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**Human rights situations that require the Council's attention****Situation of human rights in the Russian Federation****Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Mariana Katzarova\****Summary*

The present report is submitted by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Mariana Katzarova, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 57/20. While trends identified in previous reports have persisted, 2024 and 2025 were marked by yet further consolidation and expansion of repressive tools, particularly the use of national security legislation to silence dissent and restrict civic space. Since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, Russian authorities have intensified their use of criminal prosecution, long-term imprisonment, intimidation, torture and ill-treatment to silence opposition to the war. Nevertheless, grave violations of international human rights and humanitarian law are committed with impunity in this war against Ukraine, which leads to the escalation of repression in the Russian Federation itself. The report includes updated evidence-based findings on the deteriorating human rights situation in both law and practice, offering analysis and recommendations to the Russian authorities and the international community.

\* The present document was submitted to the conference services for processing after the deadline so as to include the most recent information.

## I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 57/20. The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation identifies an intensification of repression and consolidation of authoritarian control. The vague and overly broad legislative framework in the Russian Federation continues to be used for politically motivated prosecutions. Recurrent and targeted application of laws on “foreign agents”, “undesirable organizations”, “discrediting the armed forces” and spreading “fake news” about the army (“war censorship”) and the abuse of “terrorism” and “extremism” laws constitute a strategy of legal instrumentalization aimed at further suppression of dissent and critics.
2. Systematic criminalization of peaceful activities by civil society, human rights defenders, lawyers, journalists, political opponents and anti-war activists and others who express dissent is underpinned by official narratives reframing legitimate exercises of human rights as “existential security threats” and portraying such individuals as “enemies of the State”.
3. The expansion of State-sponsored nationalist ideology has normalized identity-based discrimination and violence, namely against women and girls, LGBT<sup>1</sup> persons, Indigenous Peoples, ethnic minorities, migrants and asylum-seekers. Such targeting serves as a political and ideological tool to create internal and external “enemies” to justify and reinforce broader repression, while distracting attention from the war on Ukraine and government corruption.
4. State-controlled media and public education have increasingly promoted militarized narratives portraying war as a patriotic duty and moral imperative, while normalizing aggression, thus violating the prohibition of war propaganda. Grave violations of international human rights and humanitarian law continue to be committed with impunity in the war by the Russian Federation against Ukraine,<sup>2</sup> in turn exacerbating repression in the Russian Federation itself and deepening the current human rights crisis.

## II. Methodology

5. The continued failure by the Russian Federation to engage with the mandate prevented the inclusion of the Government’s views in the report. The Special Rapporteur has remained committed to fulfilling the mandate with independence, objectivity and methodological rigor, drawing on information from a wide range of credible and verified sources, including non-governmental organizations, independent journalists, and victims and their legal representatives. Consultations with more than 200 Russian and international human rights organizations and individuals were conducted, and almost 100 written submissions were received.
6. Information was obtained through direct interviews with victims and witnesses, their family members and legal counsel. The identities of those interviewed are withheld in line with the Special Rapporteur’s duty to protect sources. All materials are on file and available upon request.

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout the present report, the acronym LGBT should be read as inclusive of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and other gender-diverse persons, in line with reports of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity (see, for example, [A/HRC/56/49](#)).

<sup>2</sup> See European Court of Human Rights, *Ukraine and the Netherlands v. Russia*, Applications Nos. 8019/16, 43800/14 and 28525/20, Decision, 30 November 2022, in which the Court held that the Russian Federation has had “effective control” over occupied Donetsk and Luhansk since 2014.

### III. Restrictive legislation – the attack on civil society continues

#### A. Impact of “foreign agent” legislation on fundamental freedoms

7. In alignment with the Special Rapporteur’s previous findings, in October 2024, the European Court of Human Rights found that legislation in the Russian Federation violates the rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association.<sup>3</sup> As at 18 July 2025, 1,040 individuals and organizations had been designated as “foreign agents”, including 133 additions since January 2025 targeting prominent human rights defenders, including individuals affiliated with the Nobel laureates Memorial and Amnesty International, as well as political figures and dissenting former Russian diplomats.<sup>4</sup>

8. Although designations have slowed since 2024, prosecutorial pressure has escalated. In 2024, 150 politically motivated criminal cases targeted “foreign agents”. In 2023–2024, at least 33 individuals were charged under article 330.1 of the Criminal Code for violation of “foreign agent” requirements; 29 of those cases were initiated in 2024, compared to only four in 2023. With the conviction of Laurent Vinatier, the Russian Federation expanded the application of this article to foreign nationals.

9. This trend continued in 2025, with the latest case against political activist Maxim Katz. On 1 July, the authorities reported that 72 individuals had been charged with violations of “foreign agent” requirements over a period of six months. Those prosecuted include human rights lawyer Valeria Vetoshkina, political scientist Ekaterina Shulman, writer Dmitry Bykov and Dozhd TV journalists Tikhon Dziadko, Ekaterina Kotrikadze and Valeria Ratnikova.

10. As of 1 March 2025, “foreign agents” must open special bank accounts where all their income remains frozen until their removal from the “foreign agents” registry,<sup>5</sup> allowing the State to extract fines for alleged offences committed abroad.

11. An April 2025 law bans “foreign agents” from any educational activity,<sup>6</sup> and the “foreign agents” criteria were expanded to include assistance to international organizations or foreign State bodies that was deemed to threaten national security.<sup>7</sup>

12. Effective 1 September 2025, “foreign agents” lose eligibility for “socially oriented” status and municipal financial support. Another law<sup>8</sup> introduced tougher penalties for non-compliance with “foreign agent” requirements and fines of up to 500,000 roubles (approximately \$5,400). Additionally, a draft law passed in first reading in July proposes imposing criminal liability on the basis of a single administrative fine.<sup>9</sup>

#### B. Impact of designation as an “undesirable” organization

13. As at 24 July 2025, 245 organizations had been designated as “undesirable”, with 46 new additions since the beginning of 2025,<sup>10</sup> criminalizing their engagement with foreign and international organizations.

14. In May 2025, Amnesty International was designated as “undesirable”, thus its operations were banned in the Russian Federation. The Elton John AIDS Foundation was banned in April, the British Council in June, Yale University in July and Reporters sans frontières international/Reporters without Borders International in August. Also designated

<sup>3</sup> *Kobaliya and others v. Russia*, Application No. 39446/16 and 106 others, Judgment, 22 October 2024.

<sup>4</sup> See <https://minjust.gov.ru/ru/pages/reestr-inostryannykh-agentov> (in Russian). Access from outside the Russian Federation to this website and several others referenced in the present report requires the use of a virtual private network (VPN).

<sup>5</sup> Federal Law No. 520-FZ of 28 December 2024.

<sup>6</sup> Federal Law No. 100-FZ of 21 April 2025.

<sup>7</sup> Federal Law No. 89-FZ of 21 April 2025.

<sup>8</sup> Federal Law No. 171-FZ of 24 June 2025.

<sup>9</sup> See <https://sozd.duma.gov.ru/bill/956293-8> (in Russian).

<sup>10</sup> See <https://minjust.gov.ru/ru/documents/7756/> (in Russian).

were six organizations founded by Russians in exile. In July, the Sakharov Institute and the anti-war movement “Peace, Progress, Human Rights” – both founded in France by Lev Ponomarev – were designated as “undesirable”.

15. In 2025 alone, at least 152 administrative cases under article 20.33 of the Code of Administrative Offences, on participation in “undesirable organizations”, have been prosecuted. Between mid-2024 and mid-2025, at least 25 criminal cases were opened under article 284.1 of the Criminal Code, on involvement with “undesirable organizations”, resulting in at least 37 convictions.<sup>11</sup>

16. In May 2025, Grigory Melkonyants, co-chair of the independent election-monitoring group Golos, was sentenced to five years’ imprisonment and banned from public activity for 10 years, one of the harshest penalties to date under the “undesirable” framework. As of July 2025, at least 12 individuals remained detained on such charges.

