше половины респондентов [Poll by Gorod.lv: more than half of respondents wanted to participate in the events on May 9]. Portal gorod.lv, 08.11.2021: <https://gorod.lv/novosti/303025-opros-gorodlv-v-meropriyatiyah-9-maya-zhelali-uchastvovat-bolshe-pолоviny-respondentov>

¹⁰ see for example «9 мая тысячи липайчан несли к памятникам цветы». Портал «Инфолиепая» [“On May 9, thousands of Liepaja residents brought flowers to the monuments.” Portal "Infoliepaja"], 11.05.2020: <https://infoliepaja.lv/2020/05/11/9-maya-tysyachi-liepajchan-nesli-k-pamyatnikam-cvety-90-foto/>

¹¹ Русских Латвии призывают выйти и «защитить памятник физически» [Russians in Latvia are urged to come out and "defend the monument physically"], BB.lv, 25.06.2019: <https://bb.lv/statja/nasha-latvija/2019/06/25/prislushayutsya-li-vlasti-latvii-k-golosam-zdravomysliya>

¹² Aptaūja: puse iedzīvotāju atbalsta Uzvaras pieminekļa demontāžu [Poll: Half of the population supports the dismantling of the Victory Monument]. TV3, 24.05.2022: <https://zinas.tv3.lv/900-sekundes/aptauja-vairums-iedzivotaju-atbalsta-uzvaras-pieminekla-demontazu/>

¹³ SKDS: большинство русскоязычных, осуждающих действия РФ в Украине, — против сноса памятника в Парке Победы [the majority of Russian-speakers who condemn the actions of the Russian Federation in Ukraine are against the demolition of the monument in Victory Park]. Portal LSM, 07.07.2022: <https://rus.lsm.lv/statja/novosti/analitika/skds-bolshinstvo-russkojazichnih-osuzhdayuschih-deystvija-rf-v-ukraine--protiv-snosa-pamjatnika-v-parke-pobedi.a464347/>

8. On June 16, 2022, the law «On the prohibition of exhibiting objects glorifying the Soviet and Nazi regimes and their dismantling on the territory of the Republic of Latvia» was adopted by Parliament and on June 22 it came into force¹⁴ (hereinafter - the Demolition Law). The municipalities in which territory they are located are ordered to dismantle the monuments the title of the law refers before November 15, 2022 (Article 5.5).

Article 4 of the Demolition law names the monument to the Liberators by name, and also instructs the government to submit a list of objects subject to mandatory dismantling and the right for municipalities to dismantle other objects as well.

On July 14, 2022, the government regulations No. 448 "List of objects glorifying the Soviet and Nazi regimes to be dismantled on the territory of the Republic of Latvia"¹⁵ were adopted, containing a list of 69 objects to be dismantled (hereinafter – the List).

The List, despite the name of the above-mentioned regulations, includes only monuments of the Soviet era, mainly monuments to the soldiers of the anti-Hitler coalition.

9. Local governments have made extensive use of the right granted to them by the Demolition Law (Article 4 (3)), and have demolished about 70 other similar monuments not on the government list¹⁶.

On the contrary, the municipalities of Daugavpils and Rezekne, where the Russian-speaking minority in Latvia constitutes the majority of citizens, resisted by all possible means the implementation of the normative acts mentioned in §8 above.

On 30 June 2022, the Daugavpils City Council filed a lawsuit to the Constitutional Court against the Demolition Law (case No. 2022-41-01), on which the Constitutional Court issued a negative decision only on 7 December 2023, i.e. one year after all the monuments had already been demolished.

The Government openly threatened the Daugavpils City Council with dissolution, and the Mayor of Rezekne was dismissed on 02.11.2023, and on 20.06.2024 the entire Rezekne City Council was dissolved under the pretext of budget imbalance¹⁷.

Communication No. 4203/2022 was submitted by a group of members of the NGO "Latvian Workers' Front", the rest by members of LRU (including elected councillors).

Two participants of Communication No. 4203/2022 (a Lithuanian citizen and a Russian citizen) were expelled from Latvia, and their NGO was liquidated by a court decision on the proposal of the prosecutor's office¹⁸.

