



**Committee on the Rights of the Child
Convention on the Rights of the Child
95 Session Session
(15 Jan 2024 - 02 Feb 2024)**

Additional submission

Background of submitting NGOs

The Citizens' Watch (citwatch.org, St. Petersburg, Russia) is a human rights NGO active since 1992 with extensive expertise in the field of access to justice. We pay special attention to the transparency and accessibility of justice, our experts take part in the development of recommendations to improve transparency of the courts, to lower the threshold of access to justice for disadvantaged groups. The Citizens' Watch regularly conducts trial monitoring of cases of public interest. Our organisation also provides free legal assistance to vulnerable groups and engages in human rights awareness and education.

Sphere Foundation (spherequeer.org) is a human rights organisation that has been advocating for the rights of the LGBT+ community in Russia since 2011. We possess expertise in developing and coordinating programs for psychological, emergency, and legal assistance, as well as monitoring discrimination and engaging in national and international advocacy. We actively assist and support LGBT+ individuals and collaborate with other organisations that share similar objectives in various regions of Russia. Additionally, in response to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the Sphere Foundation has taken an active stance against the war.

Women. Prison. Society (women-in-prison.ru) is a nationwide Human Rights Project, founded in 2016 as a volunteer initiative group without official registration; based mainly in St. Petersburg. Its main areas of work: investigations, research and educational projects; protection of the rights of vulnerable groups of prisoners and public campaigns and advocacy. The Project focuses on real stories of people whose fates are connected with prisons, police and migration centres, in particular women and children, LGBT+ and other vulnerable groups. The mission of the Project is to bring their voices to society, as only by drawing public attention to what is happening “behind bars” can force the government to humanise the prison system. The Project works towards systemic changes in the Russian penitentiary system and changing public opinion.

A. General measures of implementation (arts. 4, 42 and 44 (6) of the Convention)

Independent monitoring — Commissioner for children's rights

Concluding observations on the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of the Russian Federation, CRC/C/RUS/CO/4-5, 2014	Combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of the Russian Federation on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (2011–2019), CRC/C/RUS/6-7
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<p>16. The Committee notes the establishment of the post of commissioner for children's rights at the federal and regional levels. However, it is deeply concerned that the position of commissioner is directly linked to the Office of the President and not to the Parliament. Furthermore, it is concerned about the non-transparent procedure for appointing commissioners and reports that many of them have little experience in protecting children's rights, do not observe the confidentiality of cases and act rather as law enforcement officials.</p> <p>17. The Committee recommends that the State party introduce a transparent and competitive process, regulated by law, for nominations and appointments to all posts of commissioners for children's rights, ensuring that the candidates are selected on the basis of merit and are free from political or other influence and in full compliance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles). It also recommends that the State party provide the commissioners' offices with the necessary human, technical and financial resources, and their staff with the necessary training on children's rights.</p>	<p>The issue was not raised. Russia outlined the legal regulation of the status of the Commissioner:</p> <p>32. Federal Act No. 501-FZ of 27 December 2018 on Commissioners for Children's Rights in the Russian Federation defines the features of the legal position, main objectives and powers of the Presidential Commissioner for Children's Rights and the basics of the legal position of the commissioners for children's rights in the constituent entities of the Russian Federation. In particular, article 4 of the Act sets out the requirements for the Presidential Commissioner, while article 13 defines the legal status of the commissioners in the constituent entities of the Russian Federation (concluding observations, paras. 16–17).</p>
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The present commissioner, Maria Alekseyevna Lvova-Belova, is allegedly responsible for the war crimes of the unlawful deportation of population (children) and the unlawful transfer of population (children) from occupied areas of Ukraine to the Russian Federation under articles 8(2)(a)(vii) and 8(2)(b)(viii) of the Rome Statute. According to the International Criminal Court, there are reasonable grounds to believe that Ms. Lvova-Belova bears individual criminal responsibility for the aforementioned crimes, having committed the acts directly, jointly with others, and/or through others (article 25(3)(a) of the Rome Statute).¹

Cooperation with civil society — foreign agents

<p>Concluding observations on the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of the Russian Federation, CRC/C/RUS/CO/4-5, 2014</p>	<p>Combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of the Russian Federation on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (2011–2019), CRC/C/RUS/6-7</p>
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¹ Situation in Ukraine ICC-01/22, URL.: <https://www.icc-cpi.int/situations/ukraine>.

<p>18. The Committee expresses its deep concern at the 2012 Federal Act regarding the regulation of activities of non-commercial organizations performing the function of foreign agents, which requires that organizations receiving financial support from sources outside the State party register and identify themselves publicly as “foreign agents”. It also expresses its deep concern at recent amendments to the Criminal Code that expanded the definition of the crime of State treason to include “providing financial, technical, advisory or other assistance to a foreign State or international organization ... directed at harming Russia's security” and which are used against organizations working on children's rights.</p> <p>19. The Committee urges the State party to repeal its 2012 Act requiring human rights organizations that receive foreign funding to register as “foreign agents”, and amend the definition of the crime of treason in the Criminal Code in order to ensure that non-governmental organizations working in the area of human rights and children's rights can operate without any undue pressure.</p>	<p>Russia in para. 33 comments that the legislation on foreign agents “provides Russian society with proper elements of control over the activities of non-profit organizations”. Russia clarifies that at that time there were two cumulative criteria of a foreign agent: financing from abroad and exercise of political activities.</p>
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Since the 2019 report, the regulation on foreign agents has changed. Originally, the law introducing the status of an “NGO performing the functions of a foreign agent” was adopted in July 2012 (Federal Law No. 121-FZ of 20.07.2012). In December 2015, the law on undesirable organisations² was adopted, significantly reducing access for Russian CSOs to support from international donors. Since then, Russian legislation has undergone numerous changes and extensions of the foreign agent status. In particular, in 2017, the status of foreign agents was extended to mass media (Federal Law No. 327-FZ of 25.11.2017), and in December 2020, it was extended to individuals (Federal Law of 30.12.2020 No. 481-FZ).

Since December 2022, when the Federal Law of 14.07.2022 No. 255-FZ “About the Control of Activities of Persons Under Foreign Influence” entered into force, consolidating the rules for foreign agents, the term “NGO performing the functions of a foreign agent” was substituted with “foreign agents.” To qualify as a foreign agent, one does not need to receive foreign funding but rather to come under “foreign influence,” an extremely vague and unclear notion. Earlier amendments to the law allowed mass media (Federal Law of 25.11.2017 No. 327-FZ amending Article 6 of the Law on Mass Media) and individuals to be labelled as foreign agents (Federal Law

² Federal Law of May 23, 2015 No. 129-FZ “On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation”; Article 284–1 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation “Operation in the Russian Federation of a foreign or international non-governmental organisation, whose activities have been declared undesirable in the Russian Federation.”

of 30.12.2020 No. 481-FZ “On Amending Certain Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation with regard to the Establishment of Additional Measures to Counter Threats to National Security”). Finally, the majority of the statuses and limitations related to foreign agents are compiled in the Federal Law of 14.07.2022 No. 255-FZ “On Control over the Activities of Persons Under Foreign Influence.”