## IV. Key human rights observations and challenges

### A. Freedom of peaceful assembly

17. Peaceful public protest continued to decline, shifting to online or symbolic forms of dissent. A brief resurgence occurred in early 2024, when at least 672 individuals were detained at gatherings commemorating Alexei Navalny, at least 496 in protests in Bashkortostan, and 46 in protests by the wives of mobilized men.

18. From mid-2024 to mid-2025, the number of documented arrests fell to 295, reflecting a deep suppression of public dissent after the mass peaceful anti-war protests in 2022 and the subsequent severe reprisals.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, prosecutions have escalated, with at least 3,905 individuals convicted on administrative or criminal charges for peaceful dissent.

19. At least 80 prosecutions were linked to the peaceful protests in Bashkortostan,<sup>13</sup> with 48 people convicted to up to eight and a half years’ imprisonment, reflecting a pattern of mass criminalization of peaceful dissent under the guise of targeting “public disorder” and “violence”.

### B. Freedom of association

20. Authorities continued to make it legally and financially impossible for independent non-governmental organizations to operate. The March 2024 legislative prohibition on advertisements by “foreign agents”<sup>14</sup> has further undermined the ability of Russian organizations to generate revenue. They have also faced serious fundraising obstacles from international crowdfunding platforms and banking systems. Moreover, Russian citizens donating to “undesirable” organizations became criminally liable.

21. In 2025, Vyacheslav Volodin, the State Duma speaker, publicly demanded that the Congress of the United States of America hand over a list of Russian grant recipients, stating that it would be submitted to the Federal Security Service for investigation. Moreover, he suggested that Russian politicians, activists and journalists in exile who have been recipients of United States Agency for International Development grants should publicly confess and repent on Red Square.

22. In June 2025, the Supreme Court dissolved Civic Initiative, one of the last remaining non-systemic opposition parties.

<sup>11</sup> Data received from OVD-Info.

<sup>12</sup> [A/HRC/54/54](#), para. 75.

<sup>13</sup> [A/HRC/57/59](#), para. 34.

<sup>14</sup> Federal Law No. 42-FZ of 11 March 2024.

## C. Freedom of opinion and expression

23. Since 2022, Russian authorities have initiated 1,259 criminal cases against individuals for statements they have made, including criticism of the State and opposition to the war against Ukraine. In 2024, freedom of expression cases accounted for half of all politically motivated prosecutions, with increasingly severe sentences, some exceeding 10 years' imprisonment.

24. Since 2022, 247 journalists and media outlets have been designated as "foreign agents", with 59 additions in 2024 and another 40 added in the first four months of 2025.

25. Journalists also face judicial harassment. About 40 per cent of all "foreign agent" non-compliance cases under article 19.34 of the Code of Administrative Offences targeted journalists and bloggers. At least 16 journalists faced criminal charges in 2024 under article 330.1 of the Criminal Code for non-compliance with "foreign agent" requirements.

26. As of June 2025, 195 media outlets had been designated as "undesirable", leading to prosecutions and penalties of up to six years' imprisonment.

27. In a significant escalation, Russian authorities have begun designating independent media as "terrorist organizations", including those for and run by members of national minority groups and Indigenous Peoples.

28. The government strategy to muzzle freedom of expression in the arts was institutionalized in 2024 through the creation of an anti-Russian cultural activities investigation group tasked with "cleansing the cultural sphere of anti-State elements".<sup>15</sup>

### 1. Targeting dissent and anti-war criticism: political prisoners

29. Between 2024 and mid-2025, at least 912 individuals were prosecuted on politically motivated grounds, with about 60 new cases each month. At least 390 of them remain in detention. Many were detained for peacefully dissenting against the war on Ukraine, and often face torture, as well as punitive measures such as prolonged confinement in a solitary punishment cell (SHIZO).

30. In the first half of 2025, on average 20 to 30 per cent of individuals in pretrial detention in the Russian Federation were political prisoners.<sup>16</sup> This reflects both the growing use of politically motivated prosecutions, which fill up the prisons, and the release of criminal offenders who agree to be recruited for the war against Ukraine.

31. Those who express dissent and activists are increasingly targeted with charges related to "espionage", "treason", "extremism" and "terrorism", alongside "rehabilitation of Nazism" charges. While official data are unavailable, given the closed trials and lack of judicial transparency, some representative cases reflecting the scale of repression are described below.

### 2. Journalists

32. With 50 media professionals imprisoned, the Russian Federation has become the third-largest jailer of journalists in the world.<sup>17</sup> These include 29 Ukrainian journalists detained in the Russian Federation or occupied territories. Between July 2024 and July 2025, 42 Russian journalists were sentenced to up to 12 years' imprisonment. Authorities opened new criminal cases against 89 Russian journalists,<sup>18</sup> a drastic increase compared with the number from 2023 (23 cases). The charges most frequently levied against journalists include "war censorship" violations, non-compliance with "foreign agent" requirements, "extremism" and "terrorism", and involvement with "undesirable organizations".

<sup>15</sup> See <https://mironov-online.ru/news/natsionalnyj-suverenitet-v-oblasti-kultury-ukrepyat-zakonom/> (in Russian).

<sup>16</sup> Data from First Department (civil society organization).

<sup>17</sup> See <https://rsf.org/en/imprisoned-reporting-rsf-profiles-29-ukrainian-media-professionals-detained-russia>.

<sup>18</sup> Submission from Mass Media Defence Centre.

33. At least 65 exiled journalists faced criminal cases. Their assets in the Russian Federation and bank accounts have been seized by the Russian authorities. Their names are on various wanted lists, including International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) Red Notices, effectively putting them at risk of arrest and refoulement if they travel to countries where extradition with the Russian Federation is possible.

### 3. “War censorship”

34. “War censorship” charges continued to be widely applied against journalists for reporting about the war by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, as they have been since 2022. During the reporting period, at least 18 criminal cases were opened on such charges and at least 23 journalists were sentenced, including Sergey Mikhailov, sentenced to eight years’ imprisonment for “fake news” about the army in August 2024. Journalists Masha Gessen, Mikhail Zygar, Dmitry Kolezev, Ekaterina Fomina and Roman Anin were sentenced in absentia. In July, criminal cases were opened against four exiled journalists of Dozhd TV, for social media posts concerning Russian military actions and civilian casualties in Ukraine; three of them were also charged with non-compliance with “foreign agent” requirements.

35. In its February 2025 ruling, aligned with the Special Rapporteur’s own findings, the European Court of Human Rights found that these laws, rather than counter genuine threats, criminalize reporting and statements contradicting the official narrative and suppress dissent.<sup>19</sup>

### 4. Non-compliance with “foreign agent” requirements

36. Since July 2024, at least 28 criminal cases have been opened and three journalists convicted for non-compliance with “foreign agent” requirements. Journalists Yevgeniya Baltatarova and Alexandr Kushnar were sentenced in absentia to seven and eight years’ imprisonment, respectively, on “fake news” and “foreign agent” charges.

37. In January, the Russian authorities opened a criminal case and arrest warrant against Alesya Marokhovskaya, editor-in-chief at the Important Stories media outlet, for non-compliance with “foreign agent” requirements.

### 5. Abuse of anti-extremism and counter-terrorism laws

38. The “extremism” and “terrorism” charges are increasingly used to silence independent journalists. Between July 2024 and July 2025, at least eight new criminal cases were opened, and 12 journalists convicted for “extremism”.

39. In April 2025, a Moscow court sentenced four journalists – Antonina Favorskaya (Kravtsova), Sergei Karelin, Konstantin Gabov and Artem Kriger – to five and a half years’ imprisonment for participating in an “extremist” organization for alleged cooperation with the “Anti-Corruption Foundation”, founded by Alexei Navalny. In July 2025, Olga Komleva was sentenced to 12 years’ imprisonment on “extremism” charges for involvement with Mr. Navalny’s campaign offices and “fake news” about the Russian armed forces.