¹⁴ <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/333439>

¹⁵ <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/334177-latvijas-republikas-teritorija-esoso-demontejamo-padomju-un-nacistisko-rezimu-slavinoso-objektu-saraksts>

¹⁶ Pašvaldības nojauc vairāk padomju pieminekļu par prasīto; objektu skaits varētu dubultoties [Municipalities demolished more monuments than they were required to; number of objects could double]. LSM, 05.11.2022: <https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/latvija/pasvaldibas-nojauc-vairak-padomju-piemineklu-par-prasito-objektu-skaitsvaretu-dubultoties.a481244/>

¹⁷ Резекненская дума официально распущена [Rēzekne City Council is officially dissolved]. Rēzeknes ziņas, 02.07.2024: <https://rezekneszinas.lv/ru/Aktualno/1/26812/Rezeknenskaya-duma-oficialno-raspushena>

¹⁸ Решением Рижского окружного суда удовлетворен иск Генеральной прокуратуры о прекращении деятельности общества «Рабочий фронт Латвии» [The judgment of the Riga District Court satisfied the claim of the General Prosecutor's Office to terminate the activities of the Latvian Labour Front society], LSM.lv, 24.01.2024: <https://rus.lsm.lv/statja/novosti/obschestvo/27.01.2024-za-proslavlenie-kommunizma-sud-prekrashaet-deyatelnost-raboego-fronta-latvii.a540570/>

10. In Latvia, after the events of May 9 2022, three street actions were announced in defense of the monuments to the fighters of the anti-Hitler coalition to be demolished: on May 13, May 28 and August 22. All these actions were applied by deputies of the Riga City Council from the LRU faction (the last two - by the co-chairman of the LRU party and, since July, the leader of the electoral list of this party, Miroslavs Mitrofanovs). In all three cases, the Riga City Council prohibited these actions on the proposal of the State Security Service¹⁹. The prohibitions were challenged in court (cases No. A420202922, A420209922, A420247322²⁰), all three cases were lost, including in the Senate of the Supreme Court (judgements dated 06.03.2025, 25.11.2024, 28.12.2024). On 17.03.2025, a complaint was filed with the ECtHR on two 2024 judgements.

11. The authorities are in every way preventing residents who want to celebrate 9 May as Victory Day from doing so.

On May 9, 2023, at least 35 administrative and four criminal cases were initiated for attempts to celebrate Victory Day "privately", and 24 people were detained²¹.

In 2024, the State Police recorded 66 offences of justifying war, inciting national and social hatred: including 47 offences where individuals justified genocide, crimes against humanity, crimes against peace and war crimes (in the understanding of the police, almost all of the above 'crimes' relate to attempts to celebrate Victory Day on 9 May)²².

12. The Law 'On the Prohibition against Organisation of Specific Public Events on 9 May' , prohibits the holding of all public events on 9 May, except for those events that allow to prevent the belittling of and threat to the values of Latvia as a democratic and national state, including social division, glorification of war, military aggression, totalitarianism, violence, and also false representation of historical events, as well as events demonstrating solidarity with the Ukrainian nation whose national sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity are threatened as a result of Russia's military aggression, and to commemorate those who have suffered and died in Ukraine. The annotation to the relevant bill states in part: 9 May symbolises the occupation and annexation of the Republic of Latvia to the USSR, and this day is celebrated by some sectors of society as a day of praise for the totalitarian and occupation regime. It is in the interests of the State of Latvia to silently express condemnation of the illegal policies and crimes of both the USSR and Nazi Germany, to promote public understanding of the events that took place on the territory of Latvia during and after the Second World War, to strengthen the historical memory of society, to prevent false, inaccurate and biased coverage of historical events, thereby creating a common understanding of and 9 May.