Furthermore, the Ministry of Justice maintains a separate registry of individuals affiliated with foreign agents, which, unlike the registry of foreign agents, is not open to the public. In 2022, there were 861 individuals and organisations in this registry³. According to the Ministry of Justice's report on the activities of foreign agents in 2022⁴, the aim of this status seems to be to prevent affiliated persons from participating in elections. The Ministry of Justice does not disclose to a foreign agent whether the list of affiliated persons includes people or organisations “affiliated” with it, claiming that the person in question should apply to the Ministry of Justice to determine if they are on this registry. There is no publicly available information on the procedure for including a person in this list or whether the Ministry of Justice informs a person about their inclusion in this list.

The foreign agents legislation raises concerns among the UN human rights treaty bodies.⁵ The European Court of Human Rights ruled that the status of foreign agents in Russian legislation violates the right to freedom of assembly.⁶ The Venice Commission declared the foreign agents legislation a “serious violation of basic human rights, including the freedoms of association and expression, the right to privacy, the right to participate in public affairs, as well as the prohibition of discrimination.” The commission recommended that Russia “abandon the special regime of registration, reporting, and public disclosure requirements for associations, media outlets, and individuals receiving 'foreign support,' including the related administrative and criminal sanctions.”⁷

The foreign agents law results in the liquidation of CSOs⁸ and the reduction of their activities. In particular, individuals recognized as foreign agents are prohibited from engaging in educational activities with children and might lose their jobs.⁹ For example, in 2013, 12 CSOs

³ Ibid., P. 27.

⁴ Report of the Ministry of Justice of Russia to the Chairman of the State Duma of the Russian Federation, submitted in accordance with part 11 of Article 10 of the Federal Law of 14.07.2022 № 255-FZ “On control over the activities of persons under foreign influence” on the activities of foreign agents, including information on their participation in political activities carried out in the territory of the Russian Federation, on the receipt and expenditure of funds, as well as on the results of control over their activities, URL.: <https://t.me/komisgd/589>.

⁵ CCPR/C/RUS/CO/7 (2015); CERD/C/RUS/CO/23-24 (2017), para 11; CERD/C/RUS/CO/20-22 (2013), para 13; CEDAW/C/RUS/CO/8 (2015), para 15; E/C.12/RUS/CO/6 (2017), para 7.

⁶ Ecodefence and Others v. Russia (9988/13, 14338/14, 45973/14...), Judgment (Merits and Just Satisfaction), Court (Third Section), 14 June 2022.

⁷ CDL-AD(2021)027-e, Russian Federation — Opinion on the Compatibility with international human rights standards of a series of Bills introduced to the Russian State Duma between 10 and 23 November 2020, to amend laws affecting “foreign agents”, adopted by the Venice Commission at its 127th Plenary session (Venice and online, 2-3 July 2021), paras. 91, 93.

⁸ To name a few examples, on December 2021 International Memorial was liquidated by the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation; on April 2023 Moscow City Court decided to liquidate SOVA Center for Information and Analysis (appeal is pending).

⁹ Moscow State University has fired associate professor Mikhail Lobanov because of his status as a foreign agent. RBK, 10.07.2023. URL.: <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/10/07/2023/64abe4c29a79478311794eb5>; Yulia Galyamina reports resignation from RANEPa due to foreign agent status, Kommersant, 27.12.2022. URL.: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/5748626>; A teacher will not be able to teach students or schoolchildren in any educational organisation from 1 December unless he or she is removed from the status of foreign agent, Properm.ru, 6.09.2022.

URL.: <https://properm.ru/news/2022-09-05/neformalno-iz-za-statusa-inostrannogo-agenta-permskogo-politologa-uvolili-iz-peduniversiteta-2705361>; Kazan sociologist recognised as a foreign agent fired from his job, Inkazan.ru, 13.09.2022. URL.: <https://inkazan.ru/news/2022-10-13/priznannogo-inoagentom-sotsiologa-iz-kazani-uvolili-s-raboty-1727275>.

submitted reports to the Committee regarding Russia's report. Of these, 9 submissions were made by Russian CSOs or Russian NGOs in coalition with international NGOs. Three of the NGOs that submitted reports in 2013 were recognized as foreign agents: ADC Memorial,¹⁰ LGBT Organization Coming Out¹¹, and Russian LGBT Network.¹² In 2022, 5 Russian NGOs made submissions. The decrease in the interaction of civil society with the UN treaty bodies was noted by the CERD.¹³

B. General principles (arts. 2, 3, 6 and 12 of the Convention)

Non-discrimination

<p>Concluding observations on the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of the Russian Federation, CRC/C/RUS/CO/4-5, 2014</p>	<p>Combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of the Russian Federation on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (2011–2019), CRC/C/RUS/6-7</p>
<p>24. The Committee is also concerned at the recent legislation of the State party prohibiting “propaganda of unconventional sexual relationships”, generally intended protect children, but which encourages the stigmatization of and discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons, including children, and children from LGBTI families. The Committee is particularly concerned that the vague definitions of propaganda used lead to the targeting and ongoing persecution of the country's LGBTI community, including through abuse and violence, in particular against underage LGBTIrights activists.</p> <p>25. The Committee recommends that the State party repeal its laws prohibiting propaganda of homosexuality and ensure that children who belong to LGBTI groups or children from LGBTI families are not subjected to any forms of discrimination by</p>	<p>In 2019 Russia denied the mandate of the Committee in the sphere of protection of the rights of LGBT+ and called the recommendations in paras. 25, 36, 60 unacceptable. Russia highlighted that the recommendation of the Committee to repeal the law forbidding the propaganda of homosexuality contravines Articles 13-17 of the Convention and relied on the position of the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation.</p>

¹⁰ RUSSIAN FEDERATION: ADC “Memorial” officially declared a “foreign agent” by the court, FIDH, 12.12.2013. URL.:<https://www.fidh.org/en/region/europe-central-asia/russia/14381-russian-federation-adc-memorial-officially-declared-a-foreign-agent-by-the>.

¹¹ <https://ria.ru/20211224/inoagency-1765422160.html>

¹² Russia: Frontline group LGBT-Network and human rights lawyers branded “foreign agents”, Amnesty International, 9.11.2021.

URL.:<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/11/russia-frontline-group-lgbt-network-and-human-rights-lawyers-branded-foreign-agents/>.

¹³ Concluding observations on the combined twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth periodic reports of the Russian Federation, CERD/C/RUS/CO/25-26 (2023), para. 18.

raising the public's awareness of equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.	
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In light of the Russian Federation's continued disregard for repeated recommendations to repeal the law on LGBT+ “propaganda” and the further development of discriminatory legislation, we have observed a rise in institutionalised discrimination and discrimination in daily life, including within households.

LGBT+ individuals regularly become targets in state media smear campaigns and individual statements by state representatives. In these statements, LGBT+ people are often portrayed as a “threat” to children and traditional values, rather than as a vulnerable group.

In this context, we have noted the state's failure to ensure the best interests of LGBT+ minors by protecting them from domestic violence, school bullying, street assaults, and other threats to their development. We are deeply concerned that the recent enactment of the “Gender Transition Ban” bill,¹⁴ which outlaws all forms of gender-affirming therapy, may lead to a significant increase in suicide rates, especially among minors.

