



**RUSSIAN FEDERATION
COUNTRY ASSESSMENT**

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**Country Information & Policy Unit
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1. INTRODUCTION

Scope of Document

1.1. This assessment has been produced by the Country Information and Policy Unit, Immigration and Nationality Directorate, Home Office, from information obtained from a wide variety of recognised sources. The document does not contain any Home Office opinion or policy.

1.2. The assessment has been prepared for background purposes for those involved in the asylum/human rights determination process. The information it contains is not exhaustive. It concentrates on the issues most commonly raised in asylum/human rights claims made in the United Kingdom.

1.3. The assessment is sourced throughout. It is intended to be used by caseworkers as a signpost to the source material, which has been made available to them. The vast majority of the source material is readily available in the public domain. These sources have been checked for currency and, as far as can be ascertained, remained relevant and up to date at the time the document was issued.

1.4. It is intended to revise the assessment on a six-monthly basis while the country remains within the top 35 asylum-seeker producing countries in the United Kingdom.

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2. GEOGRAPHY

Location and Climate

2.1. The Russian Federation (until 25 December 1991, the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic of the Soviet Union) is bounded by Norway, Finland, Estonia and Latvia to the north-west and by Belarus and Ukraine to the west. The southern borders of European Russia are with the Black Sea, Georgia, Azerbaijan, the Caspian Sea and Kazakhstan. The Siberian and Far Eastern regions have southern frontiers with the People's Republic of China, Mongolia and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The eastern coastline is on the Sea of Japan, the Sea of Okhotsk, the Pacific Ocean and the Barents Sea. The northern coastline is on the Arctic Ocean. The region around Kaliningrad, on the Baltic Sea, became part of the Russian Federation in 1945. It is separated from the rest of the Federation by Lithuania and Belarus.[2]

2.2. The Russian Federation covers a total area of 17,075,400 sq km (6,592,850 sq miles), making it by far the largest country in the world. Its territory consists of 89 federal units, including the cities of Moscow, the capital, and St Petersburg, the old tsarist capital.[1] Given its size, it is not surprising that the climate of Russia is extremely varied, ranging from severe Arctic conditions in northern areas and much of Siberia to generally temperate weather in the south.[2]

Population

2.3. The Russians are Eastern Slavs, inhabitants of the huge Eurasian land mass, which is a territory with no great natural frontiers, a fact that has made them throughout history both vulnerable to invaders and themselves inclined to migration and expansion. Many ethnic Russians live beyond the borders of the Russian Federation, forming significant minorities in neighbouring other countries of the former Soviet Union, such as Estonia, Latvia, Belarus, Ukraine and Kazakhstan, in addition to Moldova and the Central Asian countries.[1]

2.4. The estimated total population of the Russian Federation at 1 January 2002 was 143,954,400, making the population density just 8.4 per sq km. The majority of the population lives in European Russia, the population of Siberia and the Far East being only some 32 million in 1989, approximately 22% of the total. At the 1989 census, Russians formed the largest ethnic group in the Federation, accounting for 81.5% of the population. Other major ethnic groups included Tatars (3.8%), Ukrainians (3%) and Chuvash (1.2%). There were also significant communities of Belarusians, Bashkirs, Mordovians, Mari, Chechens, Kazakhs, Germans, Udmurts, Avar, Jews and Armenians.[1]

Language and Religion

2.5. The official language is Russian, but a large number of other languages are also used. Religious adherence is varied, with many religions closely connected with particular ethnic groups. Christianity is the major religion, mostly adhered to by ethnic Russians and other Slavs, with the Russian Orthodox Church the largest denomination. The main concentrations of Muslims are among Volga Tatars, Chuvash and Bashkirs, and the peoples of northern Caucasus, including the Chechen, Ingush, Ossetians, Kabardinians and the peoples of Dagestan. Buddhism is the main religion of the Buryats, the Tyvans and the Kalmyks. The large pre-1917 Jewish population has been depleted by war and emigration, but there remain some 400,000 Jews in the Russian Federation.[2]

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3. ECONOMY

3.1. The economy continued to grow during 2002, although at lower rates than in 2001. Annual gross domestic product (GDP) growth was 4.5%, compared with 5% in 2001. GDP was \$252 billion for the first 9 months of 2002. Industrial production grew by 3.7% and real income increased by 8.8%. However, approximately 27% of the population continued to live below the official monthly subsistence level of \$60. Official unemployment was 7.1%, down from 9% at the end of 2001. Corruption continued to be a negative factor in the development of the economy and commercial relations.**[14a]**

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4. HISTORY

Pre-Twentieth Century Russia

4.1. The Russians' first state was established towards the end of the ninth century, around Kiev (now in Ukraine). Kievan Rus was the forerunner not only of the 'Great' Russians, but also of the Belarusians or 'White Russians' and the Ukrainians or 'Little Russians', and was a slave-holding society, which was officially Christianised in the year 988. The state did not last for long, however, and by the late twelfth century, the early Russians were scattered over a large area in what is now western Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. This disintegration was halted in 1237, when Mongol Tartars invaded from the east and imposed almost 250 years of subjugation on the Russian people. From the late fourteenth century, the Mongol Empire itself began to disintegrate into smaller khanates, and in 1480 a new Russian state finally emerged, when the Muscovite prince, Ivan III, proclaimed complete independence from the Tatars. However, the new state retained many of the features of the Mongol system, including the supremacy of the state over the individual and the principle of universal compulsory service to the state. Over subsequent centuries, Russia's development was marked by almost continuous expansionism and by arguments over whether to follow a Western, European model of civilisation, or to create a peculiarly Russian one, informed more by the country's geographical position on the frontier between Europe and Asia.[1]

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)

4.2. Despite the attempts of Alexander II to introduce liberal reforms, the Empire remained an autocracy until 1905.[2] Meanwhile, European liberal and revolutionary ideas increasingly threatened the political stability of late nineteenth century Russia, and the last Tsar, Nicholas II, was obliged to introduce elements of parliamentary democracy, with the establishment of a legislative assembly, the Duma, in 1906.[1] However, this and ensuing attempts at reform failed to placate the increasingly restive workers and peasants.[2] In 1917, the pressures of defeat in the First World War and growing social and economic chaos in the country at large brought two revolutions. The first, in March, overthrew the Tsar and established a provisional government, which, however, soon found itself sharing power with the new workers' councils, known as soviets. The second, the Bolshevik Revolution on 7 November, brought the Communists to power in the capital (renamed Petrograd in 1914) and, after three years of civil war, throughout most of the territory of the Russian Empire.[1]

4.3. Led by Vladimir Ulyanov (Lenin) until 1924, the Communists established the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) with Moscow as its capital in 1922, in which Russia (the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic or RSFSR) became just one of eventually fifteen national republics. In the 1920s, genuine attempts were made to encourage other nationalities to develop their own identities and cultures under local leadership, but under Stalin (Iosif Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili) between 1924 and 1953, the accepted dogma was that the Soviet nations would merge, which most understood to mean the subjugation of other nations by the Russian people.[1]

4.4. Russia, together with the other republics of the USSR experienced considerable hardship under Stalin's collectivisation campaign of the early 1930s and the accompanying widespread repression that came to characterise his brutal dictatorship.[3] Under the Nazi-Soviet Treaty of Non-Aggression in 1939, the USSR annexed the Baltic states as well as other territories, and victory over Germany and Japan in the Second World War led to further territorial gains for Russia. Stalin died in 1953 and was succeeded by Nikita Khrushchev, who admitted for the first time that there had been large-scale repressions under Stalin. However, Khrushchev's attempts to reform the Soviet bureaucracy, his erratic plans for economic reform and his conduct of international relations led to his dismissal in 1964. He was replaced by Leonid Brezhnev, who until the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, managed to improve relations with the West, which since the late 1940s had been generally characterised by the intense mutual hostility of the Cold War era. Upon his death in 1982, Brezhnev was succeeded by Yuri Andropov, who undertook an anti-corruption campaign and attempted very cautious economic reforms. He was succeeded upon his death, in 1984, by Konstantin Chernenko, who died in 1985.[2]

4.5. Chernenko's successor as General Secretary was Mikhail Gorbachev, who embarked upon a programme of changes, replacing many leading state and Communist party officials and appointing several reformists to the Politburo.[3] In addition, a policy of *glasnost* (openness) provided for a greater degree of freedom for the mass media and freer discussion of previously censored aspects of Soviet and Russian history, as well as more critical views of contemporary politics. Gorbachev's programme of gradual political and economic reform came to be known as *perestroika* (restructuring). In 1988, Gorbachev announced plans for comprehensive changes to the political system, with the introduction of a two-tier legislature, elected largely by competitive elections. In the subsequent elections to the new USSR Congress of People's Deputies, held in March 1989, many conservative candidates were defeated by reformist politicians, among them Boris Yeltsin, who won an overwhelming victory in the Moscow constituency. In May 1989, the Congress elected Gorbachev to the new post of executive President of the USSR.[2]

4.6. The first stage in the process of achieving Russian sovereignty from all-Union institutions was the election of the RSFSR Congress of People's Deputies in March 1990 by largely free and competitive elections. In May 1990, the Congress elected Yeltsin Chairman of the Supreme Soviet (the permanent working body of the Congress), the highest state post in the RSFSR and a position from which Yeltsin could effectively challenge the authority of Gorbachev and the all-Union institutions which he represented. In June 1990, the Congress adopted a declaration of sovereignty, asserting that the RSFSR was a sovereign republic and that the laws of the RSFSR had primacy over all-Union legislation. In mid-1990, the Russian Communist Party (RCP) was established and the political, cultural and scientific institutions that Russia had lacked began to be established. In June 1991, Yeltsin was elected President of the RSFSR, which gave him the executive power necessary to effect his policies as well as a sufficient popular mandate to challenge the jurisdiction of Gorbachev and the all-Union authorities.[2]

4.7. On 19 August 1991, a self-proclaimed State Committee for the State of Emergency (SCSE), led by the Soviet Vice-President, Gennadii Yanayev, seized power in Moscow, but within three days the attempted coup collapsed. Yeltsin's position was strengthened by his part in bringing about the collapse of the coup, and while the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and RCP were suspended, he asserted control over all-Union bodies, appointing RSFSR ministers to head central institutions. By the end of 1991, the USSR had ceased to exist. On 25 December 1991, Gorbachev resigned as its last President and the Russian Supreme Soviet formally changed the name of the RSFSR to the Russian Federation. Meanwhile, eleven former members of the USSR joined the newly established Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).[2]

The Russian Federation

4.8. During 1992, while Yeltsin accelerated his economic reform programme, there were increasing threats of conflict between the executive and the legislature, and his position remained precarious. In September 1993, Yeltsin suspended the Congress of People's Deputies and the Supreme Soviet on the grounds that they were obstructing both economic and constitutional reform. He also announced elections to a new bicameral Federal Assembly as envisaged in his draft Constitution.[2]

4.9. The Supreme Soviet responded by appointing Aleksandr Rutskoi as President in Yeltsin's place. On 27 September 1993, Rutskoi and his supporters became besieged in the parliament building, while Yeltsin declared a state of emergency. On 4 October, tanks opened fire on the parliament building, forcing the surrender of the rebels. In December 1993, the revised Constitution, increasing presidential power at the expense of the Federal Assembly, was endorsed by referendum held concurrently with elections to the Federal Assembly. No single party or bloc won a decisive majority of seats in the Duma.[2]

4.10. In November 1994, the Russian Security Council agreed to intervene militarily in the separatist republic of Chechnya, which, in November 1991, had declared its independence from Russia. In December 1994, Russian troops were sent in to Chechnya to introduce "constitutional rule". The conflict continued with varied intensity until negotiations achieved a ceasefire and Russian withdrawal in August 1996. However, despite the official cessation of hostilities in Chechnya, atrocities, including abductions and murders, continued and the political status of Chechnya remained unresolved.[2]

4.11. During 1994 and 1995, amidst continuing economic problems, the Chechen crisis, and a growing crime rate, it became clear that Yeltsin had serious health problems. This further undermined his position and in elections to the Duma in December 1995 the Communist Party emerged as the largest single party. Yeltsin proceeded to win the presidential elections, emerging from the second round in July 1996 with 54% of the votes cast. However, political infighting, economic problems, persistent speculation over the health of Yeltsin, and a series of financial scandals during 1997 all threatened to undermine the credibility of the government.[2]

4.12. In August 1999, Vladimir Putin was appointed Prime Minister.[2] Subsequently, a total of 26 parties and blocs contested the Duma elections on 19 December 1999.[31] On 31 December 1999, Yeltsin unexpectedly resigned as President and Putin became acting President until elections in March 2000, which saw him confirmed in the position with 53% of the vote.[1]