40. Between July 2024 and July 2025, at least nine criminal cases were initiated, and seven journalists were convicted under article 205.2 of the Criminal Code, on calls to commit, justification of, or propaganda for “terrorism”. In July 2025, former news presenter Farida Kurbangaleeva was sentenced in absentia to eight years’ imprisonment on charges of spreading “fake news” about the Russian army and charges of “justification of terrorism” for an interview with a fighter from the Free Russia Legion, designated as a “terrorist organization” in the Russian Federation. Armen Aramyan, editor-in-chief of *DOXA*, received over 10 years’ imprisonment on charges of “fake news” and “justification of terrorism”, also in absentia, in February 2025. Other convicted journalists include Sergey Kornilevsky, sentenced to two and a half years for “justification of terrorism”.

<sup>19</sup> *Novaya Gazeta and others v. Russia*, Application No. 11884/22 and 161 others, Judgment, 11 February 2025.

## 6. “Undesirables”

41. In 2025, criminal cases were opened against at least four media personalities, including Galina Timchenko, the founder of the news website Meduza; Dmitry Kuznets, a journalist for Meduza; Timur Olevsky, the head of *The Insider* newsroom; Sergei Ezhov, a journalist for *The Insider*; and Ilya Azar, a journalist for *Novaya Gazeta*. In April 2025, Kirill Martynov, editor-in-chief at *Novaya Gazeta Europe* – an organization banned as “undesirable” in the Russian Federation – was sentenced in absentia to six years’ imprisonment.

## 7. National security, harassment and attacks on journalists

42. Russian journalists continue to be targeted with national security charges. In November 2024, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty journalist Nika Novak became the first journalist convicted on “confidential cooperation” charges. In June, Vladyslav Yesypenko, also from Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, was released after serving more than four years’ imprisonment in Russian-occupied Crimea on “espionage” and “possessing explosives” charges. Mr. Yesypenko testified in court that he was tortured to extract a confession. In July 2025, a criminal case on “treason” charges was opened against the exiled founder of the 7x7 media outlet, Pavel Andreyev.

43. At least 12 criminal cases were opened in 2024 against foreign correspondents covering events in Kursk Oblast, under article 322 of the Criminal Code, on illegal border crossing.

44. Russian authorities employ charges such as “assaulting law enforcement officers” to extend prison terms and harshen conditions for political prisoners. On 27 March 2025, journalist Maria Ponomarenko, already serving a six-year prison term, received an additional prison term of one year and 10 months and was ordered to undergo compulsory psychiatric treatment.

## 8. Cultural figures

45. Between 2022 and 2025, the Russian Federation intensified its repression of cultural figures. At least 41 such figures were in detention as at 9 April 2025. Theatre director Evgenia Berkovich and playwright Svetlana Petrychuk are serving lengthy prison sentences on fabricated “terrorism” charges. In December 2024, the Military Court of Appeal in Moscow upheld the verdict but reduced Ms. Berkovich’s sentence to five years and seven months, and Ms. Petrychuk’s to five years and 10 months.

46. Oscar-nominated producer Alexander Rodnyansky and theatre director Ivan Vyrypaev were sentenced in absentia in 2024 to eight and a half and seven and a half years, respectively, for opposing the war. In July 2025, writer Boris Akunin was sentenced in absentia to 14 years’ imprisonment on “terrorism” charges and violating the “foreign agent” law.

47. In June 2025, Perm-based photographer Grigory Skvortsov was sentenced to 16 years’ imprisonment on “treason” charges for sharing a book on Soviet bunkers and declassified documents with an American journalist.

48. Svetlana Ushnitskaya, a library director in Yakutsk, was fined in December 2023 for displaying books by the Nobel laureate Heinrich Böll; the fine stemmed from the designation of the Heinrich Böll Foundation as “undesirable” in 2022.

49. The books of Nobel laureate Svetlana Alexievich are excluded from Russian school curricula. In April 2024, State Duma deputy Nina Ostanina requested a parliamentary inquiry into the alleged inclusion of Ms. Alexievich’s books in the Unified State Exam, accusing the author of “hatred” of the Russian Federation and Russian culture, outright Russophobia and having received awards from North Atlantic Treaty Organization member States during the special military operation.

## 9. Human rights defenders and anti-war activists

50. Russian authorities continued to target human rights defenders and civic activists with politically motivated criminal charges. In November 2024, the exiled former director of the closed-down Sakharov Center, Sergey Lukashevsky, was sentenced in absentia to eight years' imprisonment on charges of "fake news" for posts about war crimes and civilian casualties in Ukraine. In August 2024, exiled human rights defender Sergei Davidis was charged with "terrorism" over a Memorial publication declaring members of the Ukrainian Azov battalion – designated as a "terrorist organization" in the Russian Federation – as political prisoners.

51. In June 2025, in Sakhalin Oblast, 85-year-old human rights defender Mark Kuperman, targeted for his anti-war views, was found guilty of "incitement to terrorism" and received a fine of 500,000 roubles (\$6,000).<sup>20</sup>

52. Imprisoned human rights defenders and other political prisoners face particularly harsh detention conditions, amounting to torture. Historian Yuri Dmitriev, 69, serving a 15-year sentence, has been diagnosed with cancer but denied appropriate oncological treatment. His health has worsened rapidly.

53. In February 2025, blogger Sergey Veselov received an eight-year sentence for anti-war expression. In April 2025, Darya Kozyreva was sentenced to two years and eight months' imprisonment for "discrediting" the Russian army.

## 10. Environmental defenders

54. Between 2022 and 2023, nearly 500 eco-defenders have been persecuted, including 74 for their anti-war stance. From 2022 to 2025, at least 12 environmental lawyers were targeted. In 2024, at least 13 physical attacks on eco-defenders were documented, often involving private security or unidentified assailants.

55. In 2024, at least one eco-defender died in detention. Another died at home under suspicious circumstances, which were never investigated. Sergei Kechimov, a shaman of the Indigenous Khanty people, who battled oil giant Surgutneftegaz over a sacred lake, died while undergoing prolonged persecution for his environmental work.

56. During 2024, at least five new criminal cases were opened against eco-defenders, on charges of participation in "riots", "violence" and "insulting" State officials. Between 2024 and 2025, at least seven eco-defenders received sentences of up to nine years' imprisonment.<sup>21</sup>

57. Since 2013, 34 environmental organizations have shut down because they were designated as "foreign agents". Between 2024 and 2025, at least two organizations and two individuals were designated as "foreign agents", including the co-founder of Ecodefense!, Vladimir Sliviak.

## 11. Religious figures

58. The criminalization of religious expression increased, particularly within the Russian Orthodox Church. In January 2024, Father Alexei Uminsky was dismissed and forced into exile after refusing to read a State-mandated prayer for the victory of "Holy Russia".

59. In April 2025, Christian preacher Eduard Charov went on trial on charges of "discrediting" the army and "justification of terrorism". Former priests Alexey Vtulov and Ioann Kurmoyarov left the Russian Federation after being persecuted for anti-war views. The latter served a three-year sentence on "fake news" charges.

60. Buddhist leader Ilya Vasilyev has been in detention since June 2024 on "fake news" charges for a Facebook post condemning rocket attacks in Ukraine. Pentecostal pastor

<sup>20</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/02/russia-must-immediately-drop-charges-against-85-year-old-human-rights>.

<sup>21</sup> See <https://help-eco.info/monitoring/> (in Russian).

Nikolay Romanyuk was arrested in 2024 for a sermon in which he urged Christians not to participate in the war.