Since 2015, Sphere Foundation has maintained the Monitoring of Discrimination Database (referred to as “the Sphere's database”) based on various internal and external sources. Currently, the database includes more than thirteen hundred cases of discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. It is important to note that, given the scope of persecution and the level of stigmatisation, the Sphere's database should not be considered as an exhaustive collection of all cases of discrimination against LGBT+ individuals in the Russian Federation. However, it provides valuable qualitative data about the trends observed by Sphere Foundation in its work.

The escalation of anti-LGBT+ legislation has created a situation where adults responsible for the well-being of minors must make a difficult choice between the well-being of LGBT+ minors and their own safety.

In 2023, we documented two cases of threats under the new propaganda law targeting teachers and psychologists working on educational projects. In one case, a psychologist at a Moscow school faced threats from one of the parents, a well-known businessman. Details of the second case cannot be disclosed due to the absence of consent from the victim.

Simultaneously, LGBT+ rights and humanitarian initiatives have been forcibly shut down across the country. This intensified in 2023 with the new “propaganda” law. Even websites of such initiatives, like Raduzhnyi Mir's website, are being shut down without a court decision, upon request from Roskomnadzor. This results in social and informational isolation for LGBT+ minors, which, especially in regions, may lead to them feeling that they are not acceptable.

In July 2020, an attempt was made in Arkhangelsk to accuse the Rakurs initiative group of LGBT+ propaganda. A juvenile department inspector initiated a case under the “propaganda” law based on the fact that LGBT+ persons were receiving psychological support “in the presence of minors” in the office of the Rakurs initiative group. The report also mentioned LGBT+-related literature and depictions of “non-traditional relationships.” The district court dismissed the case due to a lack of concrete evidence of “propaganda” and the inability to prove that psychological support groups violated the law. A second attempt to initiate persecution of the same initiative for “propaganda” occurred in February 2021. The police considered statements like “homosexuality is not an illness” and “homosexual relationships are normal and positive variations of diverse human

¹⁴ <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/49598>

sexuality” as alleged “propaganda.” The district court also dismissed this case. However, despite these positive outcomes, the current version of the discriminatory “propaganda” law leaves little room for such court decisions, as it explicitly prohibits the spread of information that presents a “distorted view of the equivalence of traditional and non-traditional relations.”

Abortion (art. 6, 24 of the Convention)

<p>Concluding observations on the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of the Russian Federation, CRC/C/RUS/CO/4-5, 2014</p>	<p>Combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of the Russian Federation on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (2011–2019), CRC/C/RUS/6-7</p>
<p>The issue was not raised in Concluding Observations of 2014, but it was raised in earlier Concluding observations in 1993 (1993CRC/C/15/Add.4, paras. 10, 12), in 1999 (CRC/C/15/Add.110, para. 48) and in 2005 (CRC/C/RUS/CO/3, para. 55), where the Committee expressed concern with the restricted access to contraceptives and high rate of teenage pregnancies and abortions. In the General comment No. 15 (2013) on the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health (art. 24) the Committee recommended States to “review and consider allowing children to consent to certain medical treatments and interventions without the permission of a parent, caregiver, or guardian, such as...sexual and reproductive health services, including education and guidance on sexual health, contraception and safe abortion”. In June 2023, the Committee issued an opinion condemning Peru for failing to provide abortion services to an underage girl who became pregnant as a result of rape by her father (Camila v Peru). The Committee emphasized that teenage pregnancy carries heightened risks - possible complications during pregnancy and childbirth can have a serious impact on the girl's development and future life.¹⁵</p>	<p>43. In order to prevent and reduce the number of abortions, a set of measures is being implemented in the Russian Federation: a waiting period of 48 hours to 7 days, depending on the term, is set for women after coming to a health care provider to have a pregnancy terminated so that they may consider the decision and receive counselling from a psychologist and social worker; licensing of abortion services has been introduced; a new informed voluntary consent form for an artificial termination of pregnancy at a woman's request, containing information about the possible consequences of an abortion, has been approved; an ultrasound scan is provided before the abortion is performed to visualize the fetus and its heartbeat or listen to the sound of the heartbeat; women's clinics in the constituent entities of the Russian Federation are establishing medical and social care offices, and medical and social support centres for pregnant women in difficult circumstances, whose main objective is to provide social and psychological assistance to women in cases of unintended pregnancy, with a view to ensuring a positive alternative to abortion; coverage of pre-abortion counselling by medical psychologists has been introduced to the mandatory health insurance scheme; a further training programme on pre-abortion counselling has been developed for medical</p>

¹⁵ Camila v Peru, CRC/C/93/D/136/2021, 13.06.2023. URL.: https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC%2FC%2F93%2FD%2F136%2F2021&Lang=en.

	<p>psychologists, psychologists and social workers; a guidance note entitled “Psychological Counselling for Women Planning an Induced Abortion” was sent to the constituent entities of the Russian Federation.</p>
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The Russian state aims to address its demographic challenges¹⁶ by restricting access to abortion. These restrictions have been adopted in a manner that poses a threat to the rights of girls, including the right to health, private life, and the principle of non-discrimination. This policy may lead to the birth of unwanted children who would likely grow up in harsh economic and/or social conditions. In general, such a policy contradicts the trend in developed countries, which prioritise providing effective access to abortion.

The current situation is as follows: The Federal Law of 21.11.2011 No. 323-FZ, titled “On the Fundamentals of Health Protection of Citizens in the Russian Federation,” stipulates that “every woman has the right to independently decide on the issue of maternity. Artificial termination of pregnancy shall be carried out at the woman's will with the presence of informed voluntary consent” (Article 56).

Abortion can be performed at the woman's request up to 12 weeks of gestation, for social reasons (such as in cases of rape)¹⁷ — up to 22 weeks of gestation, and if there are medical indications, it can be performed regardless of the gestation period. The performance of an abortion by an individual without specialised medical education is subject to criminal liability (Article 123 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation). Abortion performed by a medical worker in violation of the terms established by the Law on the Fundamentals of Health Protection of Citizens in the Russian Federation or without informed voluntary consent is punishable by an administrative fine (Article 6.32 of the Administrative Offences Code of the Russian Federation).

According to data from the All-Russian Public Opinion Research Center (VCIOM) for 2022, one in every three women has undergone an abortion (29%).¹⁸ In the same year, 13% of respondents considered abortion inadmissible under any circumstances, while 36% believed that a woman should have the right to make the decision on her own, regardless of special reasons.

The Ministry of Health has proposed selling drugs for medical termination of pregnancy in pharmacies only with a doctor's prescription.¹⁹ Additionally, there is ongoing discussion, initiated by Anna Kuznetsova, Vice-Speaker of the State Duma, about the possibility of banning private clinics from performing abortions.²⁰

¹⁶ Russia is in a demographic hole. Did the war have an impact on the falling birth rate? BBC, 15.05.2023. URL.: <https://www.bbc.com/russian/features-65564360>.

¹⁷ Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation of February 6, 2012 N 98 “On the social indication for artificial termination of pregnancy.”

¹⁸ Analytical review “Termination of pregnancy: for, against and what is the role of the state,” VCIOM, 6.06.2022. URL.: <https://wciom.ru/analytical-reviews/analiticheskii-obzor/preryvanie-beremennosti-za-protiv-i-kakova-rol-gosudars-tva>.

¹⁹ The Ministry of Health has developed a project to account for abortion drugs in pharmacies, Kommersant, 18.07.2023. URL.: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/6110685>.