4.13. These changes took place in the context of renewed conflict in Chechnya. A 1997 accord had established an uneasy peace there, but in early August 1999 the status quo was broken when Chechen-backed Islamist guerrillas carried out an insurgent raid on neighbouring Dagestan. They withdrew after Russian troops were dispatched to the region, but there were renewed incursions and fighting in September 1999. Subsequent fatal terrorist bombings throughout Russia, allegedly the work of Chechens, led the government to launch a full-scale attack on Chechnya, in an attempt to reassert federal control there. This began in September 1999 and resulted in heavy casualties on both sides and the displacement of a large proportion of the Chechen population. In early February 2000, federal troops recaptured the Chechen capital, Grozny, but the rebels continued to wage guerrilla warfare.[2] The issue of restoring peace and federal order in Chechnya looked certain to remain a long-term problem, as federal forces struggled to impose their control over a severely war-damaged region and a hostile population, while under constant attack from rebel fighters.[1]

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5. STATE STRUCTURES

Constitution

5.1. The current Constitution of the Russian Federation came into force on 12 December 1993, following its approval by the majority of participants in a nationwide plebiscite. It replaced the Constitution originally passed on 12 April 1978 but amended many times after 1990. The new Constitution declares that the Russian Federation (Russia) is a democratic, federative, law-based state, with a republican form of government. State power in the Russian Federation is divided between the legislative, executive and judicial branches, which are independent of one another. Ideological pluralism and a multi-party political system are recognised.**[2]**

5.2. The Constitution also states that the basic human rights and freedoms of the Russian citizen are guaranteed, regardless of sex, race, nationality or religion. It declares the right to life and to freedom and personal inviolability. The principles of freedom of movement, expression and conscience are upheld. Censorship is prohibited. Citizens are guaranteed the right to vote and stand in state and local elections and to participate in referendums. Individuals are to have equal access to state employment, and the establishment of trade unions and public associations is permitted. The Constitution commits the state to protection of motherhood and childhood and to granting social security, state pensions and social benefits. Each person has the right to housing. Health care and education are free of charge. Basic general education is compulsory. Citizens are guaranteed the right to receive qualified legal assistance. Payment of statutory taxes and levies is obligatory, as is military service.**[2]**

Citizenship

5.3. Matters relating to citizenship in the Russian Federation are governed by the new law on citizenship, which was adopted by the Duma on 19 April 2002 and came into force on 1 July 2002.**[16]** Under the previous law, all citizens of the former USSR who were permanently resident in Russia on the day the Citizenship Act took effect (6 February 1992) were considered Russian citizens, apart from those who, within a year of that date, declared that they did not wish to become Russian citizens (Article 13.1).**[17]**

5.4. Under the new law, a child whose parents or single parent at the time of birth are Russian citizens is a Russian citizen, irrespective of the place of birth (Article 12.1a). If one of the parents of a child at the time of birth is Russian and the other stateless, the child is a Russian citizen, irrespective of the place of birth (Article 12.1b). A child, one of whose parents is a Russian citizen and the other a citizen of another country, would be considered a Russian citizen provided the child is born on the territory of the Russian Federation or would otherwise become stateless (Article 12.1c). A child of stateless parents or those with citizenship of other states is considered a Russian citizen if those

states do not extend citizenship to the child, provided the child is born on the territory of the Russian Federation (Article 12.1d).[16]

5.5. On 31 December 2000, the possibility for former USSR citizens (who resided on the territory of the USSR and arrived for permanent residence in the Russian Federation after 6 February 1992) of obtaining Russian citizenship through the simplified procedure, provided for under Article 18(d) of the 1992 Act ceased to be available. The Presidential Commission on Citizenship stated that those holding a USSR passport, who had not acquired the citizenship of any country before this deadline, would, as of 1 January 2001, be considered as stateless persons. As a consequence, they would have to apply for Russian citizenship according to the provision of the law applicable to stateless persons. From 1 January 2001, all citizens of any former USSR country had to apply according to the rules for foreign citizens, as the simplified procedure for acquiring Russian citizenship no longer applied.[13c]

5.6. Under the new law, certain categories of former USSR citizens are once again accorded special privileges. As under the previous law, any adult who is not a Russian citizen, irrespective of their origin, can apply for Russian citizenship. However, under the new law, the period of continuous residence in Russia required for foreigners (including former Soviet citizens, except for those covered by Article 13.2 and 14.1b - see below and paragraph following) to qualify for citizenship was increased from three years to five (continuous residence meaning no more than three months absence in a year), which must now be proved by a valid residency permit to cover that period (Article 13.1a). They must also have a command of the Russian language; undertake to observe the Constitution and legislation of the Russian Federation; have a legal source of means of subsistence; have renounced citizenship of any foreign state unless this is impossible due to circumstances outside the person's control or an international treaty of the Russian Federation provides otherwise (Article 13.1b-e). Exempted from the five-year continuous residence requirement are those born on the territory of the Russian Federation who were USSR citizens in the past; those married to Russian citizens for at least three years; those who lack dispositive capacity and who have an adult son or daughter who is a Russian citizen; those with significant achievements or professional skills that Russia needs; and those who have refugee status. Such people need only have resided in Russia for one year to apply for citizenship (Article 13.2).[16]

5.7. Exempted from any residence requirement are persons who are eligible to apply for citizenship in a "simplified manner" under Article 14, including those who had USSR citizenship, resided and reside in former USSR states, and have not become citizens of those states thus remaining stateless (Article 14.1b). Such persons may apply for Russian citizenship at a Russian diplomatic mission or consular institution outside the Russian Federation (Article 31.f), and consideration may take up to six months after all the necessary supporting documentation has been obtained (Article 35.4).[16]

5.8. Applications for citizenship are denied to the following persons: those who lack a legal source of means of subsistence at the date of application for citizenship or during the five-year term of their uninterrupted stay in the Russian Federation; those who advocate violent political change in the Russian Federation; those who were evicted from the Russian Federation under a federal law during the five-year term preceding the

date of their citizenship application; those who have used forged documents or intentionally provided false information; those who undergo military service, or service with the security or law-enforcement bodies of a foreign state, unless an international treaty of the Russian Federation provides otherwise; and those who have been criminally prosecuted or convicted of acts prosecuted under Russian laws (Article 16).[16]

Political System

5.9. The 1993 Constitution established a governmental structure with a strong head of state (president), a government headed by a prime minister, and a bicameral legislature (Federal Assembly), consisting of the State Duma (lower house) and the Federation Council (upper house). The Duma has a strong pro-presidential centre that puts a majority within reach of almost all presidential priorities. Nonetheless, the Duma remains an independent institution representing powerful interests and individuals. The Constitution provides citizens with the right to change their government, and citizens exercise this right in practice. Both the President (in March 2000) and the Duma (in December 1999) were selected in competitive elections, with a broad range of political parties and movements contesting offices. Both elections were judged by international observers to be largely free and fair, although pre-election manipulation of the media was a problem in both cases. President Vladimir Putin was elected in March 2000, and Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov took office in May 2000. Competitive elections for various regional and local offices were held during 2002, and observers generally viewed these elections as free and fair.[14a]

5.10. Of the 21 regions that have drawn up their own Constitutions, 19 infringe the Federal Constitution.[27] Conflicts between federal and local laws [13a] can have far reaching consequences for the functioning of the rule of law,[7] including the application and respect of principles embodied in international instruments ratified by Russia, for two main reasons. First, because those regions which are in a position of political and/or economical strength vis-à-vis the central government, do not always feel obliged to comply with the federal law, even in instances when the Constitutional Court expressly declares regional laws and rules unconstitutional. Secondly, the functioning of the principle of dual subordination of local governments' civil servants, which requires that the latter be under the hierarchical authority of both their federal ministry and the local executive, tends to give predominance to the local bodies. It results that civil servants from local law enforcement agencies will in practice apply local normative acts, even if those are in violation of federal laws.[13c]

5.11. President Putin has sought to reassert the control of the centre over Russia's unruly regions, which include 21 ethnically-based republics.[8a] In 2001, he divided Russia's 89 constituent regions and republics into seven federal districts, each with a presidential representative, whose task is to co-ordinate federal and regional laws and restore a measure of central control.[1]

Judiciary

5.12. The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary, but while it is undergoing reforms and there are increasing signs of independence, the judiciary does not yet act as an effective counterweight to other branches of government. The judiciary is divided into three branches: the courts of general jurisdiction, subordinated to the Supreme Court; the arbitration court system, under the High Court of Arbitration; and the Constitutional Court. The Constitution provides for the right to a fair trial, but this right is restricted in practice.[14a]

5.13. Judges remain subject to some influence from the executive, military and security forces, especially in high profile or political cases. The judiciary also lacks resources and is subject to corruption. Low salaries and lack of prestige make it difficult to attract talented new judges and contribute to the vulnerability of existing judges to bribery and corruption. Furthermore, defence lawyers are increasingly the targets of police harassment, including beatings and arrests. Professional associations at both the local and federal levels report abuses throughout the country and charge that police are trying both to intimidate defence lawyers and to cover up their own criminal activities.[14a]

5.14. The government did however make substantial progress during 2002 with implementation of constitutional provisions for due process and fair and timely trial. A new Criminal Procedures Code that took effect in July 2002 for the first time permitted the application of existing Constitutional provisions that individuals could be arrested, taken into custody, or detained, only upon a judicial decision. Early indications were that the changes were having an effect on the behaviour of police, prosecutors, and the judicial system. Human rights advocates reported that the strict new limits on time held in police custody without access to family or lawyers, and the stricter standards for opening cases, have discouraged abuse of suspects by police as well. Furthermore, the new Law on the Status of Judges, approved in December 2001, strives to eliminate subjectivity in the selection of judges, to facilitate access to the judicial profession by minimising corruption in the appointment process, and to improve the accountability of judges by subjecting them to disciplinary and administrative liability and by introducing age limits. In addition, judicial training was mandated and strengthened during 2002.[14a]

Military Service

5.15. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, with its armed forces of more than 4 million, the Russian army has been reduced[10g] to about 1.2 million persons.[15] Persons subjected to the draft can be divided into two groups: draftees and reservists. All draftees, after six months of serving in the army, can be sent to areas of armed conflict. Reservists consist of reservist officers (those who have completed the military academy) and reservist soldiers (those who have completed their military service). A presidential decree, adopted on 10 April 2000, provides for the possibility of mobilising 15,000 reservist officers, who are currently on the reserve list; another, adopted on 27 January 2000, provides for the possibility of mobilising reservist

soldiers for two months of military training, before sending them to areas of armed conflict. The age limit for reservists to be mobilised to serve in areas of armed conflict is 50 years.**[13c]** Meanwhile, military service is compulsory for male citizens of between 18 and 27 years of age and lasts for two years, one year in the case of university and college graduates. Certain categories of women, for example the medically qualified, are also liable for military service, although in practice there have been no cases of women being called up. Postponement may be allowed for students, and exemption for medical or domestic reasons. Those with criminal records, members of the police or security forces, individuals working abroad, university or college graduates working for the state or graduate programmes, and teachers or doctors working in small villages may also be granted exemption. The armed forces have difficulty in getting the requisite number of recruits. Only about 20% of liable conscripts are actually enlisted, while the remaining 80% are granted either postponement or exemption, or else have not responded to call-up.**[15]**

5.16. The Constitution provides for the right to alternative civilian service, and in July 2002 a new law, due to come into effect on 1 January 2004, made possible alternative service on conscientious grounds.**[36]** This will allow those eligible for military service to apply for alternative service if the former conflicts with their views or religion, or if they belong to a small indigenous ethnic group. Military registration offices have the right to refuse such applications if, for example, the application, which must be made at least six months prior to conscription, is late; if there has been a recurring failure to appear for registration or attempts to evade military service in the past; or if the application is judged to be groundless. Those applicants who are successful will generally be expected to undertake alternative service outside the regions where they live.**[33]** They may undertake alternative service in various welfare, medical or social organisations, as well as in military units as civil personnel. For those serving in military units, the length of alternative service required is 36 months if they do not have a higher education and 18 months if they do. For those serving in civil organisations, the length of alternative service required is 42 months if they do not have a higher education and 21 months if they do.**[36]** The long absence of a law on alternative service has meant that young men have risked imprisonment for refusing military service on conscientious grounds.**[10g]** It is estimated that 1,500 requests for alternative service are made annually.**[10d]** Even though there was, until recently, no legal system in place regarding alternative service, there were instances where cases were brought to court invoking the Constitution. However, while some were accepted, the majority lost their cases, and were convicted and sentenced to up to seven years' imprisonment.**[5b]** There are believed to be thousands of conscripts who are unaware of their constitutional right to conscientious objection.**[15]**

5.17. Draft evasion is widespread and punishable by one to three years' imprisonment, five years in aggravated circumstances.**[15]** Sources suggest that there are around 20 grounds for legal deferment, which result in high numbers of potential recruits delaying conscription.**[10g]** Many families, fearful of brutality in the ranks, pay huge illegal bribes to avoid conscription of their sons, sometimes paying for forged medical certificates alleging fatal or incapacitating diseases, while other potential conscripts resort to self-injury. Such desperation is encouraged by the army's notorious reputation for bullying, including torture and rape, particularly of new conscripts.**[22]**