¹⁹ See for example "VDD recommends to forbid the march on 28 May lodged by LKS", SSS website, 23.05.2022: <https://vdd.gov.lv/en/news/press-releases/vdd-recommends-to-forbid-the-march-on-28-may-lodged-by-lks>

²⁰ On the website of the judicial system, when entering the case number, you can find:

- full set of court proceedings dates: <https://manas.tiesas.lv/eTiesasMvc/e-pakalpojumi/tiesvedibas-gaita> ;

- the main judgments adopted by the courts of different instances: <https://manas.tiesas.lv/eTiesasMvc/nolemumi>

²¹ Цветы, задержания и "нулевая толерантность". Как прошло 9 мая в Латвии в 2023 году. Делфи, [Flowers, detentions and 'zero tolerance'. How 9 May was held in Latvia in 2023. Delphi,] 09.05.2023: <https://rus.delfi.lv/51164891/latvija/55501144/cvety-zaderzhaniya-i-nulevaya-tolerantnost-kak-proshlo-9-maya-v-latvii-v-2023-godu>

²² Госполиция: число связанных с оправданием войны преступлений за год выросло в несколько раз. Делфи [State Police: number of offences linked to justification of war has multiplied in a year. Delphi], 21.02.2025: <https://rus.delfi.lv/57863/criminal/120062157/gospoliciya-chislo-svyazannyh-s-opravdaniem-voyny-prestupleniy-za-god-vyroslo-v-neskolko-raz>

13. Although the authorities proclaim the ‘equal criminality’ of both Nazi Germany and the USSR, which fought as part of the anti-Hitler coalition, the bill to ban the commemoration of 9 May was passed by Parliament on 20 April 2023, Adolf Hitler's birthday.

In the centre of Riga, despite condemnation by European institutions²³, marches in honour of the Latvian SS Legion are regularly held on 16 March²⁴.

II.2. Monuments to world-famous Russians.

14. In 2023-2024 several monuments to world-famous Russians were dismantled in Riga: academician Mstislav Vsevolodovich Keldysh (03.11.2023), poet Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin (30.05.2024) and commander Mikhail Bogdanovich Barclay de Tolly (31.10.2024).

The initiative to dismantle these monuments came from the ruling coalition in Riga City Council and was accompanied by protest rallies organised by opposition deputats.

15. Mstislav Vsevolodovich Keldysh (10.02.1911 - 24.06.1978), President of the USSR Academy of Sciences (1961-1975), three times Hero of Socialist Labour and head of the Soviet space programme, was born in Riga, in the family of Vsevolod Keldysh, professor at the Riga Polytechnic Institute, son of Mikhail Keldysh, a military doctor practicing in Riga.

In 1915, due to the approach of the Kaiser's troops to Riga, the family evacuated to Moscow, where the future academician lived his life. Nevertheless, among the natives of Riga there are no persons comparable to Keldysh in terms of contribution to world science.

The names Mstislav and Vsevolod are Slavic pre-Christian names.

The bust of the academician was erected in the park opposite the entrance to the Latvian State University on 24.04.1978. The decision to demolish the monument was adopted by Riga City Council on 18.10.2023. The decision of 14.12.2022 renamed Mstislavs Keldysh Street, which received its name in 1978 when it was created in the process of building apartment blocks.

16. Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin (06.06.1799-10.02.1837) is the most famous and revered Russian poet, the founder of the modern literary Russian language. The upbringing of a Russian child begins with Pushkin's fairy tales. Monuments to the poet have been erected in several dozens of countries around the world²⁵.

In the centre of Riga a monument by the city canal was unveiled on the initiative of the then mayor of Riga on 22.08.2009.²⁶

²³ European Parliament resolution of 25 October 2018 on the rise of neo-fascist violence in Europe (2018/2869(RSP)), §§ AC, 1; ECRI report on Latvia (fifth monitoring cycle). Adopted on 4 December 2018. Published on 5 March 2019, §§27,28/ See also Resolution No. 78/190, adopted by the General Assembly on 19 December 2023, §§6,16,17

²⁴ ФОТО, ВИДЕО. В Риге прошло шествие памяти латышских легионеров. Делфи [PHOTO, VIDEO. A procession in memory of Latvian legionnaires took place in Riga. Delphi], 16.03.2025: <https://rus.delfi.lv/57860/latvia/120064915/foto-video-v-rige-proshlo-shestvie-pamyati-latyshskih-legionerov>