²⁰ Deputy Speaker of the State Duma Kuznetsova suggested that governors should not issue abortion licenses to private clinics, Vedomosti, 28.06.2023. URL.: <https://www.vedomosti.ru/society/articles/2023/06/29/982852-vitse-spiker-gosdumi-predlozhila-gubernatoram-ne-vidavat-chastnim-klinikam-litsenzii-na-aborti>.

On the regional level, some private clinics in Mordovia have already started refusing to provide abortion services.²¹ Furthermore, on August 2, 2023, Mordovia enacted a law that prohibits abortion propaganda and inducement. This law includes a comprehensive list of actions considered as abortion propaganda,²² such as:

- Providing information that suggests the “social equivalence” of abortion and childbirth.
- Promoting abortion as a “social norm.”
- Spreading information that creates fear about childbearing and childbirth while advocating the safety of abortion.
- Justifying the necessity of aborting fetuses with congenital anomalies or malformations.
- Denying that the embryo and fetus are living persons or children, and justifying the idea that the child is inferior before birth as a human being.
- Casting doubt on a pregnant woman's ability to raise a child based on her social, economic, or other conditions.
- Demonstrating the abortion process for entertainment or play purposes.

The law also explicitly prohibits inducement to abortion, defined as exerting pressure on a woman to undergo an abortion. It is clarified that informing a pregnant woman by a doctor about medical indications for terminating pregnancy is not considered inducement.

Both propaganda and inducement are subject to administrative fines, ranging from 5,000 to 50,000 rubles for individuals and officials (with potential expulsion for foreign citizens), and up to 200,000 rubles for legal entities.

C. Civil rights and freedoms (arts. 7, 8 and 13–17 of the Convention)

Freedom of expression (art. 14)

List of issues in relation to the combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of the Russian Federation, CRC/C/RUS/Q/6-7, 25 February 2014	Combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of the Russian Federation on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (2011–2019), CRC/C/RUS/6-7
Please describe the measures taken: ... To ensure children's full enjoyment of freedom of expression and that no child is persecuted or prosecuted for expressing views, including views that dissent from those of the State; To provide children with access to information, including by lifting the bans and arbitrary restrictions in place in the State party on social media platforms such as Facebook, TikTok and	54. Freedom of expression and the right to seek, receive and impart information by any lawful means are enshrined in article 29 of the Constitution (see paragraph 142 of the second periodic report, paragraph 100 of the third periodic report and paragraph 66 of the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports).

²¹ In Mordovia, private clinics have started to refuse services on pregnancy termination, Official portal of state authorities of the Republic of Mordovia, 10.06.2023. URL.: <https://www.e-mordovia.ru/glava-rm/novosti/v-mordovii-chastnye-yytckliniki-nachali-otkazyvatsya-ot-uslug-po/>.

²² Law of the Republic of Mordovia from 07.08.2023 № 58-3 “On the prohibition of inducement to induce artificial termination of pregnancy in the territory of the Republic of Mordovia.” URL.: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/document/1300202308080010?index=1>.

<p>Twitter, and by conducting campaigns on children's digital rights. Please also inform the Committee of the measures taken to put an end to State propaganda in schools.</p>	
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The state-sponsored propaganda, both within and outside schools, has significantly intensified in recent years. The Russian government has adopted a clear militarised approach in its policies toward children. Notably, in 2016, the All-Russian Children's and Youth Military-Patriotic Public Movement (Yunarmia or UNARMIA) was established on the initiative of Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu. This movement targets children aged 8 to 18²³ and is primarily focused on preparing them for military service.²⁴

Starting on January 1, 2021, Russia launched the federal project “Patriotic Education” as part of the national project “Education” scheduled until 2024.²⁵ This initiative involves a series of events centred around themes related to the Great Patriotic War. These events include traditional all-Russian patriotic actions such as “St. George's Ribbon,” the “Victory Day” flash mob, “Candle of Memory,” patriotic military camps, competitions, and more.²⁶ Notably, the Russian armed forces²⁷ and personnel from the so-called PMC Wagner have played a role in the military education of children.²⁸

Since September 2022, schools have introduced extracurricular sessions labelled as “talking about important things.” Methodological guidelines for these sessions are available on the federal portal.²⁹ Teachers have observed that the themes for these sessions in the 2023-2024 school year have taken on a more biased nature.³⁰ For instance, new methodological recommendations require teachers to express a positive view of the Russian electoral system, emphasising the “absolute accuracy and objectivity” of election results.³¹

Additionally, teachers are now obligated to monitor students' behaviour and, if any students express pro-Ukrainian or anti-war sentiments, require them to provide written explanations, summon their parents to school, and take further action.³² In one alarming case involving Masha Moskal'kova, her father, Alexei Moskal'kov, faced legal prosecution for his daughter's anti-war drawings at school, resulting in a two-year sentence in a penal colony for allegedly discrediting the Russian army.³³ Simultaneously, he was threatened with the loss of parental rights, although these proceedings were eventually discontinued,³⁴ and Masha was placed in a social rehabilitation centre

²³ Junarmy. How to join. URL.: <https://xn--80aqlcq5fm.xn--p1ai/yunarmiya-kak-vstupit>.

²⁴ Order of the Government of the Russian Federation from 03.02.2010 N 134-r On the Concept of the federal system of preparation of citizens of the Russian Federation for military service for the period up to 2030.

²⁵ Website of the federal project. URL.: <https://rospatriotcentr.ru/rospatriot/patriotic/>.

²⁶ Official website of the regional project in St. Petersburg. URL.: <https://www.gov.spb.ru/projects/53/>.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ A youth club “Vagnerenok” opened in St. Petersburg, Kommersant, 03.03.2023. URL.: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/5845348>.

²⁹ Methodical recommendations. URL.: <https://razgovor.edsoo.ru>.

³⁰ How the work of Russian teachers has changed against the background of the war and what they expect from the new school year, Bereg, 31.08.2023. URL.: <https://bereg.io/feature/2023/08/31/byvaet-deti-monitoriyat-novosti-na-urokah>.

³¹ Junior high students will choose a president between Karabas-Barabas and Baba Yaga on “Talking About Important Things”, Paper, 17.09.2023. URL.: <https://paperpaper.ru/papernews/2023/9/17/na-razgovorah-o-vazhnom-mladsheklass/>.

³² How the work of Russian teachers has changed against the background of the war and what they expect from the new school year, Bereg, 31.08.2023. URL.: <https://bereg.io/feature/2023/08/31/byvaet-deti-monitoriyat-novosti-na-urokah>.

³³ Tula court changed Moskalev's punishment, RIA Novosti, 3.07.2023b URL.: <https://ria.ru/20230703/sud-1881976678.html>.