5.18. Military desertion is punishable by three to seven years' imprisonment, five to seven years or execution in wartime. Like draft evasion, military desertion is widespread and can be attributed to bad conditions and human rights abuses in the armed forces, as well as to a fear of being sent to conflict zones such as Chechnya. Refusing to bear arms in combat or quitting from the battlefield without permission is punishable by fifteen years' imprisonment or execution.**[15]** The Criminal Code also criminalises acts such as "incitement for desertion from military service and providing refuge to a deserter," punishable by up to five years' imprisonment.**[5b]** Estimates indicate that there are as many as 1,500 deserters in Moscow alone, while the Soldiers' Mothers Committee says there are 12,000 nationwide.**[13c]** During the conflict in Chechnya between 1994 and 1996, many conscripts deserted their units, sometimes on conscientious grounds, and went into hiding either to avoid further participation in the fighting or to avoid being sent to Chechnya. At that time, there were reports of mass extrajudicial executions of groups of deserters by the Russian military authorities.**[5b]**

5.19. On 12 March 1997, the Duma declared an amnesty for all those who committed "socially dangerous acts connected with the Chechen conflict", which was said to apply to Russian soldiers who deserted or those who evaded conscription during the conflict, before 24 June 1998, and who gave themselves up no later than six months after that date.**[13c]** However, the amnesty excluded persons charged with treason, espionage and terrorism, which raised concern over the position of servicemen who evaded or deserted military service during the conflict.**[5b]** More recently, on 13 December 1999, the Duma adopted a further amnesty for those who committed criminal offences on the territories of Chechnya, Ingushetia, North Ossetia-Alania and the Stavropol Region, during the period of 1 August 1999 until 16 December 1999, and for those who stopped armed resistance and voluntarily delivered arms. The amnesty is not applicable to foreigners, stateless persons, those who have been recognised as extremely dangerous recidivists and those who are accused of dangerous crimes such as murder, severe injury, kidnapping, rape, robbery, terrorism, or theft of weapons. However, in spite of the declaration of the amnesty, the Soldiers' Mothers Committee claims that many Russian soldiers released in Chechnya are still being held in Russia under criminal investigation for desertion, and that some are being detained in their military units on charges of desertion.**[13c]**

5.20. Various abuses against military servicemen continue. Such abuses include the practice of "dedovshchina," which involves the violent, sometimes fatal, bullying of new junior military recruits, and often the extortion of money or material goods in the face of the threat of increased bullying or actual beatings. This type of treatment has resulted in permanent injuries and deaths among servicemen, and soldiers are reluctant to report bullying to officers due to fear of reprisals, since officers sometimes tolerate or even encourage such behaviour as a means of controlling their units. There are reports that officers sometimes use beatings to discipline soldiers whom they judge to be inattentive to their duties, in addition to numerous reports of other physical violence and humiliation of junior conscripts. Other reported abuses of armed forces personnel include the practice by officers and sergeants of "selling" soldiers to others for slave labour or to other officers who have a military need for personnel, often linked to units in the northern Caucasus military district. The practice of bullying is a serious problem in Chechnya, particularly where contract soldiers and conscripts serve

together. Meanwhile, degrading and substandard living conditions persist throughout the military.[14a]

5.21. One positive factor is that the Main Military Procurator's Office continues to co-operate with the Union of Soldiers' Mothers Committee to investigate allegations of abuse.[10e] However, the Union of Soldiers' Mothers Committee believes that the majority of abuses are not reported due to fear of reprisals, indifference of commanders, and deliberate efforts to cover up such activity. Meanwhile, the military leadership has made only superficial efforts to implement substantive reforms in training, education, and administration programmes within units to combat abuse, at least partly due to lack of funding and the leadership's preoccupation with urgent re-organisational issues and the conflict in Chechnya.[14a] However, President Putin, while admitting the prevalence of serious shortcomings in the armed forces, has made it clear since becoming president that far-reaching military reform is one of his priorities.[26]

Internal Security

5.22. The Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD), the Federal Security Service (FSB), the Procuracy, and the Federal Tax Police are responsible for law enforcement at all levels of government throughout the Russian Federation. The FSB has broad law enforcement functions, including fighting crime and corruption, in addition to its core responsibilities of security, counter-intelligence and counter-terrorism. The FSB operates with only limited oversight by the Procuracy and the courts. The military's primary mission is national defence, although it has been employed in local conflicts and is available to control civil disturbances. Internal security threats in parts of the Russian Federation have increasingly been dealt with by militarised elements of the security services.[14a]

5.23. Since the demise of the Soviet system, the northern Caucasus has emerged as the most volatile region of the Russian Federation. The area is rife with territorial and border disputes involving many of the more than sixty distinct national, ethnic and religious groups. The Caucasus has experienced some major conflicts, creating more than two million refugees and internally displaced persons. While most of the conflicts are relatively quiescent, none of them appears close to finding a lasting solution.[13c]

5.24. Members of the security forces, particularly within the internal affairs apparatus, are responsible for numerous and serious human rights abuses. Arbitrary arrest and detention, while significantly reduced by the new Code of Criminal Procedure, remain problems, as does police corruption. Government agencies, such as the Ministry of Internal Affairs, have begun to educate officers about safeguarding human rights during law enforcement activities through training provided by foreign governments, but the security forces remain largely unreformed. The government has prosecuted some perpetrators of abuses, but many officials are not held accountable for their actions.[14a]

Legal Rights/Detention

5.25. Arbitrary arrest and detention remain problems, but there has been progress towards effective judicial oversight in arrests and detentions. A new Criminal Procedure Code became effective in July 2002, with some provisions to be implemented in 2003. The new Code stipulates that if the police have probable cause to believe that a suspect has committed a crime, or that the suspect is an imminent threat to others, they may detain him for not more than 24 hours. During that time, they must notify the procurator, who then has 24 hours to confirm the charge or release the suspect. The Code also requires that the Procuracy obtain a judicial order for arrest, search or seizure. It provides that relatives are to be notified of a suspect's arrest within 12 hours and that suspects have access to prompt counsel prior to the first questioning. Pretrial detention for crimes carrying a sentence of less than 3 years is prohibited unless the defendant poses a demonstrable flight risk, and detention during trial is limited to 6 months, except where particularly grave crimes are involved.[14a]

5.26. The new Criminal Procedure Code specifies that within 2 months of a suspect's arrest police should complete their investigation and transfer the file to the procurator for arraignment. A procurator may request the court to extend the period of criminal investigation to 6 months in "complex" cases with the authorisation of a judge. With the personal approval of the Procurator General, that period may be extended by up to 18 months. Juveniles may be detained only in cases of grave crimes. The new Criminal Procedure Code includes a formal procedure for pleading guilty and provides incentives such as shorter sentences as well as shorter trials.[14a]

5.27. Lengthy pretrial detention remains a serious problem, but the introduction of the new Criminal Procedure Code has led to significant reductions in time spent in detention for new detainees. However, even after July 2002, when the new Code became effective, there were credible reports that police continued abuses. There were reports from throughout the country that police detained persons without observing mandated procedures and failed to issue receipts for confiscated property. There were also reports that security forces regularly continued to single out persons from the Caucasus for document checks, detention, and the extortion of bribes. Some local authorities have taken advantage of the system's procedural weaknesses to arrest people on false pretexts for expressing views critical of the government.[14a]

Prisons

5.28. Prison conditions remain extremely harsh and frequently life threatening. In recent years, between 10,000 and 11,000 detainees and prisoners were believed to have died annually in penitentiary facilities, although these numbers were estimated to be somewhat lower in 2002. Some die due to mistreatment, but most as a result of poor sanitary conditions or lack of medical care. Violence among inmates, including beatings and rape, is common. Law enforcement and correctional officials frequently use torture to coerce confessions, and prisons are often extremely overcrowded. However, recent mass amnesties have offered immediate relief, and longer-term and more systemic measures to reduce the size of the prison population have also been

taken. These include the use of alternative sentencing in some regions and revisions of both the Criminal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure which eliminate incarceration as a penalty for a large number of less serious offences. By law, the authorities must provide inmates with adequate space, food and medical attention, and with the dramatic decrease in prison populations these standards have increasingly been met.[14a]

5.29. There are five basic forms of custody in the criminal justice system: SIZOs hold those awaiting the completion of criminal investigation, trial, sentencing or appeal. Correctional labour colonies (ITKs) hold the bulk of convicts. "Prisons" are penitentiary institutions for those who repeatedly violate the rules in effect in the ITKs. Educational labour colonies for juveniles (VTKs) are prisons for juveniles of 14 to 20 years of age, where conditions are significantly better than in ITKs, but where torture, beatings and rape still occur. Finally, there are the police detention centres, where conditions vary considerably but are generally harsh. In most cases, detainees lack bedding, places to sleep, running water, toilets, showers, and adequate nutrition.[14a]

Medical Services

5.30. The Russian Federation provides a basic health service for all its citizens. All health care was formerly financed directly by the state, but in 1993 a health insurance scheme, the Medical Insurance Fund, was introduced, with payment by employers rather than by the state. Difficulties experienced by the health care system have been reflected in a serious deterioration in the health of the population. The reasons cited for this include unsatisfactory environmental conditions, a decline in immunity, a shortage of vitamins and medicines, and insufficient inoculations. Meanwhile, average life expectancy for males decreased from 64 years in 1990[1] to 58 years in 1999, and the ongoing decline of Russia's population figures has caused alarm. Factors contributing to this decline include high rates of suicide, alcoholism, abortion and infant mortality. Russia has one of the highest abortion rates in the world, with 66 for every 100 pregnancies.[21]

Educational System

5.31. All educational institutions were state-owned under Soviet rule, but a wide range of private schools and colleges were introduced in the early 1990s. Education is compulsory for nine years, between the ages of six and fifteen years. State education is generally provided free of charge, although in 1992 some higher education establishments began charging tuition fees. Students in higher education receive a small stipend from the state. The level of education is relatively high.[2] Boys and girls are treated equally in the school system. While federal law provides for education for all children in the country, regional authorities frequently deny school access to the children of unregistered persons, asylum seekers and migrants, because they lack residential registration.[14a]

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6.A. HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES

Overview

6.1. While the human rights situation in Russia has improved significantly since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, some concerns remain.**[8a]** During 2002, long-standing problems of police torture, poor prison conditions, and significant restrictions on freedom of the media, religion and movement continued,**[14a]** together with other serious abuses in Chechnya.**[9a]** As a result of the geographical scale of the country and the cultural, economic, social and political differences existing within the Russian Federation, as well as the conflicts often still existing between federal and regional laws, it is difficult to identify clear categories of people who are more likely than others to be at risk of harassment or persecution, particularly as the situation may vary quite substantially from one region to another.**[13c]**

6.2. Citizens can file appeals to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in Strasbourg about alleged human rights violations that occurred after May 1998. Complainants no longer need to exhaust all appeals in Russian courts before they can turn to the European Court but must have exhausted "effective and ordinary" appeals. By October 2001, the ECHR had received more than 7,000 complaints from Russia, including dozens from Chechnya. However, many applications were rejected at the first stage of proceedings as being clearly incompatible with the formal requirements of the European Convention. Some cases were put on the Court's calendar for fuller consideration. Meanwhile, government human rights institutions lack independence, but some of them make efforts to promote human rights. The Office of the Russian Federation Human Rights Ombudsman, headed by Ombudsman Oleg Mironov, comments on a broad range on human rights issues. Mironov's office has more than 150 employees and has several specialised sections responsible for investigating complaints of human rights abuses, including a section on religious freedom and a section on human rights education. In addition, many domestic and international human rights groups operate freely, although some have experienced harassment from local officials. Many domestic and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) continue their work in Chechnya despite the threats posed by the ongoing military conflict. Within Chechnya, some international NGOs maintain small branch offices staffed by local employees, but all international NGOs have their bases outside of Chechnya.**[14a]**

6.3. While the Constitution prohibits torture, violence, and other brutal or humiliating treatment or punishment, there are credible reports that law enforcement personnel regularly use torture to coerce confessions from suspects and that the government does not hold most of them accountable for these actions. Human rights groups describe the practice of torture as widespread and have documented numerous cases in which law enforcement and correctional officials tortured and beat detainees and suspects.**[14a]** In a 1997 report, Amnesty International refers to several methods of torture used by law enforcement officials, either to gain confessions or simply to control or abuse prisoners.**[5c]** Methods include beatings, asphyxiation using gas masks or bags, electric shocks and suspension by the wrists.**[14a]** Amnesty International also

refers to the "press-camera" method, whereby violent prisoners are co-opted by guards and used to control or punish other prisoners. The co-opted prisoners are permitted to torture prisoners (sometimes to gain confessions) or deal with "difficult" prisoners. Another method of torture used is known as the "crucifixion of Christ" and involves the victim being secured in a spread-eagle position to either a metal cot or prison bars, to which powerful electric shocks are applied.[5c] Allegations of torture are difficult to substantiate because of lack of access by medical professionals and because the techniques used often leave few or no permanent physical traces. Torture is not defined in the law or the Criminal Code, and is only mentioned in the Constitution. As a result, it is difficult to charge the perpetrators. The only accusation that could be brought against the police is that they exceeded their authority or committed a simple assault.[14a]