61. Jehovah's Witnesses continue to face severe persecution in the Russian Federation. Nearly 1,000 people have been affected, of whom 525 have been prosecuted and 157 imprisoned, with many facing torture, including denial of adequate medical care.

62. In April 2025, imams Magomed-Bashir Tamaskhanov and Magomed Sultygov were detained in Ingushetia on charges of "failure to report a crime", which they deny. They were allegedly targeted for their religious views, which challenged the State-aligned official Islamic authority.

## 12. Political opponents

63. Between mid-2024 and mid-2025, several political figures faced harsh sentences and deteriorating health in custody. On 29 November 2024, Alexei Gorinov<sup>22</sup> received an additional three years' imprisonment on charges of "justifying terrorism" and was transferred in April 2025 to a high-security prison, despite serious illness, including tuberculosis acquired in prison. In March 2025, Alexander Skobov, a 67-year-old Soviet-era dissident and political prisoner, was sentenced to 16 years' imprisonment on "terrorism" charges for a post supporting Ukraine and alleged involvement with the Free Russia Forum, an organization declared "undesirable". His health has deteriorated rapidly in custody. On 10 June 2025, Lev Shlosberg, deputy chairman of the Yabloko party, was charged with "discrediting" the army for opposing the war.

## D. State ideology and distortion of "historical truth"

64. Since February 2022, the State has promoted a consolidated ideology centred on "traditional" values and external threats,<sup>23</sup> used to justify aggression abroad and repression at home. State funding, for example 1.6 billion roubles (about \$20 million) spent by the Presidential Foundation for Cultural Initiatives in 2023, is being used to promote support for the war on Ukraine and emphasize patriotism, and to mobilize social media influencers to promote pro-war content and authoritarian-style governance.

65. Education is used for ideological indoctrination, with mandatory patriotic and pro-war content in schools and universities.<sup>24</sup> Teachers holding dissenting views face persecution, including dismissal. In June 2025, schoolteacher Natalya Taranushenko, 65, was sentenced in absentia to seven years' imprisonment for discussing reports on Bucha with students.

66. Russian textbooks that are mandatory in Grade 10 and Grade 11 omit historical facts about Soviet-era crimes, the Stalinist purges and the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.<sup>25</sup> In April 2025, the Russian Federation introduced a broadly framed definition of genocide committed by Nazis and their collaborators,<sup>26</sup> further instrumentalizing historical memory to justify its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, backed by statements such as the claim by the President, Vladimir Putin, that the Russian Federation is fighting Nazism in Ukraine.

67. Article 354.1 of the Criminal Code, on the "rehabilitation of Nazism", has been used to target dissent, with at least 52 persons convicted in 2024. In April 2025, in Kemerovo Oblast, Alexander Panasenko was sentenced to four years and four months' imprisonment for a negative post regarding the St. George's ribbon, a symbol of patriotic loyalty.

68. In 2025, the Gulag History Museum in Moscow was closed, reflecting State revisionism towards distorting Soviet history. The prosecutor's office conducted a review of over 14,000 previously issued rehabilitation decisions on Soviet-era political prisoners and revoked more than 4,000 of these decisions during 2023–2024.

<sup>22</sup> A/HRC/54/54, para. 57.

<sup>23</sup> See <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/48502> (in Russian).

<sup>24</sup> A/HRC/54/54, para. 73.

<sup>25</sup> Submission from International Memorial Association.

<sup>26</sup> Federal Law No. 74-FZ of 21 April 2025.

## **E. Digital surveillance, limitations on access to information, and online censorship**

69. Russian authorities continued using new technologies to restrict freedom of expression, access to information and freedom of association. Roskomnadzor, a government agency, monitors online content to identify shifting political opinions, track dissent and suppress protest activity. Over 1.2 million Internet resources are banned. In 2025, 497 Internet resources, channels and materials – 87 of “foreign agents” and 410 of “undesirable organizations” – have been blocked.

70. Since 1 November 2024, social media pages with more than 10,000 subscribers must register with Roskomnadzor,<sup>27</sup> forcing the de-anonymization of content creators. In July 2025, a new law was adopted, making the use of virtual private networks (VPNs) an aggravating circumstance in criminal proceedings.<sup>28</sup> Another law penalizes the advertising of VPNs and online searches of “extremist materials”.<sup>29</sup> This applies to all searches for content listed as “extremist” in the Ministry of Justice registry – about 5,400 titles, including banned books, videos and websites.

71. In August 2024, Roskomnadzor announced the blocking of the messaging applications Signal and Viber, citing their alleged use for “terrorist” and “extremist” purposes. In December 2024, WhatsApp and another 11 messaging applications were ordered to store user data and share it with Russian law enforcement.

## **F. Fair trial and access to justice**

72. Concerns outlined in previous reports persisted,<sup>30</sup> with increasing persecution of legal professionals defending individuals in politically sensitive or national security-related cases, a growing number of closed-door trials, and a bill, presented in July 2025, proposing to consolidate the power of the government-controlled Federal Chamber of Advocates<sup>31</sup> by requiring all lawyers practicing in civil and commercial law to join the Russian Bar.

73. Amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code expanded in absentia trials to include charges of “justification of terrorism”, “fake news” and “discrediting” the army, and participation in activities of “undesirable organizations”.<sup>32</sup>

74. Abuses have been committed in undercover operations, especially test purchases of drugs, including the planting of evidence, torture to extract confessions, and entrapment. By early 2025, 17 wrongful drug convictions in Samara were overturned for lack of a crime, highlighting systemic injustice.<sup>33</sup>

75. The persecution of lawyers has intensified. Lawyers in politically motivated cases face harassment and criminal prosecution. In November 2024, lawyer Dmitry Talantov was sentenced to seven years’ imprisonment on charges of “fake news” and “incitement of hatred” over comments on Bucha and in retaliation for defending journalist Ivan Safronov,<sup>34</sup> exemplifying the State’s selective, punitive justice.

76. Lawyers risk “extremism” charges in connection with their professional activities. In January 2025, Alexei Navalny’s lawyers – Igor Sergunin, Alexei Liptser and Vadim Kobzev – were sentenced to three and a half to five and a half years in prison. By April 2025, Mr. Liptser’s health had seriously deteriorated.

<sup>27</sup> Federal Law No. 303-FZ of 8 August 2024.

<sup>28</sup> Federal Law No. 282-FZ of 31 July 2025.

<sup>29</sup> Federal Law No. 281-FZ of 31 July 2025.

<sup>30</sup> A/HRC/57/59, paras. 62–64.

<sup>31</sup> See <https://www.avocatus.org/en/post/the-international-association-of-russian-advocates-has-presented-a-critical-report-on-the-bill-propo>.

<sup>32</sup> Federal Law No. 101-FZ of 21 April 2025.

<sup>33</sup> Submission from Public Verdict.

<sup>34</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/11/russia-un-special-rapporteur-urges-acquittal-russian-lawyer-dmitry-talantov>.

77. In May 2025, Kaliningrad lawyer Maria Bontsler was detained and charged with “confidential cooperation” with a foreign State,<sup>35</sup> and faces up to eight years’ imprisonment. Searches targeted her and lawyer Roman Morozov; both had represented activist Igor Baryshnikov, who was imprisoned for seven and a half years on “fake news” charges.

## V. Torture and ill-treatment – a tool in the strategy for repression at home and aggression abroad

78. Torture and ill-treatment in the Russian Federation remain widespread and systematic, affecting not only Russian citizens but also Ukrainian prisoners of war and civilian detainees. At least 258 cases of torture by law enforcement, prison staff, and inmates acting under orders of prison authorities were documented in 2024/25. Torture methods used were extensively documented in the Special Rapporteur’s first thematic report for the General Assembly, presented in October 2024, entitled: “Torture in the Russian Federation – a tool for repression at home and aggression abroad”.<sup>36</sup>

79. Courts reclassify torture charges into less serious offences. Moreover, available data indicates a significantly higher acquittal rate in cases of torture, as well as a prevalence of suspended sentences, and lenient sentencing of three to five years of prison, on average.<sup>37</sup> Exceptionally, in two torture cases resulting in death, perpetrators received longer sentences: 8 and 10 years, respectively.<sup>38</sup> In 2024, only 10 individuals were convicted under the State’s legal framework on torture. Judges largely ignore victims’ testimonies of confessions extracted under torture and fail to order investigations into such allegations.