³⁴ The court dismissed the parental rights case against Masha Moskaleva's parents. RIA Novosti, 21.04.2023. URL.: <https://ria.ru/20230421/moskaleva-1866900609.html?in=t>.

for minors for several weeks until her mother, with whom she had lived separately for several years, retrieved her.³⁵

Patriotic education receives substantial support from the federal executive body, Rosmolodezh,³⁶ which backs various youth initiatives across the nation. One such organisation is the Volunteer Company youth public organisation, whose members actively participate in various patriotic activities:

- On July 2, 2023, the Volunteer Company took part in a rally in support of the special operation in Ukraine in St. Petersburg, where over 300 people formed the letter “V.”³⁷

- On July 11, 2023, the Volunteer Company organised a rally against NATO in St. Petersburg, demonstrating in front of the embassies of key NATO member states in Moscow and Consulates General in St. Petersburg. Activists held placards and chanted slogans: “NATO weapons in the hands of terrorists”, “NATO - your weapons kill old people and children”, “NATO summit - summit of death”. 1,000 activists marched to the Consulate General of the Republic of Lithuania and another 500 to the Consulate General of Germany.³⁸

- On August 20, 2022, the Volunteer Company obstructed the Memorial and the Polish community from holding the Day of Remembrance of Poles Victims of Political Repression at the Levashovo Memorial Cemetery.³⁹

Starting on September 1, 2023, all schools in Russia transitioned to unified educational programs for students in grades 1-11.⁴⁰ Some teachers argue that these standardised programs represent an encroachment on the autonomy of Russian schools.⁴¹ Moreover, as of September 1, 2023, students in grades 10 and 11 began studying history using a single textbook,⁴² with unified textbooks for grades 5 through 9 expected by the 2024/2025 school year.⁴³ These textbooks, along with the Unified State Exam, now include questions related to the war in Ukraine (referred to as the “special operation”) and the annexed territories.⁴⁴ Unified state textbooks are planned for all subjects.⁴⁵

³⁵ Alexei Moskalev (father of the girl who drew an anti-war picture) was jailed for two years and may soon be deprived of parental rights He will not be allowed to communicate with his daughter? Meduza, 5.04.2023. URL.: <https://meduza.io/cards/alekseya-moskaleva-papu-devochki-narisovavshey-antivoenny-risunok-posadili-na-dva-goda-a-vskore-mogut-esche-i-lishit-roditelskih-prav>.

³⁶ <https://base.garant.ru/193353/>

³⁷ <https://spbnevnik.ru/news/2022-07-02/video-v-peterburge-bolee-300-chelovek-vystroilis-bukvoy-v-v-podderzhku-etsoperatsii-na-ukraine>

³⁸ URL.: <https://volrotaspb.ru/news>.

³⁹ URL.: <https://meduza.io/news/2023/08/20/v-peterburge-administratsiya-levashovskogo-kladbischa-i-aktivisty-patrioty-pomeshali-inostrannym-diplomatam-provesti-aktsiyu-pamyati-repressirovannym-polyakam>.

⁴⁰ Federal basic educational programs for all subjects will be introduced at the beginning of the school year, Ministry of Education, 30.06.2023. URL.: <https://edu.gov.ru/press/7231/federalnye-osnovnye-obrazovatelnye-programmy-po-vsem-predmetam-budut-vvedeny-v-nachale-uchebnogo-goda/>.

⁴¹ “Make everyone use the same shampoo”. What awaits Russian schoolchildren after the transition to unified programs. BBC Russian Service, 1.09.2023. URL.: <https://www.bbc.com/russian/articles/cldg129nddeo>.

⁴² Looking into the past to understand what is happening outside the window, Rossiyskaya Gazeta, 7.08.2023. URL.: <https://rg.ru/2023/08/07/zaglyanut-v-proshloe-chtoby-poniat-proishodiashchee-za-oknom.html>.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Federal basic educational programs for all subjects will be introduced at the beginning of the school year, Ministry of Education, 30.06.2023. URL.: <https://edu.gov.ru/press/7231/federalnye-osnovnye-obrazovatelnye-programmy-po-vsem-predmetam-budut-vvedeny-v-nachale-uchebnogo-goda/>.

The authorities have also introduced a new course for higher education students called “Fundamentals of Russian Statehood,” which has been implemented since September 2023,⁴⁶ aiming to promote patriotism.⁴⁷

Notably, in July 2023, the Federal Law on Education was amended to include provisions allowing for the engagement of children in forced labour without their consent and underage students in labour not specified in the educational program, effectively reviving the approach of using forced child labour reminiscent of the USSR era.⁴⁸

The Rosmolodezh reports that within two years, the percentage of young people expressing pride in Russia has doubled, reaching 91%, compared to 46% in 2020.⁴⁹ However, such unanimity among the youth raises suspicion, as there are no publicly available studies to substantiate this figure. In contrast, another study conducted in 2022 found that 68% of students consider themselves patriots.⁵⁰ This statement by the Rosmolodezh highlights the state's concerted efforts to instil patriotism in young people.

D. Violence against children (arts. 19, 24 (3), 28 (2), 34, 37 (a) and 39 of the Convention)

Freedom of the child from all forms of violence

<p>Concluding observations on the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of the Russian Federation, CRC/C/RUS/CO/4-5, 2014</p>	<p>Combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of the Russian Federation on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (2011–2019), CRC/C/RUS/6-7</p>
<p>34. Recalling the recommendations of the United Nations study on violence against children of 2006 (see A/61/299), the Committee recommends that the State party prioritize the elimination of all forms of violence against children. The Committee further recommends that the State party take into account general comment No. 13 (2011) on the right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence, and in particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Develop a comprehensive national strategy to prevent and address all forms of violence against children; (b) Adopt a national coordinating framework to address all forms of violence against children; (c) Pay particular attention to and address the gender dimension of violence; (d) Cooperate with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against 	<p>In paragraph 70, Russia mentions only articles from the Criminal Code that cover offences involving the use of violence against minors. No comments on the national strategy or coordinating framework to prevent and address all forms of violence against children were provided.</p>

⁴⁶ <https://minobrnauki.gov.ru/press-center/news/novosti-ministerstva/66405/>.

⁴⁷ https://fgosvo.ru/uploadfiles/method/Ps_MON_MN_11_1516_PK_21042023.pdf.

⁴⁸ Federal Law of 04.08.2023 N 479-FZn “On Amending the Federal Law ‘On Education in the Russian Federation’”.

⁴⁹ <http://duma.gov.ru/news/57913/>.

⁵⁰ <https://институтвоспитания.рф/upload/iblock/82b/t9sxl5u4puc8j4vgvt0tфрахсјмбmzf5/Институт%20воспитания%20ценностные%20ориентиры%20молодежи%202022%20лето%20количественный%20%20.pdf>

Children and other relevant United Nations institutions.	
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According to the Sphere's database, there were at least 8 cases of domestic violence against minors based on their sexual orientation and gender identity documented by Sphere Foundation for the period of 2020-2023. 3 of these cases involved threats or actual eviction by the victims' close relatives. Only one of the victims reported the violation to the law enforcements which led to initiation of criminal proceedings. Despite the relatively low numbers we consider domestic violence and arbitrary eviction as corresponding issues. The Sphere Foundation provided a wider context to the issue in the joint input for the report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing to inform his report to the 78th session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.⁵¹

At the end of 2022 and beginning of 2023, “Coming Out” group and the Sphere Foundation conducted a joint quantitative research on the situation of LGBT+ people in Russia.⁵² According to the research, 15% of respondents suffered from domestic violence. For transgender respondents the number was significantly higher (28%). Given the wide scope of the research we consider these numbers possible to be extrapolated to the minors, especially since the legislative amendments decriminalising domestic violence and the high latency for this type of violation.