Chechnya

6.4. In response to international criticism of the human rights situation in Chechnya, where the conflict between government forces and separatist elements has continued since September 1999, several government organisations were established to examine alleged human rights violations there. The office of Vladimir Kalamonov (replaced in July 2002 by Abdul-Khakim Sultygov), the Special Presidential Representative for Human Rights in Chechnya, was established, but has a limited mandate. Meanwhile, the government has not complied with the 2001 resolution of the UN Commission on Human Rights, calling for a broad-based, independent commission of inquiry to investigate alleged human rights violations and breaches of international humanitarian law in Chechnya.[14a] The conflict has continued with steady casualties on both sides. Russian forces now fully occupy Chechnya, but they are unable to prevent Chechen fighters from mounting attacks throughout the republic. Troop withdrawals have been put on hold because of the unstable security situation. Meanwhile, serious human rights abuses by both sides have continued.[8a]

6.5. There have been credible reports of serious violations by Russia's forces in Chechnya,[5a] including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detention, torture, rape, looting and extortion. They have also been accused of indiscriminate force in areas of significant civilian populations, resulting in numerous deaths, the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people and massive destruction of housing, commercial and administrative buildings, as well as the breakdown of gas and water supply facilities and other types of infrastructure. Representatives of international organisations and NGOs who visited Chechnya have reported little evidence of federal assistance for rebuilding war-torn areas. Meanwhile, only a fraction of reported abuses have been investigated.[14a]

6.6. There are also credible reports of Chechen rebels torturing and killing captured Russian troops, killing civilians and officials loyal to the federal government as well as those who would not assist them, using civilians as human shields, forcing civilians to build fortifications, preventing civilians from fleeing Chechnya, provoking Russian counterattacks on civilian areas, and beating or firing on villagers when they protested. Some rebel commanders are believed to have resorted to drug

smuggling, kidnapping and ransom to raise funds. As a result, it is often difficult to make a distinction between rebel units and simple criminal gangs. Kidnapping is frequently used by criminal groups in the northern Caucasus, some of which may have links to elements of the separatist forces. The main motivation appears to be ransom, although some cases have political or religious overtones. Many of the hostages are being held in Chechnya or Dagestan, and some, including religious figures, have been killed. There have also been reports of government involvement in politically motivated disappearances in Chechnya. In September 2001, Kalamonov's office stated that it had received complaints of 959 disappearances.[14a]

Freedom of Speech and the Media

6.7. The Constitution provides for freedom of speech and of the press, and numerous national and regional media reflect a multitude of opinions.[14a] However, government pressure on the media persists[11], resulting in numerous infringements of these rights. The government has exerted pressure on journalists, particularly those who reported on corruption or criticised officials, by: selectively denying journalists access to information and filming opportunities; withholding financial support from government media operations that exercised independent editorial judgment; attempting to influence the appointment of senior editors at regional and local newspapers and broadcast media organisations; removing reporters from their jobs; bringing libel suits against journalists; and intimidating and harassing journalists. An estimated several hundred lawsuits and other legal actions were brought by the government against journalists and journalistic organisations during 2001, the majority of them in response to unfavourable coverage of government policy or operations, and the high government success rate in such cases reinforced the tendency among journalists towards self-censorship.[14a]

6.8. Faced with continuing financial difficulties and increased pressure from the government and large, private companies with reported links to the government, many media organisations saw their autonomy weaken during 2002. The financial dependence of most major media organisations on the government, or one or more of several major financial-industrial groups, continues to undermine editorial independence and journalistic integrity in both the print and broadcast media. Not infrequently, journalists, in particular those who pursued investigative stories on corruption and organised crime, have been attacked physically and even murdered.[14a]

Freedom of Assembly and Association

6.9. The government generally respects freedom of assembly, although at times this right is restricted at the local level. Organisations must obtain permits in order to hold public meetings, and the application process must begin between five and ten days before the scheduled event. Permits to demonstrate have been readily granted to both opponents and supporters of the government, although some groups have been either denied permission to assemble, or once Ministry of Justice officials issued permission, local officials have withdrawn it. The Constitution also provides for

freedom of association and the government generally respects this right in practice. Public organisations must register their bylaws and the names of their leaders with the Ministry of Justice.[14a]

Freedom of Religion

6.10. The Constitution provides for freedom of religion,[6] the equality of all religions before the law and the separation of church and state, but in practice the government does not always respect the provision for equality of religions, and local authorities have imposed restrictions on some groups. The 1997 law regulating religious practice limits the rights, activities, and status of religious "groups" existing in the country for less than 15 years and requires that religious groups exist for 15 years before they can qualify for "organisation" status, which conveys juridical status. All religious organisations were required to register or reregister by the end of 2000 or face liquidation (deprivation of juridical status). Groups that were unregistered previously, including groups new to the country, were severely hindered in their ability to practice their faith.[14a]

6.11. According to the Ministry of Justice, by January 2001 20,215 religious organisations were either reregistered or registered anew, compared with approximately 16,000 in 1997. Religious freedom advocates accept these figures as essentially accurate.[14b] Treatment of religious organisations, particularly minority denominations, varies widely in the regions, depending on the attitude of local offices of the Ministry of Justice. In some areas, such as Moscow, local authorities have prevented minority religious denominations from reregistering as local religious organisations, as required by law, subjecting them to campaigns of legal harassment. Many religious groups continue to contest administrative actions against them in the courts. While such cases are often successful in court, administrative authorities are at times unwilling to enforce court decisions.[14a]

6.12. Contradictions between federal and local law in some regions and varying interpretations of the law give some regional officials pretexts to restrict the activities of religious minorities. Discriminatory practices at the local level are attributable to the relatively greater susceptibility of local governments to lobbying by majority religions, as well as to discriminatory attitudes that are widely held in society. During 2002, the government was more active in preventing or reversing discriminatory actions taken at the local level, by more actively disseminating information to the regions and, when necessary, reprimanding the officials at fault. President Putin also has sought stricter and more consistent application of federal laws in the many regions of the country. Working through the Procuracy, the Ministry of Justice, the Presidential Administration, and the courts, the government has attempted to persuade the regions to bring their laws into conformance with federal laws and with the Constitution.[14a]

6.13. Several groups continue to face discrimination in their ability to rent premises and conduct group activities. There are reports that some local governments have prevented religious groups from using venues suitable for large gatherings and from acquiring property for religious uses.[14a] The denial of access to buildings has been

cited as the most widespread violation of religious freedom.[6] Property disputes are among the most frequent complaints cited by religious groups, although some synagogues, churches and mosques have been returned to communities to be used for religious services. Members of individual minority religions continue to encounter prejudice and societal discrimination, and in some cases violence. The authorities usually investigate incidents of vandalism and violence, but arrests of suspects are extremely infrequent and convictions are rare. In addition, religious figures have been kidnapped and killed in Chechnya.[14a]

Christianity

6.14. The **Russian Orthodox Church** is the dominant religious denomination in the Russian Federation, with an estimated 75 million adherents.[1] However, the Russian Orthodox Church was not without its own problems during the Soviet era,[3] and, like other Churches in Russia, is seeking to rebuild religious life after years of persecution, totalitarian atheism and indoctrination. Over 200,000 Russian Orthodox priests, monks and nuns were killed in the Communist purges of the 1920s and 1930s. Most of the priests were shot or hanged, while others were crucified on their church doors.[23] Between 1988 and 2001, more than 12,000 churches were established or returned to religious use, and by 2001, there were 128 dioceses, some 19,000 Orthodox communities and 480 monasteries. There were also five theological academies and 26 seminaries. The Church's jurisdiction is challenged by the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, which was established in 1921 and rejects the hierarchy of the Moscow Patriarchate.[1]

6.15. In its preamble, the 1997 law on religion recognises the "special contribution of Orthodoxy" to Russia's spirituality and culture.[14a] It is estimated that 5% of Russians regard themselves as serious Orthodox believers,[20] and many religious minority groups have complained of what they believe is a confluence between the Russian Orthodox Church and the state. Public statements by some government officials and anecdotal evidence from religious minority groups suggest that the Russian Orthodox Church in some cases may enjoy a status that approaches official. The Church has entered into a number of agreements with government ministries that have raised the question of favoritism. For example, the Russian Orthodox Church appears to have had greater success in reclaiming pre-revolutionary property than other groups. Also, many religious workers believe that the Russian Orthodox Church has played a role in the cancellation of visas held by foreign religious workers.[14a]

6.16. Although the Russian Orthodox Church is the dominant church in Russia, there are several independent Orthodox Churches. The **Old Believers** broke away from the Russian Orthodox Church in the late seventeenth century, in protest against the changes to the liturgy. Some Old Believers have an ordained priesthood, while others function without clergy. Despite concessions made to the Old Believers by Tsar Peter III, they suffered persecution from both the Tsarist and Communist authorities. They are thought to number several million. The **Church of True Orthodox Believers (or Catacomb Church)**, which rejected the Russian Orthodox Church's accommodation with the Soviet authorities, was driven underground in 1927. After religious restrictions were eased in the early 1990s, it surfaced and was formally registered as a Church in February 1996. Another influential Orthodox community is the **Free Orthodox Church**,

whose headquarters are in Suzdal and whose spiritual leader is Archbishop Valentin. Like those of the Church of True Orthodox Believers, the members of the Free Orthodox Church are few in number, but active.[8b]

6.17. There are an estimated 300,000 **Roman Catholics** in European Russia and a further 1,050,200 in Siberia.[1] During the Soviet era, most of the millions of Roman Catholics were to be found in the Baltic states and Ukraine.[8b] Between 1917 and the late 1930s, the Catholic Church in Russia lost around 1,000 priests and most of its 614 churches. In European Russia, there are now 80 priests serving 86 parishes, and there are 18 churches and 21 small chapels currently available to the Catholic community for worship. In Asian Russia, there are 67 priests serving 80 registered parishes.[23] Catholics continue to encounter prejudice and societal discrimination, and the level of harassment increased during 2002.[14a] Following the upgrading of the Catholic Church's four apostolic administrative divisions in Russia to the status of dioceses in February 2002, claims emerged of a campaign led by the Russian Orthodox Church against the Catholic community, resulting in the expulsion from or denial of entry to Russia of five Catholic priests during that year. At the same time, Catholics reported constant harassment by government officials and Orthodox clergy, while the building of churches has been fraught with problems.[20] They have also faced sharp rent increases on land where they once owned churches that were confiscated and in certain cases demolished by the Soviet regime.[6]

6.18. During the Communist era, the **All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians/Baptists** was officially registered and recognised. A parallel group, the **Council of the Evangelical Christian/Baptist Churches**, founded in 1965, functioned underground. Other Protestants traditionally resident in Russia were **Lutherans**, **Mennonites** and **Seventh Day Adventists**. In June 1995, members of the German Lutheran Community in Perm, mainly descendants of Germans invited to work in the Demidov factories during the reign of Peter the Great, were allowed to re-open their church after a gap of nearly sixty years. Similarly, the **Anglican** Church of St Andrew in Moscow, which like other places of worship was confiscated in the early years of the Soviet Union, was returned for religious worship in 1996. There are also the **Molokans**, a Christian sect that originated in Russia in the late eighteenth century and whose teaching is based on a spiritual interpretation of selected biblical texts. Their numbers have declined dramatically, but some active groups remain, especially in the Transcaucasus.[8b]

Judaism

6.19. At the beginning of the twentieth century, approximately half of the world's Jews lived in the Russian Empire. Although many Jews emigrated from the USSR in the 1970s and 1980s, there is still a significant Jewish population in Russia (400,000 at the end of 1998), most of whom live in the larger cities.[1] Over 90% of Russian Jews are Ashkenaz, but there are communities of Sephardic Jews in Dagestan and other parts of the Caucasus.[8b] In addition, there are a small number of Jews in the Jewish Autonomous Oblast in the Far East of the Russian Federation.[1]

6.20. Although Jewish leaders have acknowledged publicly that the state-sponsored anti-Semitism of the Soviet era no longer exists, Jews continue to face prejudice, societal discrimination and some acts of violence. Anti-Semitic leaflets,

graffiti and articles continue to appear in some regions. Vandalism of synagogues, Jewish cemeteries and memorials also continues.[14a] While anti-Semitic publications are against the law in Russia, critics have claimed that legislation designed to protect minority rights has not been strictly enforced, and that the police have failed to respond adequately to reports of anti-Semitic actions.[10f]