²⁵

https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%9F%D0%B0%D0%BC%D1%8F%D1%82%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%BA_%D0%9F%D1%83%D1%88%D0%BA%D0%B8%D0%BD%D1%83

²⁶

[https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%9F%D0%B0%D0%BC%D1%8F%D1%82%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%BA_%D0%9F%D1%83%D1%88%D0%BA%D0%B8%D0%BD%D1%83_\(%D0%A0%D0%B8%D0%B3%D0%B0\)](https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%9F%D0%B0%D0%BC%D1%8F%D1%82%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%BA_%D0%9F%D1%83%D1%88%D0%BA%D0%B8%D0%BD%D1%83_(%D0%A0%D0%B8%D0%B3%D0%B0))

No special Riga City Council decision on the monument's installation was made, which allowed its demolition on 30.05.2024 without formal consent of the Riga City Council members.

29.11.2023 by the decision of Riga City Council one of the best Russian schools in the city - Pushkin Lyceum - was renamed.

21.02.2024 by the decision of Riga City Council, Pushkin Street, which received its name in 1923, was renamed. During the pre-war period of the Latvian Republic, Pushkin's name was honoured, as evidenced by the celebrations dedicated to the centenary of his death²⁷.

On 30.11.2024 a bust of the poet's famous muse Anna Kern, who lived in Riga in the 1820s, was dismantled. The poet dedicated the poem 'I Remember a Wonderful Moment' to her. The bust and a memorial stone with an inscription were erected in 1990²⁸.

17. Field Marshal Mikhail Bogdanovich Barclay de Tolly (27.12.1761-26.05.1818), Napoleon's victor, is undoubtedly the most famous native of the Baltic provinces of Russia²⁹. Barclay belonged to an old Scottish family that had migrated to Riga in the 17th century in the time of Oliver Cromwell. Barclay's grandfather and cousin were burgomasters of Riga. Barclay himself, who devoted his life mainly to military service, according to some sources worked in the provincial board of trustees, where he supervised Riga's most famous educational institution, the Dome Cathedral School³⁰.

Barclay claimed in writing that he was born in Riga, although his exact place of birth is considered unknown. On 11.06.1818 in Riga, his body was solemnly buried and military honours were paid in the presence of clergymen of all denominations and the city's civil administration headed by the Governor-General, as well as the military garrison.

The monument to Barclay in the centre of Riga on the Esplanade was unveiled on 13.10.1913 by the Riga City Council, which allocated half of the necessary funds. The remaining funds were collected as public donations.

The monument was evacuated in 1915 when the Kaiser's troops approached Riga and was lost.

The pedestal, which has an independent cultural value, has survived all successive regimes, including the Nazi occupation.

The monument was restored on the funds of a Riga businessman and unveiled on 02.07.2002. Based on the positive results of a poll of Riga citizens, the Riga City Council approved the installation of the monument by a decision of 17.12.2002.

By the Riga City Council decision of 17.10.2024, executed on 30.10.2024, both the statue and the pedestal, which had been standing for 111 years, were dismantled.

18. At the meeting of Riga City Council on 17.10.2024 a draft decision on dismantling the monument to 400 Russian soldiers on Lutsavsala Island was also submitted.

The monument is dedicated to the heroic death of the Russian military detachment surrounded by the Swedish king's troops on 10.07.1701.

²⁷ 100 лет Пушкину в Риге, газеты. Пушкинское общество Латвии. Сайт [100 years of Pushkin in Riga, newspapers. Pushkin Society of Latvia. Website]: <https://pushkin.lv/?p=733>

²⁸ В Риге демонтировали бюст музы Пушкина, которой он посвятил строки "Я помню чудное мгновенье" [A bust of Pushkin's muse to whom he dedicated the lines 'I Remember a Wonderful Moment' was dismantled in Riga]. Otkrito, 30.11.2024: <https://rus.jauns.lv/article/novosti/631418-v-rige-demontirovali-byust-muzy-puskina-kotoroi-on-posvyatil-stroki-ya-pomnyu-cudnoe-mgnovene>

²⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_Andreas_Barclay_de_Tolly

³⁰ «Skolas un izglītība Rīgā: no sendienām līdz 1944.gadam» [Schools and education in Riga: from ancient times to 1944]. Alfrēds Staris. «Lielvārds», 2000, 59.lpp.