80. In October 2024, Svetlana Savelyeva was arbitrarily detained at the border in Kursk Oblast, when trying to cross to Ukraine to unite with her boyfriend. She was kept in a “carousel” of consecutive terms of administrative detention, while being taken to hotel rooms and a private house by Federal Security Service officers, who tortured her over a two-month period; the torture included beatings, strangulation, electric shocks, humiliation, death threats and threats of sexual violence to force a confession. In December 2024, she was charged with “treason” for an alleged attempt to join Ukrainian armed forces.

81. Kezhik Ondar, an ethnic Tuvan, was tortured in a pretrial detention facility (SIZO-1) in Irkutsk in 2020 by fellow inmates, acting on prison administration orders; the torture included repeated rape and the insertion of a heating element into his rectum, which was switched on and exploded inside his body. Five prison staff convicted for his torture under article 286 –exceeding official powers – had their convictions downgraded to “negligence” by the appeal court in 2025. The Supreme Court annulled this ruling and remanded the case for reconsideration.

82. In January 2025, Magomed Magomedov, a 26-year-old ethnic Dagestani, was arbitrarily detained and subjected to torture – including electric shocks and rape with a broom handle – by two police officers in Moscow Oblast, while held incommunicado. After he reported the abuse, unsubstantiated allegations related to Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant emerged, raising concerns of retaliation. No investigation has been opened, despite documented forensic evidence of torture.<sup>39</sup>

83. In December 2023, President Putin instructed the Investigative Committee to improve the effectiveness of criminal investigations into torture allegations. In June 2025, the Investigative Committee stated, in response to a request by a State Duma deputy, that the Committee’s report to the President is not subject to public disclosure, further highlighting the lack of transparency and accountability in addressing torture.

<sup>35</sup> A/HRC/57/59, para. 78.

<sup>36</sup> A/79/508.

<sup>37</sup> Submission from Crew Against Torture.

<sup>38</sup> See [https://cdep.ru/userimages/Statistika\\_2024/k4-svod\\_vse\\_sudy-2024.xls](https://cdep.ru/userimages/Statistika_2024/k4-svod_vse_sudy-2024.xls) (in Russian).

<sup>39</sup> Communication RUS 6/2025. The communication will be available from <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/Tmsearch/TMDocuments>.

84. The use of coercive psychiatry as a tool of repression, where criminal prosecution is substituted with indefinite psychiatric measures, increased, with an average of 23 cases documented annually since 2022, compared to five cases per year between 2015 and 2021. Opposition activists, environmental defenders and anti-war protesters are disproportionately targeted. As of August 2025, at least 51 individuals had been subjected to coercive psychiatric measures,<sup>40</sup> including Yakut shaman Alexander Gabyshev, confined in a psychiatric hospital since 2020.

85. On 8 July 2025, the State Duma adopted a law that transfers seven high-security SIZOs back to the jurisdiction of the Federal Security Service. The law is set to come into force on 1 January 2026.<sup>41</sup> The legislative shift would grant the Service extensive authority to investigate, arrest and detain persons and operate its own detention facilities, heightening the risks of torture and fuelling impunity, particularly in certain categories of politically sensitive cases. Given the Service's exemption from external oversight, any independent scrutiny is effectively being removed and judicial control weakened.

## **VI. Human rights violations in the name of national security and silencing dissent**

### **A. Treason, espionage and confidential cooperation**

86. Since February 2022, at least 536 persons have received sentences, ranging from 10 years to life in prison, on “treason”, “espionage” or “confidential cooperation” charges; at least 359 of those persons were sentenced in 2024.<sup>42</sup>

87. Legal expansion in 2022–2024 equipped authorities with additional tools to fabricate national security offences, often based on evidence extracted through torture and entrapment. Amendments made in 2024 to the Criminal Code broadened the definition of “switching to the enemy’s side” (art. 275), introduced a new offence of assisting the enemy in activities directed against the security of the Russian Federation (art. 276.1) and expanded application of these provisions to everyone on Russian territory. Entrapment has become routine, especially on social media. Federal Security Service agents initiated an online conversation with Ivan Tolpygin soliciting his views on the war, for which he was sentenced to four years’ imprisonment.

### **B. “Terrorism” and “extremism”**

88. Russian authorities continued to abuse “terrorism” charges to criminalize pro-Ukraine support. In June 2025, Nadin Geisler (Nadezhda Rossinskaya) was sentenced to 22 years’ imprisonment on “treason” and “terrorism”-related charges for an Instagram post, which she denies authoring.

89. New legislation in December 2024 broadened the grounds for including organizations and individuals in the “extremists” list, including for “fake news” and acts “discrediting” the army that were deemed “motivated by hatred”.<sup>43</sup> In June 2024, the Supreme Court banned the non-existent “Anti-Russian Separatist Movement” as “extremist”. The abuse of criminal provisions for displaying “extremist symbols” has resulted in at least 67 convictions since 2022.

90. The targeting of children for “terrorism” and “extremism” remains deeply troubling. As of July 2025, over 150 children aged 14 to 17 were added to the federal list of “extremists” and “terrorists”. Cases have also emerged where children have been accused of “treason” and subjected to torture to extract confessions.

<sup>40</sup> Data from Memorial International Association.

<sup>41</sup> Federal Law No. 239-FZ of 23 July 2025.

<sup>42</sup> See <https://dept.one/story/izmena-2024/> (in Russian).

<sup>43</sup> Federal Law No. 522-FZ of 28 December 2024.

## VII. Conscientious objection to military service and mobilization

91. Desertion has become one of the main avenues for those seeking to avoid participating in the war. Estimates indicate that over 50,000 Russian soldiers had deserted since 2022, representing nearly 10 per cent of all Russian troops in Ukraine. Since 2022, more than 16,000 military personnel have been prosecuted for desertion-related offences, with over 13,500 conscripts and contract soldiers convicted in 2024.

92. The “disobeying orders” charge is applied to men, including injured soldiers, who refuse to fight. Torture and ill-treatment, including beatings, starvation and death threats, are used to “enforce discipline” and compel compliance with military orders. So-called “torture pits” were created at training grounds to punish soldiers who try to escape fighting on the front lines in Ukraine.

93. Following legislative amendments in 2024,<sup>44</sup> criminal suspects, accused persons and convicts can have their sentences commuted or prosecutions dropped for signing military contracts, which has expanded the recruitment pool for deployment to the war. Around 12 per cent of all suspects sign military contracts, with police officers receiving financial remuneration for each signed contract. Since 2022, approximately 200,000 inmates have been recruited, contributing to the reported closure of nearly 80 of the 900 penitentiary institutions as of July 2025.<sup>45</sup>

94. By February 2025, investigative journalists at Vyorstka, an online media outlet, calculated that over 750 people had been killed or severely injured by returning combatants, including 378 deaths and 376 life-threatening injuries. In September 2024, a cannibal convicted to 25 years’ imprisonment was freed after fighting in Ukraine. In November 2024, a former soldier, sentenced to 20 years in prison for killing 13 people, returned to the front lines after signing a new contract.

95. The Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation denies having information on missing soldiers. In November 2024, the Deputy Defence Minister stated that 48,000 relatives had submitted DNA to identify remains, although some submissions were duplicates. The Ukrainian “Want to Find” initiative has received more than 88,000 inquiries regarding missing Russian servicemen, while the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has registered 110,000 missing person cases.