6.21. The 1990s saw a Jewish revival in Russia, as Jewish communities worked to re-establish religious, social and cultural life, and to provide for the education and welfare of their people. The focal point of the Jewish renaissance has been Moscow, where almost all international Jewish organisations, numbering over 100, are represented, and where numerous religious, academic and social events and programmes have been organised, including Jewish schools, kindergartens and institutes of higher education. The Jewish cultural, religious and social revival has been accompanied by a political renaissance: there were more Jews in high government positions in 1997 than there had been since 1917.[10f]

6.22. In January 1996, there was warm official support for the Russian Jewish Congress, a non-political public organisation designed to consolidate the Jewish community in Russia, when the Mayor of Moscow stated that Jews must be given a standard of living that would encourage them to stay in Russia, regretted that Moscow was losing some of its best intellects through Jewish emigration, and expressed a desire for co-operation between his administration and the Congress.[8b] In July 2000, Russia's Chief Rabbi, Berel Lazar, stated that the Jewish community experiences no more anti-Semitism there than in any other East European nation and much less than in some countries. He stated further that, "We do not feel any negative attitude on the part of the state to the Jewish people and our religion," that Russia possesses the conditions for the development of all religions, and that the Russian leadership, the people, and other religions alike, have a good attitude towards the Jewish people.[28]

Islam

6.23. Like other religious communities, Muslims were persecuted during the Soviet period,[3] when half of all Muslim places of worship were destroyed. However, Islam is currently the second largest faith in Russia and, like the Russian Orthodox Church, is accepted as one of the country's traditional religions. In 1997, there were estimated to be between 15 and 22 million Muslims in Russia. Although 90% of Russian Muslims are Sunni, there is a Shi'a minority in the northern Caucasus, especially in Dagestan.[8b] The main concentrations of Muslims in the Russian Federation are among Volga Tatars, Chuvash and Bashkirs, and the peoples of northern Caucasus, including the Chechen, Ingush, Ossetians, Kabardinians, and the peoples of Dagestan.[2] As of October 2002, 3,186 Muslim groups were registered, up from 3,048 in 2001. Rival Muslim groups continue to accuse each other of "Wahhabism." This pejorative label may have had a detrimental effect on reregistration in certain regions and has made local ethnic Russians more wary of Muslim religious organisations. While Muslims form the largest religious minority, they continue to face societal discrimination and antagonism in some areas. Discriminatory attitudes have become stronger since a group of Chechen rebels took 750 hostages in a Moscow theatre in October 2002. The authorities, the media and the public have been quick to label Muslims or Muslim organisations "Wahhabists," a term that has become synonymous with "extremists." [14a]

6.24. In 1995, two new Islamic organisations emerged: Nur ("Light"), which has cells in 47 out of the 89 regions of the Russian Federation, is a cultural and educational foundation, which concentrates on human rights, equality for all religions and strictly Islamic issues such as access to religious education and creating conditions for the observance of Muslim customs and rituals. The Union of Muslims of Russia (SMR), which has over 50 branches, is a political organisation committed to the defence of the political, spiritual, economic and social interests of Muslims. Nur and the SMR had been preceded by the Islamic Renaissance Party (IPV), which existed between 1990 and 1994, and which aimed at a rebirth of Islam and the political awakening of all Muslims in the Soviet Union. The party had between 30,000 and 100,000 members, mostly in Russia, including 5,000 in the north Caucasus. In 1996, Nur and the SMR, by then Russia's two largest Muslim organisations, formed an association, open to all Islamic movements, under the chairmanship of Mukhaddas Birbarsov. It was intended to elaborate a single Muslim position on the future presidential elections in Russia, and was registered as the All-Russian Public Political Movement of Muslims of Russia (Muslims of Russia Movement). Meanwhile, the Central Spiritual Council of Muslims (TsDUM) is active in building mosques and madrasahs (Islamic religious academies) for its 1,411 communities. Islamic mores are a factor influencing legislation in a number of Russian republics. In 1997, the President of Ingushetia banned sales of alcohol in the republic during Ramadan (January-February).**[8b]**

Cults and Sects

6.25. According to some reports, up to five million Russians belong to cults, although such estimates probably include Christian fundamentalists and minor religious sects. The strength of cults in Russia can be attributed to a longstanding fascination with faith healing and the paranormal, to the spiritual and moral vacuum inflicted on the country during the Soviet era, and to the peoples' suspicion that the Russian Orthodox Church had links with the security service. Local cults include the Church of the New Holy Russia, the Church of the Last Precept, and the White Brotherhood.**[8b]**

6.26. The **Church of the New Holy Russia** (or Church of the Transfiguring Mother of God, formerly known as the Mother of God Centre) founded by Ioann Bereslavskiy in secret during the Soviet years, believes that at Judgement Day the Virgin Mary will separate the pure from the impure world. The **Church of the Last Precept**, based in Minusinsk, Siberia, was founded by Vissarion (formerly a policeman called Sergey Tropp) who claims to be Jesus Christ, married to Mary Magdalene. His followers, mainly of middle class urban origin and reported to number 70,000, live in poverty, in wooden houses in the Siberian forest. The **White Brotherhood**, founded by Yuriy Krivonogov and Marina Tsvigun in Kiev in 1990, is reported to have 10,000 followers, and believes that God became incarnate in the form of Mariya Devi Khristos, who took over Tsvigun's body in April 1990. Having mistakenly predicted the end of the world in November 1993, both Krivonogov and Tsvigun were arrested during a riot in Kiev's St Sophia Cathedral. They were charged with inciting mass unrest, infringing personal and civic rights under the guise of performing religious rituals, and the premeditated infliction of serious bodily injuries. Both were sentenced to a term of imprisonment, although Tsvigun was released under an amnesty in August 1997.**[8b]**

6.27. Foreign cults and religious groups include the **Jehovah's Witnesses**, thought to have 60,000 followers; the US-based **Church of Christ**; the **Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons)**; the **Hare Krishnas**, who have a radio station in Moscow; the **Unification Church**, which has operated since 1990 when its founder, Rev Sun Myung Moon, met President Gorbachev; the Japanese **Aum Shinrikyo** sect, which although now banned is believed to have 50,000 followers; L Ron Hubbard's **Church of Scientology**, whose recruiting structure, featuring dianetic centres, has been active since 1992, and which has financed the refurbishment of a reading room at Moscow State University; and the New Age Movement.**[8b]** Some of these and numerous other religious groups have sometimes experienced various problems in Russia.**[14b]**

Other Religions

6.28. Other religions, including **Buddhism**, are practised in specific localities. Buddhism, established as an official religion in Russia in 1741, is most widespread in the Republic of Buryatiya, where the Central Spiritual Department of Buddhists of Russia has its seat, the Republics of Kalmykiya and Tyva and in some districts of the Irkutsk and Chita Oblasts. There are also newly established communities in Moscow and St Petersburg. Before 1917, there were more than 40 datsans (monasteries) in Buryatiya, but by 1990 only two of these remained in use. There were believed to be a million Buddhists in Russia in 1997.**[1]** Within Buryatiya, Buddhism is enjoying a revival, both among the Buryats and among ethnic Russian residents.**[8b]**

People Trafficking

6.29. The law does not specifically prohibit trafficking in people, although other provisions of the law may be used to prosecute traffickers. There are no reliable estimates of its scope, but observers believe trafficking in women and children for sexual exploitation to be widespread. Women are reportedly trafficked from Russia to European Union countries, the Middle East, Asia, and the US. The country also serves as a transit and destination country for women trafficked from the Caucasus and Central Asia to Western Europe. There are reports that women from Tajikistan, Ukraine, and other countries of the former Soviet Union are trafficked to Russia, and that organised crime is increasingly involved in trafficking in women and children. Men are also reportedly trafficked for their physical labour.**[14a]**

Freedom of Movement

6.30. People who have a well-founded fear of persecution from the local authorities in one of the regions of the Russian Federation, without the involvement or the complicity of the federal authorities, may, in principle, find effective protection elsewhere in Russia. However, such an alternative may be limited due to the cost of moving, the undeveloped housing market, and above all by the enforcement of strict registration regulations or practices in parts of the country.**[13c]** Despite constitutional protections for freedom of movement, the government places some limits on this right, and some regional authorities, most notably the city of Moscow, restrict movement in particular by denying local residency permits to new settlers from other

areas of the country.[14a]

6.31. Although new rules were justified as a notification device rather than a control system, their application has produced many of the same restrictive results as the Soviet era *propiska* (pass) regulations. While citizens are free to travel within Russia, the government imposes registration requirements on domestic travel. All adults are issued with internal passports, which they must carry while travelling and use to register with local authorities for visits of more than three days (in Moscow, for visits of more than 24 hours), although travellers not staying in hotels usually ignore this requirement. These internal passports are also required for obtaining many governmental services. Citizens must register to live and work in a specific area within seven days of moving there; the fees for permanent and temporary registration remain low. Corruption in the registration process in local police precincts is a problem. Police demand bribes in processing registration applications and during spot checks for registration documentation.[14a] Meanwhile, lack of registration leads in practice to the deprivation of most civil, social and economic rights. People may not be admitted to public services, such as free medical services, education, pensions, child and unemployment allowances, unless they hold registration at their place of residence, and employers are required to hire only individuals holding registration in their place of residence.[13c] While federal law provides for education for all children in the Russian Federation, regional authorities frequently deny access to schools to the children of unregistered persons, asylum seekers and migrants.[14a]

6.32. Russian citizens changing residence in Russia, as well as people with a legal claim to citizenship who decide to move to Russia from other former Soviet republics, often face enormous difficulties or are simply not permitted to register in some cities.[14a] There is no uniform procedure on the registration of residence in Russia; each region and republic has its own regulations, the application of which is often arbitrary or racially motivated.[13c] The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and refugee rights non-governmental organisations have cited Stavropol, Krasnodar, Moscow, and St Petersburg as being the least open to migrants. It is not unusual for dark-skinned persons to be stopped at random and for officers to demand bribes from those without residence permits.[14a] Some (but not all) of the Russian regions which implement registration regulations in a less strict manner are located in the far north of Eurasia, where the hard climatic conditions, the remoteness from the central regions of Russia and the severe economic situation may make it difficult for people to establish themselves there.[13c] Meanwhile, the government and residents of Moscow and other large cities defend registration as necessary in order to control crime, to keep crowded urban areas from attracting even more inhabitants, and to gain revenue.[14a] However, another major factor has been a desire to shield themselves from the wave of refugees and internally displaced persons fleeing the numerous ethnic conflicts on the territories of the former Soviet Union.[9b]

6.33. The city of Moscow is frequently cited for violating the rights of non-residents and ethnic minorities, as well as the rights of those legitimately seeking asylum. Moscow police conduct frequent document checks, particularly of those who are dark-skinned or appear to be from the Caucasus. There are credible reports that police have fined persons without registration documents in excess of legal requirements and have not provided proper documentation of the fine.[14a]

6.34. The Constitution provides all citizens with the right to emigrate. The government imposes nominal emigration taxes, fees and duties. On average, it takes three months to process a passport application, although it can take much longer if documentation is needed from elsewhere in the former Soviet Union.[14a] At the end of 2000, only one third of Russian citizens had obtained the new passport of the Russian Federation. The others were still holding the old USSR passport, with a sticker inserted inside (by the local bodies of the Ministry of Internal Affairs), declaring the holder to be a Russian citizen. Russian citizens holding the old USSR passport will be able to use it until 31 December 2005, when it is expected that all Russian citizens will have received the new passport of the Russian Federation.[13c]

6.35. A Soviet requirement that citizens receive a stamp permitting "permanent residence abroad" (PMZh) in order to emigrate was formally abolished in 1996, but implementation of the law (which had been scheduled to go into effect early in 1997) remains incomplete. Border guards continue to require a PMZh-like stamp of all emigrants and the passport control agency (OVIR) continues to issue it. Emigrants who have permanently resettled abroad have been able to visit or repatriate without hindrance. However, visiting emigrants who departed without first obtaining a "PMZh" stamp have been stopped at the border and prevented from departing Russia again (although they may enter without difficulty), as they could present neither a non-immigrant visa to another country nor evidence of permission to reside legally abroad.[14a]

6.36. Under the law, access to classified material can only occur with the consent of the citizen, established in the form of a written contract that states that the signatory understands that he has been given access to state secrets and that his ability to travel abroad may be restricted. The law envisions a maximum period of delay under normal circumstances of five years, and it grants the interagency Commission on Secrecy the right to add an additional five year term to the period of delay if the Commission finds that a person had access to particularly sensitive materials. This latter provision has raised serious concerns among human rights advocates who monitor government restrictions on foreign travel, although there were no reports that the provision was applied during 2002.[14a]