The monument was erected in 1891 on people's donations and reopened on 10.07.2001 after restoration on the money of local Russian businessmen.

The draft decision was withdrawn from the agenda at the last moment because the remains of Russian soldiers were discovered under the monument.

On 26.10.2023, amendments to the Demolition law (Bill No. 387/Lp14) allowing the demolition of monuments over burials, having previously been exhumed, were overwhelmingly passed to the Parliament's committees by a majority vote. After receiving a positive opinion from the Ministry of Defence on 16.01.2024, no further progress on the amendments has been made so far.

III. Toponyms

19. Since 2022, Riga City Council, in addition to the already mentioned renaming of Keldysh and Pushkin streets, has renamed several other streets whose names have a direct or indirect relation to Russian culture:

- by a decision of 14.12.2022, Valentin Pikul's alley and trail were renamed, as well as Detlav Brantkaln and Stara Russa streets³¹;

- By decisions of 21.02.2024, Moskovskaya (named so in 1859), Lomonosov (1950), Pushkin (1923), Lermontov (1901), Turgenev (1885) and Gogol (1902) streets were renamed³².

During the voting on 21.02.2024, the proposals of the LRU faction to submit draft decisions on renaming streets for discussion by the residents of the city were rejected.

20. Valentin Savvitch Pikul (1928-1990) - author of many books in Russian on military-historical themes with a total circulation of 20 million copies. There are various memorial signs to the writer in St Petersburg, Murmansk, Baltiysk and Severomorsk, and three Russian ships bear his name. From 1962 to 1990 he lived and worked in Riga.

Valentin Pikul's Alley and Valentin Pikul's Trail appeared in Riga in 2016.

21. Detlav Karlovich Brantkaln (1890-1979) - participant of the Civil War on the side of the Red Army, during the Second World War he commanded the 130th Latvian Rifle Corps, a Red Army unit manned by natives of Latvia. In 1983, a street in a new residential neighbourhood was named after him.

Although Brantkalns is an ethnic Latvian, the commemoration of the anti-Hitler coalition fighters directly affects the cultural issues of the Russian-speaking minority (see §§ 7 and 13 above).

22. The street of Staraya Russa was named so in honour of the battles of 1942 on liberation of this district centre of the Novgorod region of Russia by the troops of the Latvian Rifle Division. The motivation for listing this re-designation is the same as in §21.

³¹ В Риге переименоуют некоторые улицы [Some streets in Riga will be renamed]. LSM, 14.12.2022: <https://rus.lsm.lv/statja/novosti/politika/v-rige-pereimenuyut-nekotorie-ulici.a487072/>

³² В Риге отменили названия улиц Маскавас, Пушкина, Гоголя, Тургенева и других. Портал bb [The names of Maskavas, Pushkin, Gogol, Turgenev and other streets were cancelled in Riga. Portal bb], 21.02.2024: <https://bb.lv/statja/nasha-latvija/2024/02/21/rigu-zachishchayut-ot-russkogo-duha-vmesto-nego-vozvrashchayutsya-nemeckie-veyaniya>

23. Moskovskaya Street [in Latvian - Maskavas], which retained this name for 165 years (except for a short break in 1938-1940), was the largest street in the city with a length of 16 kilometres and 751 buildings located on it.

Mikhail Vasilyevich Lomonosov (1711-1765) - the founder of the Russian Academy of Sciences; Mikhail Yurievich Lermontov (1814-1841) - the second most important poet in Russia after Pushkin; Ivan Sergeyevich Turgenev (1818-1883) and Nikolai Vasilyevich Gogol (1809-1852) were outstanding Russian writers.

