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Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)
LEGAL AID BOARD

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Information on rape in Russian prisons.

The 2011 *United States Department of State* country report on Russia, in a section titled “Prison and Detention Center Conditions”, states:

“Abuse of prisoners by other prisoners continued to be a problem. Violence among inmates, including beating and rape, was common. There were elaborate inmate-enforced caste systems in which certain groups, including informers, homosexuals, rapists, prison rape victims, and child molesters were considered ‘untouchables’ (the lowest caste) and treated harshly. Prison authorities provided little or no protection.”
(United States Department of State (8 April 2011) *2010 Human Rights Report: Russia*)

An article published by the Australian newspaper *The Telegraph* states:

“Mr Balobolko is accused of illegally sending a prisoner to a Saint Petersburg psychiatric hospital ‘with the aim of carrying out physical and psychological violence as a punishment’. He ordered two convicts who were patients at the hospital to carry out ‘violent acts of a sexual nature’ on the prisoner, prosecutors said. In the second case, Mr Petrov personally raped a prisoner in the psychiatric hospital, while filming the attack, the prosecutors said. ‘He made a video recording (of the rape) and also compelled three other inmates to carry out a sexual assault on the prisoner and took photographs of this,’ the statement said. Despite being ordered to carry out the assaults, four convicts were charged with sexual assault in the two cases.” (The Telegraph (10 March 2010) *Russian prison officials ‘ordered rapes’*)

See also *BBC News* report on this case which states:

“A court in north-western Russia has jailed seven senior prison staff for torturing prisoners and ordering them to be raped by other inmates. The former head of the prison department for St Petersburg and its region, Vyacheslav Toppel, received the longest sentence, seven years. He and five others were jailed over the same rape case, while the seventh officer was jailed over a separate one. Four prisoners who carried out the rapes were all acquitted.” (BBC News (4 March 2011) *Russian jail officials jailed for ordering prison rapes*)

An article from the *Business Recorder*, which does not specifically refer to rape, describes the alleged ill treatment of inmates in Russian prisons as follows:

“Relatives of prison inmates who have been brutally mistreated or even killed often implore the president to take action against the ‘sadistic’ guards. Their letters spell out, down to the last detail, who has tortured whom, where and how. They tell of inmates beaten with truncheons until they lose consciousness. But as lawyers, human rights

activists and the association of prison inmates in Russia point out, the accused torturers typically go unpunished. Maxim Gromov, a member of the inmates' association, said prison personnel even recorded their misdeeds with video cameras as a teaching tool for novice torturers and to intimidate prisoners. Many frightened inmates pay 'protection money' to guards, the journal *For the Protection of Prison Inmates* wrote in its November issue. From all over Russia are also reports of forced full-body shaves, water torture that simulates drowning and mouldy, maggoty prison food. Efforts to rectify these ills, observers say, are often thwarted by an elaborate system in which the guilty parties cover for each other, give bribes, have the power to blackmail and pass off beatings as acts of self-defence against violent inmates." (Business Recorder (7 January 2010) *Medvedev Aims To Reform 'Hellish' Prison System*)

References:

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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UNHCR Refworld
United States Department of State