6.37. If a citizen had access to classified material, police and FSB clearances are necessary to receive an external passport. Persons denied travel documents on secrecy grounds can appeal the decision to an interagency commission chaired by the First Deputy Foreign Minister, which cannot rule on whether the material should or should not be classified, but can rule on the legality of travel restrictions imposed and on whether or not the traveller actually had access to materials requiring a travel restriction. During 2002, the commission granted travel permission to approximately 78% of appellants. Other grounds for denial of the right to travel abroad are military conscription or assignment to civilian alternative service, being under investigation for or serving a sentence for a crime, evasion of a court-ordered obligation, or providing false information on a passport application.[14a]

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6.B. HUMAN RIGHTS - SPECIFIC GROUPS

Women

6.38. Domestic violence remains a major problem, and victims rarely have recourse to protection from the authorities. Police are reluctant or even unwilling to involve themselves in what they see as purely domestic disputes. Many women are deterred from reporting such crimes because of family and social pressure, because the housing system makes it difficult either to find housing outside the family dwelling or to expel an abusive spouse, even after a final divorce action. The government has estimated that on average, there are more than 250,000 violent crimes against women annually. Despite serious difficulties, many groups continue to address violence against women. NGOs, alone or in co-operation with local governments, operate more than 55 women's crisis centres throughout the country, and their number continues to grow. In addition, the crisis centres have formed an association in order to co-ordinate their efforts better.[14a]

6.39. There is credible evidence that women encounter considerable discrimination in employment. There is concern that women form a disproportionately high percentage of the unemployed, that they are discriminated against in hiring, and paid less than their male colleagues for the same work. The government has been accused of condoning discriminatory actions against women by seldom enforcing employment laws concerning women. A significant number of women are victims of international trafficking for sexual exploitation.[14a]

Children

6.40. The Constitution assigns the government some responsibility for safeguarding the rights of children; a family code regulates children's rights and the state endeavours to provide, within its limited means, for the welfare of children. The position of many children has deteriorated since the collapse of Communism because of falling living standards, an increase in the number of broken homes and domestic violence. About 50,000 children run away from home each year and children on the street, estimated at between 2.5 and 4 million, often become engaged in criminal activities, receive no education, and are vulnerable to drug and alcohol abuse. In the St Petersburg region, local government and police run various programmes for homeless children and co-operate with local NGOs, while many Moscow charitable organisations have established productive relations with the city government to address the needs of children with disabilities, as well as other vulnerable groups.[14a]

6.41. Special institutions exist for children with various disabilities but do not serve their needs adequately due to a lack of finances. Being disabled is still a serious social stigma, an attitude that profoundly influences how institutionalised children are treated. Human rights groups allege that children in state institutions are provided for poorly and in some cases are abused physically by staff. Many physically or mentally disabled children are considered ineducable, even those with only minor

birth defects. Meanwhile, the prospects of children, including orphans, who are disabled physically or mentally are extremely bleak, and the most likely future is a lifetime in state institutions. Life after institutionalisation for other children also poses serious problems, as they may lack the necessary social, educational and vocational skills to function in society.[14a]

Ethnic Minorities

6.42. Ethnic discrimination in the Russian Federation persists, and there is also believed to have been a rise in xenophobia, particularly in the south, since the break-up of the Soviet Union. Negotiating the process of building a new multi-ethnic, multi-cultural Russia has generated a wide variety of problems and, on occasion, violence,[4] which has served as a catalyst for xenophobic outbreaks. A negative image of ethnic Caucasians has been born in the minds of many Slavs, and the media, which often demonises ethnic Caucasians, has been a part of this process. The media was able to exploit the outbreak of several wars in the former Soviet Union, between 1987 and 1994. Fighting erupted in Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan), South Ossetia (Georgia), Abkhazia (Georgia), Ingushetia (Russia), the Prigorodny region (North Ossetia), and Chechnya (Russia). Meanwhile, the neighbouring Krasnodar and Stavropol regions became magnets for refugees, and also, subsequently, two of the most ethnically discriminating provinces of the Russian Federation, where xenophobia is particularly apparent.[9b]

6.43. Since the early 1990s, the struggle for power between the federal authorities and the ethno-territorial units has gradually transformed the Russian Federation from a unitary empire into something that resembles a federation. Of the Russian Federation's 89 regions, 21 are ethnically defined republics, which enjoy considerable degrees of autonomy codified through treaties with Moscow. Those minorities with their own officially recognised territory usually have significant advantages over other minority populations in the Russian Federation, although in some autonomous areas with high concentrations of Slavic settlers, the minority groups face problems similar to those of minorities lacking a formal homeland. Minorities that have been granted territorial recognition can be broadly divided into two categories: religious and linguistic minorities. This distinction does not reflect any official division between groups, based on religion or language, but rather the primary element around which group self-identity is formed in each case.[4]

6.44. Religiously defined groups form the largest set of minorities and include Buddhists, comprising Buryats, Kalmyks, and Tuvans; Muslims, comprising Middle Volga Tatars and Bashkirs, and the peoples of the north Caucasus, including Chechens, Ingush, Karachai and Cherkess, Kabards and Balkars, Adygei and Dagestanis; Christians, comprising Chuvash and Ossetians; and Shamanists, comprising Altai, Khakass, Yakuts, and native peoples of the north, Siberia and the Far East, including Nenets and Dolgan, Evenk, Chukchi and Koriaks. Linguistically defined groups form the second main category of minorities and include the Finno-Ugrian peoples, Karelians, Mari, Udmurts, Mordovans, Komi, Komi-Permiaks, Khants and Mansi. Meanwhile, leading minorities which lack an officially recognised homeland within the Russian Federation include, Jews, Ukrainians, Belarusians and Kazakhs,

Russian or Volga Germans, Meskhetians or Meskhetian Turks, Roma, Cossacks and native peoples of the north, Siberia and the Far East.[4]

6.45. The Russian Federation's multi-ethnic population is made up of more than 100 national groups. Many of the 89 regions of the country are formed on the basis of their predominant ethnic group. The Constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of nationality and makes provision for the use of national languages in the various regions, alongside the official Russian language. The Constitution also states that each citizen shall have the right to define his or her own national identity and that no citizen shall be required to state officially his or her nationality.[14a] In August 1998, Russia ratified the European Convention on the Protection of National Minorities, which binds ratifying nations to combat discrimination against ethnic minorities within their borders and guarantee their freedom of association, expression and peaceful assembly. The Convention also obliges states to allow their national minorities to use their languages in public and provide opportunities for minorities to pursue courses in school in their own languages.[37] During 2002, the President and other prominent officials issued numerous declarations regarding the multi-ethnic nature of the country and calling for tolerance. [14a]

Africans, Asians, Roma, Caucasians and Central Asians

6.46. During 2002, there were numerous racially motivated attacks on members of minorities, particularly Asians and Africans. Attacks generally appeared to be random, inspired by racial hatred, and carried out by individuals or small groups, some of whom were known to law enforcement authorities for their racial intolerance or criminal records. Members of ethnic or racial minorities were the victims of beatings, extortion, and harassment by "skinheads" and members of other racist and extremist groups. Police made few arrests, although many such cases were reported by human rights organisations. Many victims, particularly migrants and asylum seekers who lack residence documents recognised by the police, choose not to report such attacks or report indifference on the part of police. Meanwhile, Roma (gypsies)[7][10c] and people from the Caucasus and Central Asia face widespread governmental and societal discrimination, which is often reflected in official attitudes and actions. New federal and local measures to combat crime are disproportionately applied against persons appearing to be from the Caucasus and Central Asia. Law enforcement authorities have targeted people with dark complexions for harassment, arrest, and deportation from urban centres. Police reportedly beat, harass, and demand bribes from people with dark skin, or who appear to be from the Caucasus, Central Asia, or Africa. In Moscow, such people are subjected to far more frequent document checks than others, and are frequently detained or fined in excess of permissible penalties, often without formal documents recording the infraction being drawn up. Although the Mayor of Moscow ruled out a crackdown on the Chechen population in the city following the mass hostage seizure at a Moscow theatre in October 2002, human rights monitors reported in November 2002 that hundreds of ethnic Chechens were detained in sweeps across Moscow and that acts of discrimination against them increased. [14a]

Indigenous People

6.47. The law provides for the support of indigenous ethnic communities, permits the creation of self-governing bodies, and permits them to seek compensation if

economic development threatens their lands. In some areas, local communities have organised to study and make recommendations regarding the preservation of the culture of indigenous people. People such as the Buryats in Siberia, the Tatar and Bashkiri in the Urals, the people of the North, including the Enver, Tatarli, and Chukchi, and others, work actively to preserve and defend their cultures, as well as the economic resources of their regions. Most believe that they receive the same treatment as ethnic Russians, although some groups believe that they are not represented or are underrepresented in regional governments. The principal problems for indigenous people are the distribution of necessary supplies and services, particularly in the winter months for those who live in the far north, and disputed claims to profits from exploitation of natural resources. Some groups in the far eastern part of the country have criticised the government for not developing an overall concept for the development of indigenous people. Responsibility for government policy toward indigenous people has been transferred between government agencies several times in earlier years. After the President abolished the Ministry of Federation Affairs, Nationalities, and Migration Policy in October 2001, he appointed a new minister without portfolio to coordinate nationalities policy.[14a]

Cossacks

6.48. The nationalism of Soviet minorities, openly and often violently expressed during *perestroika*, gave rise to a counter-nationalism among Russians. One manifestation has been the rebirth of the Cossack[7] movement, which has provoked a rise in anti-Caucasian tensions. Originally runaway serfs who dispersed to the border regions of the expanding Russian empire, the state authorities later organised them into border guard detachments, and armed Cossack settlements were developed to help guard Russia's new frontier. As a result of their 1917 alliance with the White Armies against the Bolsheviks, the latter subsequently disbanded Cossack units, took away their land and killed or exiled many. During *perestroika*, many descendants of Cossacks started to rediscover their heritage and organise, sometimes into armed Cossack detachments which demanded the restoration of the rights and privileges they enjoyed before the revolution. The 1991 Law on Repressed Peoples, which envisioned giving territorial and other compensation to ethnic groups repressed under Communism, also covered the Cossacks, who describe themselves as "a unique ethnic community and a cultural nation," and whose agenda includes opposition to the immigration of non-Slavs, which often translates into general hostility towards them. In the Krasnodar region, Cossack paramilitary formations are authorised to conduct passport checks in markets, private homes, and other locations.[9b]

Homosexuals

6.49. In April 1993, Article 121 of the Criminal Code was amended, thus decriminalising sexual relationships between males in Russia. Male homosexuality had been a criminal offence in the Soviet Union since 1933, soon after which all the republics followed suit. This provision survived in Russia until 29 April 1993, when former President Yeltsin signed a law on amendments to the Criminal Code, including a change to the language of Article 121. This had previously contained two parts and now only contains one, referring to criminal responsibility for sexual acts between males

involving the use of violence, threats or taking advantage of the helpless or dependent state of a victim, also with regard to minors, which carries a penalty of up to 7 years' imprisonment.[34]

6.50. Article 115 of the Criminal Code provides for a jail sentence for endangering or infecting a partner with venereal diseases or the HIV virus. This article carries a maximum jail sentence of 8 years, which could result in someone who has the HIV virus dying in prison. In 1992, a Russian man was prosecuted for unwittingly infecting a male partner. He was indicted under Article 115, but was not imprisoned due to an amnesty and also because he was an invalid.[34]

6.51. Three months after the decriminalisation of homosexuality, Russian homosexuals announced the creation of an advocacy group, Triangle, through which they sought equality for gay men and lesbians. The group also acted as an information centre for homosexuality and AIDS, and was involved in political activities. According to activists, treatment of homosexuals has improved since the law against male homosexuality was repealed. There are reportedly now hundreds of homosexual groups across the country, along with openly gay bars and cafes. People are said to be increasingly willing to be tested for AIDS because they no longer have to worry about being arrested. While homosexuals still fear discrimination in the workplace and social censure,[24] they are also reported to have been able to obtain the protection of the authorities in cases of harassment.[13c]

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6.C. HUMAN RIGHTS - OTHER ISSUES

Organised Crime

6.52. Organised crime and corruption **[10b]** have become significant factors in the political and economic life of Russia. While Russian organised crime has a long tradition dating as far back as the nineteenth century, the collapse of the Soviet state and subsequent loss of a capacity to impose order on the population provided unprecedented opportunities for the flourishing of criminal organisations. The adoption of a new criminal code went some way towards easing the problem, but its implementation remained uneven, particularly as lack of resources made it difficult for the police to combat organised crime. The number of criminal organisations operating in the country grew from 3,000 in 1992 to 9,000 in 1998, and their activities include extortion, economic crime and financial fraud, infiltration of the property market, of the banking system, and of industry and commerce, the illicit production and sale of vodka, automobile theft, contract killings, drugs trafficking, counterfeiting and intellectual property theft, corruption, and trafficking in nuclear materials. Of these activities, the most pervasive and significant is the extortion of business, with criminals demanding 10% of turnover, often accompanied by threats of violence and no prospect of any protection service in return.**[1]**