96. The Ministry of Defence has enlisted foreign nationals, including trafficked persons from Nepal and Sri Lanka, into the army, coercing them into signing contracts through torture and threats.

97. As reported in 2024, conscripts are forced, through torture and deceit, into signing military contracts that allow them to be sent to the front lines. In at least one case, a person was shot dead for refusing to sign the contract.

## VIII. Groups vulnerable to human rights violations based on their identity

### A. Detention and treatment of Ukrainians

98. As of May 2025, thousands of Ukrainian civilians remained forcibly disappeared in Russian detention. The number of deaths from torture, including denial of medical treatment, is unknown. ICRC has been denied access to the Ukrainian detainees.

99. As of May 2025, the Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War, a Ukraine State body, reported that of the 5,000 Ukrainian soldiers whose remains had been repatriated, 206 had died in Russian captivity, with autopsies revealing torture and denial of medical care as causes of death.

<sup>44</sup> Federal Laws No. 64-FZ of 23 March 2024 and No. 340-FZ of 2 October 2024.

<sup>45</sup> Submission from Russia Behind Bars.

100. On 14 February 2025, 757 bodies of individuals killed in action were repatriated to Ukraine. One body, marked as an “unidentified male” and missing some organs, was identified through DNA testing as Viktoriya Roshchyna, a 27-year-old Ukrainian journalist killed in Russian detention.<sup>46</sup> Forensic analysis revealed torture, including electric shock injuries. Her last confirmed sighting was on 8 September 2024 at Taganrog SIZO-2 detention facility.

101. Taganrog SIZO-2 is one of the most violent detention facilities, with Ukrainian survivors reporting extreme overcrowding, unsanitary conditions, starvation, beatings with stun guns and batons, near-drownings, electric shocks, including to the genitals, both to extract confessions and as punishment, forced nudity for both men and women, sexualized humiliation, and rape and threats thereof. Detainees were coerced into renouncing legal representation, while lawyers were presented with signed refusals, preventing them from representing their clients.

102. In December 2024, the Southern District Military Court in Rostov-on-Don convicted Ukrainian civilian Natalia Vlasova on charges of “terrorism”, “espionage” and “attempted assassination”, sentencing her to 18 years and two months in prison. She had been unlawfully detained in the so-called Donetsk People’s Republic in late 2018, held incommunicado for over four years, including at the notorious Izoliatsiya (Isolation) prison, an unofficial detention facility in Donetsk. Ms. Vlasova, in a rare instance of public court testimony, described being gang-raped by 15 armed men, raped with a bottle and subjected to electric shocks, and her teeth being filed down with a metal file. The court failed to investigate the allegations of torture.

#### **Participation of medical personnel in torture**

103. Former Ukrainian detainees, both civilians and prisoners of war, interviewed by the Special Rapporteur testified to being tortured by medical personnel in Russian detention, with reports of, inter alia, physicians condoning or witnessing torture of detainees and failing to report it. Their testimonies were corroborated independently by other victims and witnesses.

104. Between February 2023 and April 2025, in Penal Colony No. 10, a high-security facility in Mordovia, many of the 700 Ukrainian prisoners of war and civilian detainees were systematically tortured – often by medical personnel. A paramedic known as Doctor “Zlo” (Doctor Evil), identified as Ilya Sorokin, routinely beat detainees with rubber batons and electrocuted them with stun guns. In February 2023, prisoner of war Pavlo Afisov was taken to the paramedic for a medical procedure: the paramedic beat him with a stun gun. When prisoners requested medical help, the paramedic subjected them to shocks while mocking their pain.

105. In September 2023, Volodymyr Yukhymenko, from Vinnytsia, died after prolonged abuse and medical neglect. Suffering from severe mental health issues since his earlier detention in Vladimir Oblast, he was denied medication and regularly beaten. When his ear became swollen from beatings, Ilya Sorokin instructed a guard to strike him directly in the ear. Mr. Yukhymenko died shortly after. A Ukrainian forensic examination confirmed pneumonia, internal bleeding and multiple fractures. The paramedic also trained guards on how to inflict maximum pain; requests for medicine were met with electrocutions. The actions of that paramedic contributed to at least four confirmed deaths, and were corroborated by over 50 former detainees.<sup>47</sup>

106. In April 2022, in a medical unit of SIZO-2, in Kashino, Tver Oblast, prisoners of war were stripped naked, beaten with stun guns, and forced to squat and shout “Glory to Russia” while two medical staff in white coats silently observed and later recorded their height and weight. Former detainees testified that in SIZO-2 in Stary Oskol, Belgorod Oblast (October 2022) and SIZO-2 in Ryazhsk, Ryazan Oblast (April 2022), medical personnel instructed

<sup>46</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/10/russia-must-confirm-news-ukrainian-journalists-death-custody-un-experts>.

<sup>47</sup> Submission from Center for Civil Liberties, Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group and the Skhemy project.

staff on how to apply electric shocks to inflict greater pain, while in SIZO-2 in Kamyshin, Volgograd Oblast (May 2022), a doctor was present during torture, including the forcible removal of a mole.

107. In February 2024, wounded prisoner of war Andrii Pereverzev was beaten and electrocuted in the presence of a paramedic who gave instructions on where to apply the electric wires and for how long. During surgery at Kalinin hospital in Donetsk, a surgeon visiting from Moscow branded Mr. Pereverzev's abdomen with "*Slava Rossii*" (Glory to Russia) and the letter "Z", using a medical cautery tool. Later, in Hospital No. 15 in Donetsk, Mr. Pereverzev was shocked with stun guns and forced into stress positions; medical personnel witnessed the acts but did not intervene.

108. Since mid-2023, hundreds of Ukrainian inmates, primarily those deported from territories occupied by the Russian Federation in 2022, have been released from Russian prisons upon completing their sentences. Those refusing Russian citizenship are detained in immigration centres, pending deportation. Given the absence of a return mechanism, they are left stranded at the Russian-Georgian border in Verkhny Lars. One individual has died; two attempted suicide during June and July 2025. As of July, at least 60 people, including 10 women, remained in overcrowded, makeshift basement facilities, which have a total of 17 beds. They have been denied medical care, including for serious health conditions such as tuberculosis or HIV infection, and have been left in legal and humanitarian limbo.

## B. Women and girls

109. Violence against women in the Russian Federation has intensified; in the absence of domestic violence legislation, women and girls are left without protection. Since 2022, the number of reported incidents of domestic violence involving current or former members of the armed forces has nearly doubled.

110. Returning combatants have killed their wives, ex-partners or other family members. One man was sentenced to 20 years for rape and murder in 2022. After just seven months in prison, he signed a military contract to join the war. Upon returning home in October 2024, he killed his former wife and her daughter. No legal ban prevents repeat offenders from signing a second contract to evade accountability.

111. In November 2024, the Russian Federation enacted the so-called "child-free propaganda" law, which restricts discourse on contraception, abortion, infertility and voluntary childlessness.<sup>48</sup>

## C. LGBT persons

112. Following the designation of the "international LGBT movement" as "extremist", State-led repression intensified in 2024/25. At least five LGBT organizations and 11 informal initiatives were shut down. In 2024, authorities carried out around 40 raids, 24 targeting establishments of and for queer persons, often with the participation of ultranationalist vigilantes, leading to detentions and military draft notices. Courts reviewed 221 "LGBT propaganda" cases, including for displaying symbols such as the rainbow flag.

113. As of early 2025, at least eight criminal cases had been brought on "extremism" charges, involving 14 defendants, one of whom died in custody. Prosecuted activities include operating gay clubs, organizing LGBT events and engaging in activism; in some cases, prosecutions targeted an individual's perceived sexual orientation.