IV. Freedom of conscience

24. According to the data of representative surveys the belonging of different ethnic groups to religious confessions can be seen from the following table³³

Table 2

Answers to the question (%) about belonging to various confessions in 2005 and 2014

Year	2014	2005					
Confession	All	All	Latvians	Russians	Others	Citizens	Non-citizens
Lutheran	23.8	20	33.6	0.9	6.7	24.3	2.9
Catholics	22.3	20.7	26.8	6.7	30.8	23	11.9
Russian Orthodox	18.9	24.1	4	56.1	33	15.9	57.1
Old Believer	2.7	4.4	0.3	12.8	0.8	4.7	3.5
Baptists	0.8	1	1.2	0.3	2	1.1	0.6
Adventists	0.4	0.5	0.3		2.5	0.3	0.9
Others confessions	0.6	1	0.8	0.9	2.5	0.7	2.3
Believers, do not belong to confessions	12.8	10.6	11	10.9	7.5	11.2	8
Atheists	17.7	15.8	19.8	10.8	10.7	16.9	11.5
No answer	-	1.7	2	0.6	3.4	1.8	1.4

From the above data, it seems clear that the Orthodox faith is dominant among Latvia's non-citizens, the Russian ethnic minority, and Latvian national minorities in general.

While several Western Christian holidays, as Easter and Christmas, are official holidays, not a single Orthodox one is, despite repeated attempts to amend the legislation accordingly³⁴.

³³ To the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

Alternative NGO report on Latvia (third cycle). July 31, 2017, table 6: http://www.lhrc.lv/arxiv/Shadow_report_FCNM_LV2017.docx

³⁴ See, for example, the article “«Согласие» вновь потребует признания православного Рождества официальным праздником” ([Parliamentary faction] "Concord" will again demand recognition of Orthodox Christmas as an official holiday). LETA, November 30, 2014:

The Latvian Orthodox Church was in canonical connection with the Moscow Patriarchate and, according to Latvian intelligence services, may be an agent of Russian influence among Latvian society³⁵.

25. By amendments dated 06.06.2019 to the Law on the Latvian Orthodox Church³⁶ it was established that only clergymen of the Church and citizens of Latvia whose permanent place of residence has been Latvia for not less than the last 10 years may be the Primate, metropolitans, archbishops, bishops and candidates for such offices.

06.06.2022 Moscow Patriarchate TV channel "Soyuz" was excluded from the Latvian TV broadcasting grid.

By amendments of 09.09.2022 it was established that the Law fully consolidates the autocephalous status of the Church, i.e. the connection of the Church with the Moscow Patriarchate was interrupted.

These amendments were tabled in Parliament by the President of the country and were passed in one day without any discussion, including among the parishioners³⁷.

V. Freedom to receive information

26. According to the 2021 survey³⁸, the share of Latvian residents who use certain types of media on a daily basis is as follows: social networks - 61%, internet news portals - 57%, television - 49%, radio - 44%, press publications - 18%. In 2018, these shares were 52, 52, 61, 52 and 16%, respectively.

In general, 65% of respondents (91% of those under 30 years of age) received information predominantly on the Internet, while 32% (76% of those over 65 years of age) received information in traditional media (television, radio, press).

In terms of the language of daily used media, the preferences of consumers were distributed as follows: Latvian - 85%, Russian – 59% (including 94 % of national minorities), English - 35 %. 86% of Latvians and 79% of representatives of national minorities noted the desirability of receiving information in their native language.

27. As of 2021, a significant number of channels retransmitted in Latvia were Russian-made. Russian channels were watched by 59 per cent of national minorities and 35 per cent of Latvians in 2021. At the same time, 78% watched films and serials, 45% watched shows and concerts, 34%

³⁵ DP: Krievija izmanto Pareizticīgo baznīcu, lai ietekmētu sabiedrību Latvijā (SP: Russia uses Orthodox Church to influence public in Latvia). TVNET/TV3. January 11, 2015: http://www.tvnet.lv/zinas/latvija/543001-dp_krievija_izmanto_pareizticigo_baznicu_lai_ietekmetu_sabiedribu_latvija (LV)