6.53. Cases where such criminals are acting with the co-operation or at least with the acquiescence of the police **[13a]** are believed to be widespread throughout the Russian Federation, although this is more likely to occur in smaller cities, towns and rural areas, beyond the environs of Moscow and St Petersburg, and particularly in the east of the country, where feudal-type systems dominate. The likelihood of such occurrences is also affected by the presence of foreign business, as there tends to be more adherence to the rule of law if foreign companies are located in an area. Meanwhile, the victims are more likely to be able to obtain the protection of the authorities in the larger cities. However, in cases where low-level police officers are co-operating with criminal groups, even in the larger cities it is possible that protection might not be adequate, given that the higher authorities may fear the exposure of further dubious connections at the senior rank. In such cases, the victim may be compelled to seek refuge in another area of the country (see Chapter V.A.G: Freedom of Movement). It is possible that a victim who returns to Russia from abroad may be pursued by the same criminals, but the likelihood of this occurring will depend on the level of the criminal group, the profile of the victim, and the nature and extent of the harassment.**[35]**

6.54. There is evidence that the Russian authorities are committed to combating the problem of organised crime. Laws have become stronger, omissions of legislation are being rectified and the criminal justice system is gradually beginning to function with greater integrity and effectiveness. During 1997, over 16,000 participants in criminal formations were brought to justice in Russia, while 5,600 cases of bribery were identified and over 480 corrupt officials were indicted.**[1]** Some 26,100 crimes were exposed by the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs Department on Organised Crime, between January and October 2000. In the same period, approximately 24,600 crimes were solved, while 5,381 pieces of firearms, more than 650,000 pieces of ammunition,

over 230 tonnes of explosives, 11,000 bombs, 2 million dollars worth of counterfeit money, and 1,767 kilograms of narcotic drugs were confiscated by the department.[30] Meanwhile, criminal proceedings were instituted against more than 18,000 officials in 2000, for various economic crimes.[29] Furthermore, the overall number of crimes registered in Russia in 2000 did not exceed three million for the first time in the past few years, with a decline of 2.2% in the crime rate, along with a considerable improvement in crime detection.[32] For example, more than 100 suspected members of an organised crime gang who were found in possession of pistols, narcotics and stolen property in the Russian Far East city of Komsomolsk were arrested in November 2000.[19] In nine months of 2001, 7,200 cases of bribery were registered and among those caught misusing funds and awaiting investigation were 14 federal or regional parliamentarians, 302 bankers and 21 state officials.[10b] Between January and May 2002, 20 criminal groups specialising in fraud, extortion and robbery, and 115 cases of "gangsterism" were filed by police. In July 2002, 44 members of a criminal group in Tatarstan, including its leader, were charged with committing "several dozen" murders.[10a]

6.55. All this indicates that criminals could not act with impunity and that the authorities have taken effective action against them. While the enormity of the problem and the capacity of organised crime to obstruct the movement towards reform should not be underestimated, the steps taken towards improvement are significant. Moreover, the election of President Putin increased morale among law enforcement personnel, who believed that he would not only provide strong, decisive leadership in the fight against organised crime, but would also ensure that a co-ordinated policy was vigorously implemented. Putin has reduced the power of the first generation of Russian oligarchs and encouraged initiatives against organised crime. In July 2002, he stated that "special attention should be paid to the protection of the rights of owners," and that "entrepreneurs should be protected from pressure on the part of criminal groups." [1] There has been a substantial increase in the growth and power of the security forces and significant legal changes, including a law on extortion.[10a] Initiatives have also been taken to curtail corruption, for example, the introduction of a draft corruption law in November 2002, and a campaign to replace corrupt officials.[10b] However, weak law enforcement has undermined the effectiveness of the law,[10a] and government agencies continue to be associated with organised crime.[10b] Putin has admitted that organised crime still controls much of the economy, and has rebuked law enforcement agencies for insufficient action to counter it.[25]

Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons

6.56. In February 1993, the Russian Federation acceded to the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, but has been criticised since for failing to meet its obligations under this instrument, by routinely denying access to asylum procedures, thereby putting asylum seekers at risk of harassment, detention, or removal to their country of origin (*refoulement*). The federal law Concerning Making Changes and Additions to the Law of the Russian Federation Concerning Refugees came into effect in July 1997. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has criticised the new law for being unfair and ineffective.[13b] It is particularly concerned about the situation of asylum seekers at

Moscow's Sheremetyevo-2 Airport, from where improperly documented passengers are deported systematically.[14a] The UNHCR advises, in principle, not to apply the "safe third country" notion to asylum seekers who have stayed in or transited through Russia, due to the serious risk of *refoulement* and the difficulties in obtaining access to the refugee status determination procedure.[13b]

6.57. The government nonetheless co-operates to a limited extent with the UNHCR and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). Both organisations assist the government in developing a humane migration management system, which includes effective and fair refugee status determination procedures. The UNHCR recognises some 40,000 asylum seekers who originate from outside the territories of the former Soviet Union. The government rarely grants asylum and acts more expeditiously for those applicants who had been citizens of the former Soviet Union, to whom it applies a more lenient standard. There continues to be widespread ignorance of refugee law, both on the part of officials and would-be petitioners.[14a]

6.58. A group of about 1,400-2,000 Armenian refugees, evacuated from Azerbaijan in the wake of the late 1980s ethnic violence, are still housed in "temporary quarters," usually in Moscow hotels or workers' dormitories. They are unable to return to Azerbaijan, and conditions in Armenia make emigration to that country practically impossible; they also lack residency permits for Moscow. They have declined offers of Russian citizenship on the grounds that this would not improve their situation materially, although such a step would entitle them to the benefits accorded to Russian forced migrants. They have also rejected offers of relocation to other regions of Russia because they allege that the alternative housing that they are offered is frequently not suitable or available. Their situation remains precarious as the formerly state-owned hotels in which many reside are being privatised, and a number of eviction orders have already been served in such cases. Despite official promises, their status and permanent housing has yet to be resolved.[14a]

6.59. There are believed to be up to 460,000 displaced persons in the Russian Federation, of whom around 87,000, mostly ethnic Russians who left the northern Caucasus during the first Chechen conflict between 1994 and 1996, are currently registered by the federal authorities as "forced migrants," which entitles them to assistance to facilitate their resettlement elsewhere in the Russian Federation.[12] It has been estimated that at least a quarter of a million residents, including almost the entire Russian, Armenian, and Jewish populations, migrated from Chechnya as a result of both the first conflict and the current one. The current conflict in Chechnya, which began in September 1999, resulted in widespread civilian casualties and the displacement of around 280,000 people, 110,000 of whom remain in Ingushetia. Meanwhile, some 4,500 Chechens are reported to remain in Dagestan, 2,500 in North Ossetia, and 4,000 in Georgia, while thousands of others reportedly went to other regions of the Russian Federation. Federal refugee policy aims at repatriating the internally displaced as soon as possible back to Chechnya, but assurances have been given that no one would be repatriated forcibly. There are believed to be approximately 140,000 internally displaced Chechens in various parts of Chechnya itself.[14a]

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CHRONOLOGY OF MAIN EVENTS, 1917-2002

1917: The pressures of defeat in the First World War and growing social and economic chaos in the country at large brought two revolutions. The first, in March, overthrew the Tsar and established a provisional government, which, however, soon found itself sharing power with the new workers' councils, known as soviets. The second, the Bolshevik Revolution on 7 November, brought the Communists to power in the capital (renamed Petrograd in 1914) and, after three years of civil war, throughout most of the territory of the Russian Empire.[1]

1922: The Communists established the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) with Moscow as its capital, in which Russia (the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic or RSFSR) became just one of eventually fifteen national republics.[1]

1920s: Genuine attempts were made to encourage other nationalities to develop their own identities and cultures under local leadership, but under Stalin, who succeeded Lenin upon his death in 1924, the accepted dogma was that the Soviet nations would merge, which most understood to mean the subjugation of other nations by the Russian people.[1]

1930s: Russia, together with the other republics of the USSR, experienced considerable hardship under Stalin's collectivisation campaign of the early 1930s and the accompanying widespread repression that came to characterise his brutal dictatorship.[2]

1939: Under the Nazi-Soviet Treaty of Non-Aggression, the USSR annexed the Baltic states, as well as other territories.[2]

1941: In June, Germany invaded the USSR.[1]

1945: Victory over Germany and Japan in the Second World War led to further territorial gains for Russia. In the west, it gained part of East Prussia, now Kaliningrad, from Germany, a small amount of territory from Estonia and those parts of Finland annexed during the Soviet-Finnish War between 1939 and 1940. In the east, it acquired the strategically important Kurile Islands from Japan.[2]

1953: Stalin died and was succeeded by Nikita Khrushchev, who admitted for the first time that there had been large-scale repressions under Stalin.[2]

1954: The present territorial extent of the Russian Federation was achieved, when Crimea was ceded to the Ukrainian SSR.[2]

1955: The Warsaw Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance was signed by Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic (GDR - East Germany), Hungary, Poland, Romania and the USSR. The Treaty established a

military alliance between these countries, known as the Warsaw Treaty Organisation or the Warsaw Pact.[1]

1956: In November, Soviet forces invaded Hungary to overthrow the reformist government of Imre Nagy.[1]

1964: Krushchev was dismissed and replaced by Leonid Brezhnev, who until the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, managed to improve relations with the West, which since the late 1940s had been generally characterised by the intense mutual hostility of the Cold War era.[2]

1968: Soviet and other Warsaw Pact forces invaded Czechoslovakia to overthrow the reformist government of Alexander Dubcek.[1]

1979: Soviet forces invaded Afghanistan, where their troops were to remain until 1989.[1]

1982: Brezhnev died and was succeeded by Yuri Andropov, who undertook an anti-corruption campaign and attempted very cautious economic reforms.[2]

1984: Andropov died and was succeeded by Konstantin Chernenko, a former close ally of Brezhnev, who died in 1985.[2]

1985: Chernenko's successor as General Secretary was Mikhail Gorbachev, who embarked upon a programme of changes, replacing many leading state and Communist party officials and appointing several reformists to the Politburo.[2]

1988: Gorbachev announced plans for comprehensive changes to the political system, with the introduction of a two-tier legislature, elected largely by competitive elections.[2]

1989: In elections to the new USSR Congress of People's Deputies in March, many conservative candidates were defeated by reformist politicians, among them Boris Yeltsin, who won an overwhelming victory in the Moscow constituency. In May, the Congress elected Gorbachev to the new post of executive President of the USSR.[2]

1990: The first stage in the process of achieving Russian sovereignty from all-Union institutions was the election of the RSFSR Congress of People's Deputies in March by largely free and competitive elections. In May, the Congress elected Yeltsin Chairman of the Supreme Soviet (the permanent working body of the Congress), the highest state post in the RSFSR and a position from which Yeltsin could effectively challenge the authority of Gorbachev and the all-Union institutions which he represented. In June, the Congress adopted a declaration of sovereignty, asserting that the RSFSR was a sovereign republic and that the laws of the RSFSR had primacy over all-Union legislation.[2]

1991: In June, Yeltsin was elected President of the RSFSR. On 19 August, a self-proclaimed State Committee for the State of Emergency (SCSE) seized power in Moscow, but within three days the attempted coup collapsed. Yeltsin was subsequently able to assert control over all-Union bodies, appointing RSFSR ministers to head

central institutions. By the end of the year, the USSR had ceased to exist. On 25 December, Gorbachev resigned as its last President and the Russian Supreme Soviet formally changed the name of the RSFSR to the Russian Federation. Meanwhile, eleven former members of the USSR joined the newly established Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). In November, Chechnya declared its independence from the Russian Federation.[2]

1992: Yeltsin accelerated his economic reform programme, amid increasing threats of conflict between the executive and the legislature, rendering his position precarious.[2]

1993: In September, Yeltsin suspended the Congress of People's Deputies and the Supreme Soviet on the grounds that they were obstructing both economic and constitutional reform, and the Supreme Soviet responded by appointing former Vice-President Rutskoi as President in Yeltsin's place. On 27 September, Rutskoi and his supporters became besieged in the parliament building, while Yeltsin declared a state of emergency. On 4 October, tanks opened fire on the parliament building, forcing the surrender of the rebels. No single party or bloc won a decisive majority of seats in the Duma elections in December.[2]

1994: In November, the Russian Security Council agreed to intervene militarily in the separatist republic of Chechnya, where in December, Russian troops were sent to introduce "constitutional rule".[2]

1995: In elections to the Duma in December, the Communist Party emerged as the largest single party.[2]

1996: Yeltsin proceeded to win the presidential elections emerging from the second round in July, with 54% of the votes cast. Meanwhile, the conflict in Chechnya continued with varied intensity until negotiations achieved a ceasefire and Russian withdrawal in August.[2]

1997: Political infighting, economic problems, persistent speculation over the health of Yeltsin, and a series of financial scandals all threatened to undermine the credibility of the government. On 12 May, Yeltsin and Chechen President, Aslan Maskhadov, signed a peace agreement in which both sides agreed to settle the dispute by peaceful means.[2]