E. Family environment and alternative care (arts. 5, 9–11, 18 (1) and (2), 20–21, 25, 27 (4) of the Convention)

Concluding observations on the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of the Russian Federation, CRC/C/RUS/CO/4-5, 2014	Combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of the Russian Federation on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (2011–2019), CRC/C/RUS/6-7
47. The Committee notes that children under the age of 4 who are placed in baby homes in the grounds of prisons can be visited by their mothers outside working hours, but it is concerned that no measures have been taken to adapt special wings in prisons where those children can live with their mothers. The Committee regrets that no information was provided by the State party as to whether the judiciary or prison services consider the placement of parents in institutions where children can assume their visiting rights or whether children are financially or otherwise assisted in that regard. 48. The Committee recommends that the State party give due consideration to the	In report 2019 Russia cited Articles 89 and 100 of the Penal Enforcement Code of the Russian Federation and provided some statistics: there are 13 children homes, where 479 children live.

⁵¹ <https://spherequeer.org/input-for-report-of-special-rapporteur-un/>

⁵² <https://spherequeer.org/en-discrimination-2022/>

<p>circumstances in which the best interests of the child may be better fulfilled by living with the incarcerated parent. In doing so, due consideration to the overall conditions of the prison context and the particular need for parent-child contact during early childhood should be taken into full account, with the option of judicial review and with full consideration for the best interests of the child. Furthermore, the Committee urges the State party to ensure that, in the sentencing of parents and primary caregivers, non-custodial sentences are handed down, wherever possible, in lieu of custodial sentences, including in the pretrial and trial phases</p>	
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1. Children of incarcerated parents

The number of convicted women showed a decreasing trend from 2013 (109,785 convicted) to 2020 (73,325 convicted). However, it started to rise again from 2020 (80,952 convicted). In 2022, there were 84,859 convicted women, making up 14.7% of the total number of convicted women.⁵³

Of the 84,859 convicted women in 2022, 939 were pregnant, and 3,372 had children under 3 years of age.⁵⁴

Postponement of the execution of sentence

Russian law allows pregnant women, women with children under fourteen, and single fathers with children under fourteen to postpone the execution of their sentences until the child reaches the age of fourteen (Article 82 of the Criminal Code, Article 298 of the Penal Code).⁵⁵ The court may decide on the postponement either in the sentence itself or upon the convicted person's request.

The Penitentiary Service oversees the execution postponement, explaining the conditions to the convicted person, including responsibilities related to child care and the consequences of non-compliance. They also inspect the person at least once a month, caution them or issue warnings for any violations of the postponement conditions. They are authorised to appeal to the court to revoke the postponement decision.⁵⁶

⁵³ Main statistical indicators of the state of criminal record in Russia for 2003-2007 and 2008-2022, URL.: <http://www.cdep.ru/index.php?id=79&item=2074>.

⁵⁴ Consolidated Statistical Data on the State of the Criminal Record in Russia for 2022, Form No. 11.1 "Report on Demographic Characteristics of Convicted Persons for All Constituent Offenses of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation," URL.: <http://www.cdep.ru/index.php?id=79&item=7649>.

⁵⁵ With exception for persons who have been sentenced for crimes against the sexual inviolability of minors, for grave and especially grave crimes against the person or national security.

⁵⁶ Order of the Ministry of Justice of Russia from 20.05.2009 No. 142 "On Approval of the Instruction on Organization of Execution of Punishments and Measures of Criminal-Legal Character without Isolation from Society".

However, court decisions often do not take into account the best interests of the child⁵⁷ and rarely consider the child's opinion. Postponements are sometimes denied based solely on the gravity of the crime,⁵⁸ insufficient time for correction,⁵⁹ or even the mere fact of the crime being committed.⁶⁰

Common reasons for revoking postponement decisions include excessive drinking in the presence of children,⁶¹ child abandonment⁶² leading to child protective services' intervention,⁶³ administrative penalties for neglecting parental duties,⁶⁴ and the restriction or termination of parental rights.⁶⁵

Communication with incarcerated parents

Mothers may be sent to serve their sentences far from where their child lives if they are officially registered in a different location, making it difficult to maintain contact.⁶⁶

In pre-trial detention centres (SIZO), family visits may be denied to detainees,⁶⁷ except those who have already been convicted and temporarily placed there.⁶⁸ In one case, a detainee was denied family visits for over 20 months, which led to a case reaching the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation.⁶⁹ Furthermore, there have been instances where meetings with children were denied to detainees in SIZOs.⁷⁰ These refusals were justified by referring to the Ministry of Justice's

⁵⁷ In the Appellate Ruling on the case of the Supreme Court of the Chuvash Republic 22-250 of February 16, 2018 the court took into account that in case the mother serve the sentence in the correctional colony, the apartment, where she and her child lives, would be sold by the bank. In contrast, in the Cassation Ruling of the Perm Territory Court in case No. 22-5527 of July 28, 2011 the court disregarded the opinion of social services that absence of the mother will negatively influence the child.

⁵⁸ Appellate Ruling of the Novosibirsk Regional Court in case No. 22-1280/2016 of March 23, 2016; Cassation Ruling of the Moscow Regional Court in case No. 22-2095 of March 22, 2012; Appeal Decision of the Supreme Court of the of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) in Case No. 22-989 dated July 5, 2016.

⁵⁹ Appellate decision Ivanovo Regional Court in case No. 22-362 of February 24, 2021.

⁶⁰ Cassation Ruling of the Perm Territory Court in case No. 22-5527 of July 28, 2011.

⁶¹ Appeal judgment of the Kursk Regional Court in case No. 22-127/2019 of February 6, 2019 .

⁶² Appellate Ruling of the Khabarovsk Krai Court in case No. 22-3635/2022 of October 04, 2022.

⁶³ Appellate Decision of the Ivanovo Regional Court in Case No. 22-2650 of December 22, 2020.

⁶⁴ Appellate Ruling of the Court of the Jewish Autonomous Region in case No. 22-503/2021 of November 09, 2021.

⁶⁵ Appellate Decision of the Supreme Supreme Court of Justice of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) in case No. 22-1322 of August 21, 2014.

⁶⁶ Decision of the Oktyabrsky District Court of the city of Murmansk of 30.10.2018 in case N 2A-6126/2018~M-5437/2018

⁶⁷ Decision of the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation of 28.02.2023 N 441-O "On refusal to accept for consideration the complaint of citizen Sviridyuk Alexander Yurievich about violation of his constitutional rights by a number of provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code of the Russian Federation and article 18 of the Federal Law 'On detention of suspects and accused of committing crimes;'"

Decision of the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation of 27.12.2022 N 3533-O "On refusal to accept for consideration the complaint of citizen Smirnov Nikolai Sergeevich on violation of his constitutional rights by article 18 of the Federal Law "On the detention of suspects and accused of committing crimes."

⁶⁸ Resolution of the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation of 28.12.2020 N 50-P "On the case of verifying the constitutionality of Article 77.1 of the Criminal Executive Code of the Russian Federation, Articles 17 and 18 of the Federal Law "On the detention of suspects and accused of committing crimes" and paragraphs 139 - 143 of the Internal Regulations of remand prisons of the criminal executive system in connection with the complaint of citizen E.V. Paramonov".