³⁶ <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/184626>

³⁷ Сейм Латвии самовольно утвердил «автокефалию» Латвийской Православной Церкви [Latvian Saeima arbitrarily approved the 'autocephaly' of the Latvian Orthodox Church]. GLOBAL ORTHODOX, 08.09.2022: <https://gorthodox.com/news-item/sejm-latvii-samovolno-utverdil-avtokefaliyu-latvijskoj-pravoslavnoj-cerkvi> Протоиерей Владислав Цыпин, По поводу провозглашенной латвийским Сеймом «автокефалии» [Archpriest Vladislav Tsypin, On the 'autocephaly' proclaimed by the Latvian Seimas.]. Православие.ru, 15.09.2022: <https://pravoslavie.ru/148246.html>

³⁸ Pētījums par Latvijas iedzīvotāju medijpratību un mediju satura lietošanas paradumiem (Survey of Latvian population's media literacy and media content usage habits: July-September 2021) http://petijumi.mk.gov.lv/sites/default/files/title_file/Iedz_medijpratiba_PETIJUMS.pdf

watched popular science programmes, and 31% of viewers of Russian channels watched news programmes³⁹.

The top three in terms of popularity until 2022 were almost invariably the First Baltic Channel (PBC), established and registered in Latvia (Baltijas mediju alianse), and through subsidiary companies also in Estonia and Lithuania. The channel rebroadcast Russian public television programmes, but also had original programmes, including a news programme.

There was also a news programme in Russian on the second programme of public television (LTV7).

28. The presence of foreign languages (primarily Russian) in the packages of retransmitted TV programmes was limited by quotas (no more than 35% of airtime) and the need to include in the package several channels produced in Latvia and the EU.

Occasional temporary bans on the broadcasting of some Russian channels due to ideological evaluation of some of their news programmes or formal technical violations were also applied:

- 08.02.2021 the broadcasting of Russia RTR channel in Latvia was terminated for one year⁴⁰, and on 24.02.2022 - for another 5 years⁴¹;

- 09.02.2021 broadcasting of NTV Mir Baltic, Ren TV Baltic and several other Russian programmes in Latvia was terminated

In 2020-2022, as described below, the Latvian airwaves were radically cleared of Russian-language programmes.

29. On 19 December 2019, the State Security Service initiated criminal proceedings against Baltijas mediju alianse and the firm's founder and co-owner Oleg Solodov for violating EU sanctions against Russia⁴². The court of first instance ordered the firm to pay a fine of EUR 3.1 million⁴³.

On 20.10.2021 PBC's licence was revoked. After the closure of PBC, the popularity of its subsidiary channels PBC Estonia and PBC Lithuania, broadcasting also in Latvia, increased sharply. However, as of 02.03.2023 their licences were also revoked on the basis of negative information about Oleg Solodov from the intelligence services⁴⁴. The respective lawsuits were lost.

As of 1 January 2022, the Russian-language part of LTV7 public television broadcasts from the air (including cable retransmission) was transferred to the Internet⁴⁵.

³⁹ ibid

⁴⁰ Lēmums [Decision] nr. 68/1-2: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/320922-par-programmas-rossija-rtr-izplatisanas-ierobezosanu-latvijas-teritorija>

⁴¹ Lēmums [Decision nr. 85/1-2: <https://www.neplp.lv/lv/programmu-izplatisanas-ierobezosana>

⁴² Обыски у владельца Первого Балтийского канала связаны с нарушением санкций [Searches at the owner of the First Baltic Channel are related to sanctions violations]. LSM, 05.02.2020: <https://rus.lsm.lv/statja/novosti/proisshestvija/obiski-u-vladelca-pervogo-baltiyskogokanala-svjazani-s-narusheniem-sankciy-leta.a347275/>

⁴³ Суд обязал взыскать с Baltijas mediju alianse 3,1 млн евро по делу о нарушении санкций [Court ordered to recover EUR 3.1 million from Baltijas mediju alianse for sanctions violation case]. MKLAT, 04.02.2022:

⁴⁴ NEPLP anulē atļauju Latvijā retranslēt "PBK Igaunija" un "PBK Lietuva". NEPLP, [NEPLP cancelled the permission to rebroadcast "PBC Estonia" and "PBC Lithuania" in Latvia]. Tv3.lv, 25.02.2022: <https://zinas.tv3.lv/latvija/neplp-anule-atlauju-latvija-retranslet-pbk-igaunija-un-pbk-lietuva/>

⁴⁵ Новости на русском языке останутся в эфире LTV7 до конца года [News in Russian will remain on LTV7 until the end of the year], TVNET, 03.09.2021: <https://rus.tvnet.lv/7329735/novosti-na-russkom-yazyke-ostanutsya-v-efire-ltv7-do-konca-goda>

30. In May 2022, amendments to the Electronic Media Law gave the executive branch emergency powers to dismantle television channels "when the country of jurisdiction of an audiovisual programme or audiovisual on-demand service undermines or threatens the territorial integrity, sovereignty or national independence of another country".