114. In November 2024, Andrei Kotov was detained on "extremism" charges, tortured and denied legal counsel. Investigators threatened Mr. Kotov with additional charges of child pornography, used in the past to discredit dissidents and LGBT persons. On 30 December 2024, he was found dead in custody, raising concerns of torture being the cause.

<sup>48</sup> Federal Law No. 401-FZ of 23 November 2024.

115. Viskhan Tazurkaev, a 19-year-old man from Chechnya, was detained in December 2024 for alleged association with a gay friend and subjected to torture, including electric shocks. He died in custody. The circumstances of his death were not investigated. His case follows a documented pattern of abuse against LGBT individuals in Chechnya.

116. The suppression of LGBT rights<sup>49</sup> includes the removal of art books and literature that reference LGBT experiences, including books by Susan Sontag and Olivia Laing. In May 2025, Pavel Ivanov, Artem Vakhlyayev and Dmitry Protopopov, from the independent publishers Popcorn Books and Individuum, were detained for publishing and selling LGBT content under the ban on the so-called “international LGBT movement”.

## D. Indigenous Peoples

117. Indigenous Peoples in the Russian Federation remain among the most vulnerable groups, with some facing extinction.<sup>50</sup> Only 47 Indigenous Peoples are recognized. Owing to restrictive definitions of Indigenous Peoples in Russian legislation, larger Indigenous populations continue to be arbitrarily excluded from certain legal protections.

118. Indigenous groups are also affected by the legislation on “foreign agents”, “undesirable organizations”, “extremism” and “terrorism”. The Forum of the Free Nations of Post-Russia, which included Indigenous Peoples’ organizations, was designated as a “terrorist” organization and banned by the Supreme Court in November 2024, along with 172 associated “structural divisions”. In a significant escalation, in January 2025, Komi Daily and Asians of Russia became the first media organizations to receive a “terrorist” designation.

119. Disproportionate targeting of Indigenous Peoples for military mobilization, often forced, to the war on Ukraine continues, even where communities risk extinction from war casualties.

## E. Migrants and refugees

120. The State nationalist ideology shapes the asylum and migration policies of the Russian Federation, and fuels xenophobia and discriminatory practices against non-ethnic Russian populations.<sup>51</sup> By the end of 2024, the number of officially recognized refugees in the country was just 216 people, including only 12 individuals granted refugee status in 2024, while 5,302 people, most Ukrainian citizens, had been granted temporary asylum.<sup>52</sup>

121. In February 2025, the Russian Federation implemented a new “removal regime” targeting foreign nationals who are residing in the country without legal grounds for staying.<sup>53</sup> Such individuals will be added to a registry of “controlled persons” and face strict limitations, including bans on changing residence or marrying.

122. The number of deportation rulings in the Russian Federation has significantly increased, with 85,842 decisions issued by courts in the first half of 2024, while amendments to the Code of Administrative Offences also gave police the authority to issue deportation decisions.

123. Mass raids on migrants persisted. On 10 April 2025, Moscow riot police raided a bathhouse, detaining 59 persons, mostly citizens of Kyrgyzstan, who were beaten, humiliated and forced to crawl and to lie on top of each other. On 27 June 2025, Russian security forces conducted a large-scale raid in Yekaterinburg, detaining around 50 ethnic Azerbaijanis in connection with unresolved murders from 2001–2011. Following the operation, two brothers – Huseyn and Ziyaddin Safarov – died in custody, with forensic experts in Azerbaijan later confirming death by torture.

<sup>49</sup> A/HRC/54/54, paras. 37–40; and A/HRC/57/59, para. 94.

<sup>50</sup> Submission from International Committee of Indigenous Peoples of Russia.

<sup>51</sup> Submission from SOVA Research Centre.

<sup>52</sup> Submission from Civic Assistance Committee.

<sup>53</sup> Federal Law No. 260-FZ of 8 August 2024.

124. In May 2025, the head of the Investigative Committee, Alexander Bastrykin, revealed that 80,000 recent recipients of Russian citizenship, primarily from Central Asia, have been forced to register for military service, with 20,000 already deployed to the front lines.

125. Ultranationalist vigilante groups, such as Russian Community and Northern Man, have conducted at least 80 raids targeting migrants each month, with 20–30 per cent involving police cooperation.

126. As of 1 April 2025, a new regulation<sup>54</sup> requires all migrant children to pass a Russian language proficiency test for school admission. It also bars children of migrant parents with irregular status from attending school, putting them at risk of deportation.

127. Women from Central Asia working in grocery stores in Moscow were subjected to forced labour, sexual violence and child abduction, while authorities consistently failed to investigate and address trafficking in persons.<sup>55</sup>

## **IX. Human rights in the North Caucasus**

### **A. Chechnya**

128. The situation in the North Caucasus, particularly in Chechnya, is characterized by a deeply entrenched climate of fear and institutionalized impunity. This environment enables widespread use of collective punishments, enforced disappearance, torture and extrajudicial killing.

129. In April 2025, Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov publicly ordered collective punishment against the family of 17-year-old Eskerkhan Khumashev for his alleged involvement in the death of a police officer. After killing the 17-year-old, Chechen authorities displayed his body before an audience of schoolchildren and civil servants. His father was unlawfully detained in Moscow and forcibly transferred to Chechnya, where he was tortured.

130. Chechen authorities mobilized individuals, including LGBT persons, critical of Ramzan Kadyrov, forcing them to choose between military deployment and imprisonment.

#### **Women and girls**

131. Women, particularly in Chechnya and Dagestan, continue to face pervasive gender-based violence, including forced marriages and threats of “honour killings”. In July 2025, Laura Avtorkhanova fled to Georgia to escape domestic violence, but her family kidnapped her to force her return. She managed to escape again with the help of activists.

## **X. Reprisals for cooperation with the United Nations**

132. The Russian Federation and its allies on the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, a subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council, systematically blocked Russian organizations from obtaining accreditation by exploiting procedural rules and creating obstacles. In 2024, no Russian organization was accredited, and those stripped of domestic registration could not even apply, effectively excluding them from participation in United Nations deliberations.

133. In May 2025, the Russian Office of the Prosecutor-General designated the International Indigenous Fund for Development and Solidarity Batani as an “undesirable organization”, citing its participation in international forums, including at the United Nations. As a reprisal for engaging with United Nations mechanisms, Russian authorities accused Batani of promoting “anti-Russian narratives” under the guise of Indigenous rights work.

<sup>54</sup> Federal Law No. 544-FZ of 28 December 2024.

<sup>55</sup> See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/07/russia-must-act-end-long-standing-trafficking-labour-exploitation-migrant>.

134. On 8 and 9 July 2025, human rights defenders in different Russian oblasts had their homes and offices raided. During one raid, officers forced Sviatoslav Khromenkov, the head of the “Siberia without Torture” project, a beneficiary of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, to hand over reports that had been submitted to the Fund and seized testimonies of torture victims.

## **XI. Conclusions and recommendations**

135. The human rights situation has steadily deteriorated, constituting a seismic decline. Over the past three and a half years, Russian authorities have pursued a deliberate strategy to wipe out dissent through intensified censorship, politically motivated prosecutions under broad public safety and national security provisions, and the expansion of legislation on “foreign agents” and “undesirables”. Journalists, human rights defenders, opposition figures and activists have faced imprisonment, torture and long prison sentences, while civic space has been systematically and purposefully destroyed.

136. The Russian authorities have dismantled institutional independence, bringing the judiciary, legislature and law enforcement under direct political control. This systemic capture transformed public institutions into instruments of repression and war.

137. These measures have had a particularly severe impact on vulnerable groups, especially women, LGBT persons, national and ethnic minorities, Indigenous Peoples, religious groups and migrants, who have been specifically targeted and scapegoated in official rhetoric and practice.

138. In the North Caucasus a relentless descent into lawlessness has enabled widespread violations, including gender-based violence, femicide, torture and ill-treatment, enforced disappearance and brutal suppression of the rights of LGBT persons.