⁶⁹ Decision of the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation of 28.02.2023 N 441-O "On refusal to accept for consideration the complaint of citizen Sviridyuk Alexander Yurievich about violation of his constitutional rights by a number of provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code of the Russian Federation and article 18 of the Federal Law 'On detention of suspects and accused of committing crimes.'"

⁷⁰ The lawyer obtained the recognition of the illegality of the refusal of the accused to visit his minor son in the pre-trial detention center, Advokatetskaya Gazeta, 19.10.2022. URL.: <https://www.advgazeta.ru/novosti/advokat-dobilas-priznaniya-nepravomernym-otkaza-obvinyaemomu-v-svidanii-s-nesovershennoletnim-synom-v-sizo/>.

visitation schedule. In April 2023, this order was amended to include minors in the list of individuals allowed to receive visits in pre-trial detention facilities.⁷¹

Children in places of detention

The rules regarding keeping children with their mothers in children's homes and the possibility of mothers cohabiting with their children (not in children's homes) are outlined in part 1 of article 100 of the Penal Enforcement Code and the Ministry of Justice of Russia's Order from 28.12.2017 N 285, titled "On the Approval of the Procedure for Organising the Provision of Medical Care to Persons Imprisoned or Serving a Sentence of Imprisonment."

However, the law does not clearly define women's rights in this context, leading to implementation uncertainties. For example, in 2016, in the Sverdlovsk region, the prosecutor's office demanded that the cohabitation of convicted women with children in a penal colony be recognised as unlawful, as the colony did not have a children's home.⁷² According to the prosecutor's office, women with children should have been relocated to a colony with a children's home, to which the FSIN objected that the only colony in the Sverdlovsk region with a children's home had no room to accommodate all women with children. The court refused to satisfy the demands of the prosecutor's office.

The law does not provide for proper conditions for children in the children's homes. These homes offer only medical care and supervision, encompassing measures for organising nutrition and household services for children, ensuring their personal hygiene, and managing their daily routine.⁷³

Adding to these challenges, Russia does not offer any support to released parents seeking to rebuild relationships with their children. If a single mother cannot find a job after her release and subsequently fails to provide financial support to a child staying in an orphanage, she can face imprisonment for malicious non-payment of alimony (Article 157 part 1 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation).⁷⁴

2. Forced separation of children from their parents

According to research on the situation of LGBT+ people in Russia, 6% of the respondents have children.⁷⁵ The study revealed that transgender and female LGBT+ individuals encounter issues related to their sexual orientation and gender identity more frequently than their male counterparts.

The most common challenges faced by LGBT+ parents due to their sexual orientation and gender identity include:

- Conflict with other relatives: LGBT+ parents often experience conflicts with extended family members.
- Issues when interacting with educational and healthcare services: These issues often lead LGBT+ parents to conceal their sexuality or gender identity to protect their children from potential bullying.

⁷¹ Order of the Ministry of Justice of Russia from 04.07.2022 N 110 "On Approval of the Internal Regulations of remand prisons of the penal enforcement system, Internal Regulations of correctional institutions and Internal Regulations of correctional centers of the penal enforcement system" (in edition of Order of the Ministry of Justice of Russia from 03.04.2023 N 58), p. 173.

⁷² Appellate determination of the Sverdlovsk Regional Court of 22.06.2016 in case N 33a-10899/2016.

⁷³ Decision of the Khabarovsk District Court of the Khabarovsk Territory of 11.08.2017 in case N 2-1469/2017~M-1310/2017.

⁷⁴ Decision of the Votkinskiy District Court of the Udmurt Republic of 28.07.2014 in case N 1-19/14.

⁷⁵ <https://spherequeer.org/en-discrimination-2022/>

- Formal and informal deprivation of certain parental rights: Restrictions on parental rights may be imposed by family members, social services, or court decisions. In some cases, individuals may even feel compelled to leave the country due to threats.

One respondent shared her experience, stating, “My parents attempted to force me to relinquish my parental rights in favour of my children's father, citing me as a 'bad influence' on my kids. By 'bad influence,' they referred to my romantic, caring relationship with the woman I love. My parents argued that my children would face bullying at school because their mother is a lesbian. Their father threatened to report us to social services and take legal action to gain custody of the children. In June 2022, he publicly shared his email address and sought assistance from others to 'rescue' the children from what he called the 'rainbow world.' Ultimately, we were forced to leave Russia.” (Cisgender homosexual woman, 35, Perm Krai).

On July 14, 2023, the Russian State Duma passed the “Gender Transition Ban” bill in its third reading. According to this bill, transgender individuals are barred from becoming adoptive or foster parents, and existing transgender marriages are deemed invalid. This situation raises serious concerns regarding the rights of existing transgender's childrens.

F. Disability, basic health and welfare (arts. 6, 18 (3), 23, 24, 26, 27 (1)–(3) and 33 of the Convention)

Health and health services

Within the realm of health and healthcare services, there are concerning issues that warrant attention. The members of The Presidential Council for the Development of Civil Society and Human Rights have conducted inspections of women's detention facilities, revealing distressing conditions. A case in point is the women's colony IK-7 Ivanovo, which lacks a medical unit staffed by a doctor, relying solely on a paramedic.⁷⁶ This shortage of qualified medical personnel is not an isolated problem but rather a pervasive issue. Some experts attribute this deficiency to the relatively low salaries offered to doctors working within the penitentiary system. Notably, the disparity in salaries between doctors employed by the Federal Penitentiary Service (FSIN) and civilian medical professionals can be as significant as 2-2.5 times.⁷⁷

Compounding these healthcare concerns is the recent enactment of the “Gender Transition Ban” bill, a development that has had detrimental consequences. This legislation criminalises all forms of gender-affirming treatment, directly impacting transgender minors seeking professional assistance for gender dysphoria. Additionally, it restricts medical professionals from adhering to international standards, such as ICD-11, which have not been adopted by the Russian Federation.

Moreover, there have been public statements from authorities, including State Duma deputies, suggesting a possible resurgence of conversion practices aimed at coercing individuals of “non-traditional orientation” to “return to normal.” In response to these statements, more victims of conversion practices have come forward through independent media outlets. Among these cases, the story of Khalimat Taramova stands out as a prominent example. Khalimat was a victim of family abduction from a shelter for domestic violence victims, and it later emerged that she had been held at the Invia Elite clinic in the Moscow Region in 2021 prior to her family's abduction. Importantly, such incidents are not isolated, as reports have surfaced detailing threats and the use of conversion practices against LGBT+ individuals, often instigated by their family members, in various central regions of the Russian Federation. It is worth noting that the database contains four documented

⁷⁶ Alexei Melnikov, Secretary of the Moscow ONC, member of the Presidential Council for the Development of Civil Society and Human Rights. URL.: <https://t.me/melnikovone/1143>.

⁷⁷ Ibid

cases of such practices, excluding Taramova's case, and one of these cases involves a minor who was placed in a psychiatric facility by a parent in an attempt to “correct” their gender dysphoria. Notably, none of these cases occurred in the North Caucasus region.