On 06.06.2022, 80 Russian programmes, mostly of entertainment and educational nature, including programmes for children, were banned.

Subsequently, two more TV channels for children were banned: "Visiting Fairy Tales"⁴⁶ and "I Want to Know Everything"⁴⁷.

In 2022, about 1,000 Internet domains and websites were blocked, where one could, inter alia, watch banned TV channels⁴⁸.

Finally, the amendments of 10.03.2022 to the Law on Protected Services (Article 7) introduced administrative liability for viewers for viewing prohibited content (fine of up to 700 euros).

Ensuring and combating illegal viewing of banned TV channels is particularly characteristic of Latgale, where Russian speakers constitute the majority of the population⁴⁹.

31. According to the results of a survey on media consumption habits of Latvian residents, 36 % of respondents expressed interest in Russian-language content in Latvian media in 2024, while in 2023 - 35 % of respondents.

Among non-Latvians, almost three quarters or 72 % of respondents expressed interest in Russian-language content, while in 2023 - 66 % of respondents.

Therefore, says Ivars Aboliņš, head of NEPLP (since 2017), it is necessary to strengthen Latvian-language content and stop creating Russian-language content in the public media. Asked whether the NEPLP-commissioned study could influence plans for Russian language on radio and in advertising, Aboliņš said that people around the world willingly consume pornographic content as well, but that does not mean that public funds should be used to create it⁵⁰.

Riga, 23 April 2025

⁴⁶ Released since 1976, banned from 04/04/2023: <https://bb.lv/statja/nasha-latvija/2023/03/30/retranslyaciya-peredachi-v-gostyah-u-skazki-zapreshchena-s-4-aprelya>

⁴⁷ Published since 1957, banned from 25.04.2023: <https://bb.lv/statja/nasha-latvija/2023/05/05/nsesmi-annuliroval-razreshenie-na-translyaciyu-eshche-odnoy-programmy>

⁴⁸ The list of banned domains as of 24.04.2023 is available on the NEPLP website: <https://www.neplp.lv/lv/ierobezoto-domenu-vardu-saraksts>

The power to ban domains is given to the CNEMI by the Law on Electronic Communications: Article 135 until 29.07.2022, Article 112 in the current law.

⁴⁹ В Латгалии полицейский за плату подключал запрещенные ТВ-каналы жителям [A policeman in Latgale connected banned TV channels to residents for a fee], LSM.lv, 29/03/2023: <https://rus.lsm.lv/statja/novosti/proisshestvija/29.03.2023-v-latgalii-policeiskii-za-platu-podklyucal-zapreshhennye-tv-kanaly-zitelyam.a502877/>

В Ницгале арестовали телемастера за подключение российских каналов - накажут и его клиентов [In Nitzgal, a TV master was arrested for connecting Russian channels - his clients will also be punished], Otkrito.lv, 09.03.2024: <https://rus.jauns.lv/article/novosti/597724-v-nicgale-arostovali-telemastera-za-podklyucenie-rossiiskix-kanalov-nakazut-i-ego-klientov>

⁵⁰ Интерес к масс-медиа на русском есть, но его не надо удовлетворять — глава NEPLP [There is interest in mass media in Russian, but it does not need to be satisfied - NEPLP head], LSM, 31.03.2025: <https://rus.lsm.lv/statja/novosti/politika/31.03.2025-interes-k-mass-media-na-russkom-est-no-ego-ne-nado-udovletvoryat-glava-neplp.a593659/>




Vladimirs Buzajevs

Co-chairman

Jūlija Sohina

Projects manager