139. The State’s strategy of repression within the Russian Federation itself sustains aggression abroad and continuing impunity. Accountability and justice, and the release of all Ukrainian civilian detainees, Ukrainian and Russian prisoners of war, held by both sides, deported Ukrainian children and all Russian political prisoners, must inform any peace talks and process.

140. The continuing widespread and systematic recourse to torture and ill-treatment by Russian law enforcement officials, security forces, penitentiary officials and members of the armed forces is endemic. The present reporting period has also highlighted a clear pattern of health professionals participating in and condoning the most abhorrent torture, especially of Ukrainian detainees.

141. The Special Rapporteur reiterates her previous recommendations to the Russian authorities, which regrettably have all remained unimplemented. She also recommends that the Russian authorities:

(a) Engage in good faith with the mandate of the Special Rapporteur and other human rights mechanisms, in line with Human Rights Council resolutions and the State’s obligations under international law;

(b) End censorship and the crackdown on dissent; release all those who have been detained for exercising their rights, including to freedom of expression and assembly; ensure that human rights defenders, lawyers, journalists, media workers, anti-war activists, academics, political figures and others are able to operate free from harassment, intimidation, arbitrary detention and torture and ill-treatment;

(c) Repeal all legislation concerning “foreign agents” and “undesirable organizations”, immediately release and rehabilitate individuals convicted on such charges, especially under articles 330.1 and 284.1 of the Criminal Code;

(d) Revoke the legislation related to “extremist activity” used in politically motivated cases and applied in a manner that infringes upon the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly;

(e) End the use of surveillance-based punishment and dismantle measures that criminalize online information-seeking to restore digital freedoms and protect privacy; and immediately repeal the laws adopted in July 2025 that make the use of VPNs an aggravating circumstance in criminal proceedings and that introduce administrative fines for advertising VPN services and for conducting online searches for “extremist materials”;

(f) Criminalize torture as a distinct crime in domestic legislation in accordance with article 1 of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, ensuring that the applicable penalties are commensurate with the gravity of the crime of torture; introduce the criminal offence of other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, fully reflecting articles 2 and 16 of the Convention against Torture; and ensure independent and prompt investigations and prosecutions, punishment of perpetrators and justice for victims;

(g) Ensure that confessions obtained through torture or ill-treatment are inadmissible as evidence in court;

(h) Immediately halt the participation of all medical personnel – civilian and military – in torture and/or ill-treatment of detainees; effectively prosecute any medical personnel who has participated in, condoned or failed to report torture or ill-treatment; guarantee to all detainees confidential and unfettered access to independent medical professionals, in accordance with the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules); and ensure prompt and proper documentation of injuries or abuse, in accordance with the Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Istanbul Protocol), and accessible without fear of retaliation;

(i) Amend national security legislation to align with international law, including by narrowing the scope of offences related to treason, espionage and confidential cooperation; apply such charges only to conduct that presents a genuine and demonstrable threat to national security and ensure that the application of such charges does not encroach upon freedom of expression or peaceful civic activity;

(j) Ensure full transparency and judicial oversight in designation procedures for “extremist” or “terrorist” status; any listing must be based on concrete, individualized evidence and allow for meaningful appeal;

(k) Repeal the 2023 decision of the Supreme Court designating the “international LGBT movement” as “extremist” and annul all administrative and criminal convictions issued consequently; end the persecution and arrest of LGBT persons on “extremism” charges and initiate thorough, independent investigations into all violations of LGBT persons’ rights, including cases of death in custody, torture and ill-treatment, ensuring full accountability for perpetrators and justice for victims;

(l) Rescind the 2024 decision of the Supreme Court designating the non-existent “Anti-Russian Separatist Movement” as an “extremist” organization; and end the targeting of Indigenous Peoples’ and national minorities’ organizations and advocates with “extremist” and “terrorist” designations;

(m) Align the national legislation with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and ratify the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169) of the International Labour Organization; revise the “small-numbered” classification to extend protections to all Indigenous groups, regardless of population size; and cease targeting small-numbered Indigenous populations for military mobilization to the war;

(n) Eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls, including through the adoption and effective implementation of laws and policies criminalizing domestic violence; rescind laws that prohibit so-called “child-free propaganda”; and reverse regional practices that restrict reproductive rights and choices, including the severe limitations on abortion access;

(o) Fundamentally revise legislation that restricts access to asylum, education, and legal status for migrants and asylum-seekers, including the “removal regime” and the April 2025 regulation requiring language testing for school admission; guarantee access to legal aid and fair and timely asylum procedures; and restore judicial oversight over deportation decisions to prevent arbitrary expulsions;

(p) Prevent and combat discrimination, hate speech and hate crimes, including against migrants, by ensuring the accountability of those responsible; provide regular training, including sensitization training, for police, migration officials and the judiciary on non-discrimination, refugee protection and migrants’ rights;

(q) End the persecution of, attacks on and imprisonment of environmental defenders and ensure accountability;

(r) Ensure that lawyers are not threatened with or subjected to intimidation, harassment, arbitrary arrest or criminal prosecution for carrying out their professional duties; reinstate full access to legal counsel of one’s choice, including in cases involving State secrets and/or national security; and strengthen safeguards against surveillance and ensure confidential communication between lawyers and clients;

(s) Guarantee access to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in accordance with international standards, to all defendants; prohibit the use of closed trials, except in strictly limited and justified circumstances; and reverse the expanded use of in absentia trials, and ensure that fair trial guarantees are respected;

(t) Repeal the July 2025 law transferring pretrial detention centres back to Federal Security Service jurisdiction and guarantee independent oversight over places of detention;

(u) Provide unhindered access for ICRC to Russian political prisoners and Ukrainian prisoners of war and civilian detainees;

(v) Prohibit the use of psychiatry for punitive purposes, diagnosis or treatment, and ensure that all psychiatric treatment is based on medical grounds only and free and informed consent, and is subject to independent judicial oversight and protection from torture or ill-treatment;

(w) Immediately halt all forms of intimidation and reprisal against individuals and civil society organizations seeking to cooperate with the United Nations, including its human rights mechanisms and the present mandate, and put safeguards in place to prevent future reprisals.

142. The Special Rapporteur also recommends that the international community and the States Members of the United Nations:

(a) Exercise domestic criminal jurisdiction, including on the basis of universal jurisdiction, that establishes their competence to prosecute alleged perpetrators of torture and ill-treatment or other crimes perpetrated against individuals in the Russian Federation;

(b) Uphold the human rights of Russian citizens in need of protection within their jurisdiction by respecting the principle of non-refoulement in regard to all torture survivors and asylum-seekers from the Russian Federation, in particular human rights defenders, anti-war activists, independent journalists and media professionals, conscientious objectors to military service and individuals who have refused forced mobilization to the war against Ukraine, as well as members of the LGBT community, including from Chechnya and the North Caucasus, members of Indigenous Peoples and

**national minorities, and women and girls escaping domestic violence, forced marriage, female genital mutilation and “honour killings” in the North Caucasus, among others;**

**(c) Adopt a strategy and increase sustained support to protect dissenters and human rights defenders, both those continuing to work inside the Russian Federation and in exile, and their families; refrain from discrimination and facilitate freedom of movement for human rights defenders by providing travel visas, exit and re-entry, and unhindered travel, including through airlines or other transport providers; and enable and support exiled Russian human rights defenders to continue their human rights work abroad by facilitating the registration and functioning of their non-governmental organizations, allowing them to secure funding, ensuring their ability to open bank accounts and residency permits for them and their families, including by facilitating visits by family members still living in the Russian Federation;**

**(d) Create an official and effective international mechanism for the immediate and unconditional return of all deported Ukrainian civilians held in detention in the Russian Federation, including deported Ukrainian children, regardless of the status or outcome of any peace talks, with the due involvement of ICRC.**

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