G. Education, leisure and cultural activities (arts. 28, 29 and 31 of the Convention)

Education, including vocational training and guidance

<p>Concluding observations on the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of the Russian Federation, CRC/C/RUS/CO/4-5, 2014</p>	<p>Combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of the Russian Federation on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (2011–2019), CRC/C/RUS/6-7</p>
<p>59. The Committee welcomes the fact that the age of compulsory education was raised from 15 to 18 years of age in September 2007. However, the Committee is concerned that the benefits of free and compulsory education do not extend to all children in the country. In particular, it is concerned about: (e) Violence and bullying in schools against children who belong to LGBTI groups.</p> <p>60. Taking into account its general comment No. 1 (2001) on the aims of education, the Committee recommends that the State party: (e) Take urgent measures to prevent the bullying of LGBTI children in schools by educating children and school staff and punishing the perpetrators.</p>	<p>In 2019 Russia denied the mandate of the Committee in the sphere of protection of the rights of LGBT+ and called the recommendations in paras. 25, 36, 60 unacceptable. Russia highlighted that the recommendation of the Committee to repeal the law forbidding the propaganda of homosexuality contravenes Articles 13-17 of the Convention and relied on the position of the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation.</p>

In 2020, two research projects on bullying were conducted by partner organizations of the Sphere Foundation. One study covered the entire country, while the other focused on Perm Krai, a region in the eastern part of the Russian Federation.⁷⁸ The regional research was carried out by the LGBT+ rights group Raduzhnyi Mir. The findings from both studies revealed the significant prevalence of bullying in Russian schools and other educational institutions.

The results of the research conducted in Perm Krai indicate that 81% of the respondents encountered bullying in school in some capacity. However, some respondents displayed a lack of awareness regarding what constitutes bullying. Indirect questions about experiences with bullying revealed that respondents were often unable to recognise instances of bullying when they occurred in a school environment. The broader nationwide research in Russia showed slightly different figures, likely because it focused on individuals who had experienced bullying rather than any encounter with it. Nevertheless, a significant proportion of respondents faced verbal (57.1%) and physical (53.9%) bullying.

In addition to the prevalence of minors encountering bullying, both research highlighted the significant role that adults play in the problem. Teachers and other school personnel responsible for

⁷⁸ <http://schoolenvironment.tilda.ws>

students' well-being are often found to either participate in or initiate bullying against LGBT+ students, or they adopt a “neutral” stance and remain unavailable to those facing bullying. Both studies demonstrate that the majority of students would confide in their friends rather than adults when dealing with bullying.

The Sphere's database aligns with these findings. The database includes 25 cases (out of a total of 426 cases) of LGBT+ rights violations that occurred in schools during the period spanning from 2020 to 2023. Out of these, 18 cases are linked to bullying or various forms of verbal abuse related to the victims' sexual orientation and gender identity. Additionally, 5 cases are related to the use or threat of the use of the “propaganda” law. These cases are particularly noteworthy as they involve not only minors but also professionals working with minors.

In 2020, the monitoring team was provided with and verified screenshots of text interactions between teachers at one of the schools in St. Petersburg. According to these screenshots, the teachers were mandated by the Nevsky district department of education to monitor the personal social media accounts of middle and high school students (grades 5-11). The purpose of this monitoring was to identify students who posted LGBT+ related symbols on their personal pages, with a specified list of symbols provided. The results of this monitoring were to be reported to the Nevsky district department of education.

In some cases adults are participating in the violations, as it happened in 2021 in Kursk region when the school's headmaster Alexander Androshik assaulted a 8-grade student by ripping an earring from the latter's ear with force. Beforehand the headmaster called the student by homophobic names, such as “you are walking here like faggot.” According to the regional media, the incident led to an inspection by the authorities, however, as of September 2023 Androshik remains to be the headmaster of the school.

In 2020, the administration of a school in St. Petersburg reported two female students to the police after the girls hung a rainbow flag above the school building's entrance. The school's headmistress characterised the girls' action as a “diversion.”

Recommendations

Independent monitoring — Commissioner for children's rights

- Demonstrate commitment to addressing the allegations against Maria Alekseyevna Lvova-Belova by fully cooperating with the International Criminal Court (ICC) in its investigation. This includes providing all necessary information, access to individuals involved, and facilitating the ICC's work to ensure a thorough and impartial examination of the allegations.

Cooperation with civil society — foreign agents

- Completely abolish foreign agent legislation, including all laws and regulations related to the status of foreign agents for NGOs, media outlets, and individuals.
- Ensure the prompt payment of compensations as mandated by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in the judgement *Ecodefence and others v Russia* (9988/13) dated 14.06.2023, as well as in other relevant judgments on this issue.

Non-discrimination

- Repeal all discriminatory laws and practices targeting LGBT+ individuals, including the “propaganda” law and the “Gender Transition Ban” bill.

- Implement measures to protect the rights and well-being of LGBT+ minors, including robust measures to prevent domestic violence, school bullying, and street assaults.

Abortion

- Refrain from any actions limiting the access to the abortion and ensure that all laws and regulations, including regional ones, provide effective access to abortion.

Freedom of expression

- Cease the militarization of patriotic education for children.
- End the persecution of children and their parents for expressing pro-Ukrainian or anti-war views.
- Preserve the autonomy of schools, especially in developing history education programs.
- Revoke legislation allowing forced child labour and adhere to international labour standards.

Freedom of the child from all forms of violence

- Develop policies to combat domestic violence against minors based on their sexual orientation and gender identity.
- Establish clear metrics and reporting mechanisms to track and document cases of domestic violence against minors.

Children of incarcerated parents

- Ensure that courts, when deciding questions related to the postponement of sentences for pregnant women or parents with children under the age of 14, prioritise the best interests of the child and consider the child's opinion.
- Guarantee both physical and remote communication for detained parents with their children, taking into account rules that prevent parents from being sent to facilities far from their family's place of residence, particularly their children.
- Define clearly procedures, rights for women, and obligations for authorities, including the obligation to take into consideration the best interests of the child, concerning the cohabitation of mothers with their children within detention facilities.
- Improve the conditions in children's homes located within detention facilities to provide adequate development opportunities for children, and ensure that the personnel working in these facilities receive proper training in child care.
- Establish support systems for released parents, especially women, to facilitate their self-sufficiency and promote the restoration or enhancement of their connections with their children.

Forced separation of children from their parents

- Repeal or amend laws that contribute to the forced separation of children from their parents based on the parent's sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Ensure that all laws and regulations related to parenting and adoption are free from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- Establish and enforce policies that protect the parental rights of LGBT+ individuals.
- Prevent any formal or informal deprivation of parental rights based on a parent's sexual orientation or gender identity.

Health and health services

- Ensure that women in detention facilities have access to comprehensive medical care, including prenatal and postnatal services.
- Increase the number of medical personnel in the penitentiary system and improve their salaries.
- Guarantee access to mental health support and gender-affirming therapy for transgender minors, aligning with international standards, while actively discouraging conversion practices.
- Reevaluate and revoke the recently passed “Gender Transition Ban” law, which restricts gender-affirming treatments.
- Adopt the ICD-11 standards.
- Establish legislation explicitly prohibiting conversion practices and allocate resources for supporting and protecting victims.

Education, including vocational training and guidance

- Take strong measures to address bullying in schools, with a particular focus on protecting LGBT+ students.
- Enforce policies that safeguard LGBT+ students from discrimination and harassment.
- Respect the freedom of expression of students and educators, ensuring they can openly express their sexual orientation and gender identity without fear of reprisal.