1998: Yeltsin dismissed the government twice, first in March and then again in August.[1]

1999: In August, Vladimir Putin was appointed Prime Minister. Also in August, Chechen-backed Islamist guerrillas carried out an insurgent raid on neighbouring Dagestan. They withdrew after Russian troops were dispatched to the region, but there were renewed incursions and fighting in September. Subsequent fatal terrorist bombings throughout Russia, allegedly the work of Chechens, led the government to launch a full-scale attack on Chechnya, in an attempt to reassert federal control there.[2] A total of 26 parties and blocs contested the Duma elections on 19 December.[31] On 31 December, Yeltsin unexpectedly resigned as President and Putin became acting President.[2]

2000: In early February, federal troops recaptured the capital, Grozny, but the rebels continued to wage guerrilla warfare. Presidential elections in March confirmed Putin in the position, with 53% of the vote.[1]

2001: In July, Putin signed a law, imposing new conditions on political parties, which henceforth would be required to have a minimum of 10,000 members. In December, the pro-Putin Unity Party merged with Fatherland and All-Russia to become the UF-UR.[2] The issue of restoring peace and federal order in Chechnya looked certain to remain a long-term problem, as federal forces continued with their struggle to impose control over a severely war-damaged region and a hostile population, while under constant attack from rebel fighters.[1]

2002: In October, some 50 Chechen rebels took more than 700 people hostage in a Moscow theatre, demanding the immediate withdrawal of Russian troops from Chechnya. Russian troops subsequently stormed the theatre, resulting in the deaths of the rebels and some 120 hostages.[1]

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MAIN POLITICAL ORGANISATIONS

In 1999, numerous political parties and movements were formed, in anticipation of the elections to the Duma in December of that year,[2] for which the Central Electoral Commission approved a list of 26 electoral associations and blocs.[31] Each electoral association was based on one registered political party or movement, while each electoral bloc represented an alliance of two or more parties or movements. All presented federal lists of candidates. In July 1996, there were 86 legally registered nationwide political parties. There were also many regional political organisations. In accordance with a law signed by President Putin in July 2001, a political party must have at least 10,000 members, including no fewer than 100 members in over half of the 89 regions of the Russian Federation, in order to register and function legally.[2]

AGRARIAN PARTY (*Agramaya Partiya Rossii*)

Leader: Mikhail Lapshin. Founded in 1993; left-wing; supports agricultural sector;[1] strongly opposed to private ownership of agricultural land; in favour of restoration of popular government through soviets (councils), and voluntary restoration of the Soviet Union. Referred to as "rural wing" of the Communist Party; won 20 seats in 1995 parliamentary elections, when it was allied with the latter; in 1999, announced it was joining centre-left Fatherland-All Russia bloc, following failure to reach agreement with the Communist Party; membership around 300,000.[8c]

COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION (*Kommunisticheskaya Partiya Rossiiskoi Federatsii - KPRF*)

Leader: Gennady Zyuganov. Successor to the Russian Communist Party, which was banned in 1991.[1] Formally registered in March 1993; largest parliamentary group, winning 157 seats in the 1995 elections; between 550,000 and 600,000 members; largest political party in Russia which presents itself as the main opposition party. Advocates constitutional reform to reduce powers of president and give majority party or coalition in Duma the right to form the government; favours voluntary re-unification of republics of the former Soviet Union; opposed to Russia's financial reliance on international bodies such as the IMF and World Bank, and critical of NATO enlargement; has proposed an alliance of Russia, China and India, among others, to act as a counterweight.[8c] Won 113 seats in the December 1999 elections, remaining the largest parliamentary group.[2]

CONGRESS OF RUSSIAN COMMUNITIES (*Kongress Russkikh Obshchin*)

Leader: Dmitrii O Rogozin. Founded in 1994; concerned with Russian communities resident outside the Russian Federation, and the relations of Russia with states of the near abroad; contested 1999 elections as member of Congress of Russian Communities and Yuri Boldyrev Movement alliance.[1]

DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF RUSSIA

Leader: Mikhail M Prusak. Founded in 1990; liberal-conservative; 12,086 members.[1]

DERZHAVA (Great Power)

Leader: Konstantin F Zatulin. Founded in 1994; alliance of right-wing and nationalist parties; contested 1999 parliamentary elections in association with Fatherland-All Russia.[1] (also see FATHERLAND)

FATHERLAND (*Otechestvo*)

Leader: Yurii Luzhkov. Founded by Luzhkov in December 1998; joined forces with All Russia regional movement to form electoral bloc for December 1999 elections; aims to fill space on the left between the Communist Party and Our Home is Russia; membership numbers not available, but collective members include Derzhava, the Union of Young Social Democrats, the Union of People's Power and Labour, and, since August 1999, Spiritual Heritage. Proposes reducing presidential powers, enhancing those of parliament, and re-defining the relationship between Moscow and the regions, bringing the rights of the regions into line with those of the republics, and promoting co-operation rather than confrontation; is disappointed with Western policy regarding Russia; favours strengthening links with other CIS states, and with India, China and Arab states.[8c] As part of the **Fatherland-All Russia** alliance in the December 1999 parliamentary elections, won 67 seats. In December 2001, merged with Unity and All-Russia to become the **Unity and Fatherland-United Russia Party**. [2]

FORWARD, RUSSIA! (*Vpered Rossiya!*)

Leader: Boris G Fedorov. Founded in 1995 on basis of 12 December Liberal Democratic Union; democratic party.[2] Merged with Republican Party of the Russian Federation in 2002.[1]

JUST CAUSE (*Pravoe Delo*)

Leaders: Anatoly Chubais, Sergei Kirienko, Yegor Gaidar, Boris Nemtsov, Irina Khakamada. Founded in December 1998 as a liberal-right reformist coalition movement, aimed at preventing a split in the "democratic vote"; based around Gaidar's Russia's Democratic Choice party, it includes other high-profile reformers, such as those named above and their embryonic parties; contested the December 1999 parliamentary elections under the name, **Union of Right Forces**, [8c] and won 29 seats.[2]

KEDR - CONSTRUCTIVE ECOLOGICAL PARTY (*Ekologicheskaya Partiya 'Kedr'*)

Leader: Anatoly Panfilov. Founded in 1992; officially registered as a party in 1994; advocates the resolution of social issues, and in particular protection of the family and the environment; between 10,000 and 12,000 members.[8c]

LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF RUSSIA (*Liberalno-Demokraticheskaya Partiya Rossii - LDPR*)

Leader: Vladimir Zhirinovskiy. Formally registered in 1992, although has been in existence (originally as the Liberal Democratic Party of the Soviet Union) since 1988; membership between 150,000 and 200,000; in favour of tougher laws on organised crime and corruption; highly nationalistic; advocates the establishment of a unitary state structure and the restoration of a Russian state within the borders of the former USSR;

also in favour of restoring Russia to great-power status, and the establishment of an eastern military bloc to counterbalance NATO.[8c] Won 17 seats in the December 1999 parliamentary elections.[2]

OUR HOME IS RUSSIA (*Nash dom-Rossiya - NDR*)

Leader: Viktor Chernomyrdin. Founded in 1995 when it came third in parliamentary elections, behind the Communists and LDPR; membership around 250,000; advocates political reform, privatisation, and a strong Russian state, but opposed to nationalism and extremism.[8c] Won 7 seats in the December 1999 parliamentary elections.[2]

PARTY OF ECONOMIC FREEDOM (*Partiya Ekonomicheskoi Svobody*)

Leaders: Konstantin Borovoi, Sergei Fedorov. Founded in 1992; advocates economic liberalism.[2]

REPUBLICAN PARTY OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION (*Respublikanskoi Partii Rossiiskoi Federatsii*)

Leaders: Boris G Fedorov & Vladimir N Lysenko. Founded in 1990 by former members of the Democratic Platform in the CPSU; advocates a mixed economy, rule of law and free press; merged with Forward Russia! in 2002.[1]

RUSSIAN ALL-PEOPLE'S UNION

Leader: Sergei Baburin. Founded as a party in 1994; right-wing, nationalist.[2]

RUSSIAN COMMUNIST WORKERS' PARTY-REVOLUTIONARY PARTY OF COMMUNISTS (*Rossiiskaya Kommunisticheskaya Rabochaya Partiya-Revolutsionnaya Partiya Kommunistov*)

Leader: Viktor Tyulkin. Founded 2001 by merger. Advocates restoration of a planned socialist economy; RCWP contested 1999 parliamentary elections as Communists and Workers of Russia-For the Soviet Union.[1]

RUSSIAN NATIONAL UNITY (*Russkoe Natsionalnoe Edinstvo - RNE*)

Former leader: Aleksandr Barkashov. Founded in 1990; banned in 1993; re-emerged in 1994 when ban was lifted. Ultra-nationalist and anti-Semitic paramilitary organisation; reliable figures on membership not available as the movement is semi-clandestine. Due to non-registration, cannot contest parliamentary elections on its own party list, but in 1999 formed "National Bloc" with two smaller registered groups, Saviour and Renaissance.[8c]

RUSSIAN SELF-MANAGEMENT PARTY OF SVYATOSLAV FEDEROV

(*Rossisskaya Partiya Samoupravleniya Imeni Svyatoslava Federova*)

Leader: Levon Chakhmakhchyan. Founded in 1995 as Party of Workers' Self-Management; social-democratic.[2]

SOCIALIST UNITED PARTY OF RUSSIA-SPIRITUAL HERITAGE

(*Sotsialisticheskaya Yedinaya Partiya Rossii-Dukhovnoe Nasledie*)

Leader: Aleksei I Podberezkin. Founded in 2002 by merger of Socialist Party, Spiritual Heritage and various other groups; moderate, nationalist; 11,363 members.[1]

STALINIST BLOC FOR THE USSR (SB)

Leader: Viktor Anpilov. Founded in January 1999, specifically to fight the December 1999 parliamentary elections. Combines several far-left organisations: Working Russia, led by Anpilov, the Union of Russian Youth and the Officers' Union. Also has the support of Stalin's grandson, Colonel Evgeny Dzhugashvili; registered for 1999 elections as The Stalin Bloc: Working Russia, Officers for the USSR; aims to restore the USSR and communism, and abolish the office of president by non-violent means.[8c]

UNITY and FATHERLAND-UNITED RUSSIA (UF-UR) (*Yedinstvo i Otechestvo-Yedinaya Rossiya - YeO-YeR*)

Leader: Sergei Shoigu. Founded in 1999, Unity came second in the December 1999 parliamentary elections, winning 72 seats. In December 2001, merged with Fatherland and All-Russia to become the UF-UR; centrist, reformist.[2] Also known as the **All-Russian Party**, it forms a pro-Putin bloc that dominates the Duma.[8a]

WOMEN OF RUSSIA POLITICAL MOVEMENT (WOR)

Leader: Ekaterina Lakhova. Founded in 1993, as successor to the Soviet-era Union of Soviet Women; constituent parts are the Russian Women's Union, the Female Entrepreneurs' Association and the Union of Women Serving in the Navy; predominantly concerned with social issues; centrist; encourages equal opportunities for women; supports a strong family and the rights of children, including education.[8c]

YABLOKO (*Federalnoe Obshchestvenno-Politicheskoe Dvizhenie "Yabloko"*)

Leader: Grigorii A Yavlinskii. Founded in 1993; remained a loose coalition until March 1999, when officially registered as a party;[8c] democratic-centrist;[1] Russia's strongest liberal movement; particularly concerned with economic matters; also advocates strong international role for Russia.[8c] Won 21 seats in the December 1999 parliamentary elections.[2]

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PROMINENT PEOPLE

VIKTOR ANPILOV

Anpilov set up the Working Russia movement in 1996 after he was expelled from the far-left Russian Communist Workers' Party. He has ensured that the radical left, while on the margins of Russian politics as far as official representation is concerned, has maintained a high public profile. He has led numerous public demonstrations, which have occasionally resulted in his arrest. He was prominent in his support of parliament when Yeltsin suspended it in October 1993, and spent several months in detention. Anpilov was detained again in June 1998, for attempting to organise a rally in support of striking miners. He is currently leader of the Stalinist Bloc for the USSR.[8c]

ALEKSANDR BARKASHOV

Barkashov is an electrician by training, and became involved in extreme nationalist politics when he joined Pamyat in the mid-1980s. He left that organisation in the belief that more direct action was needed. He supported the 1991 attempted coup, surviving an assassination attempt in the process, and spent a couple of months in prison subsequently. He became leader of the extremist Russian National Unity party.[8c]

VIKTOR CHERNOMYRDIN

Chernomyrdin spent most of his pre-politics career in the gas industry. He was USSR minister for the gas industry between 1985 and 1990, in which capacity he launched the privatisation of the industry and the creation of the gas giant, Gazprom. He was first elected to the USSR parliament in 1987, became Deputy Prime Minister in May 1992, and Prime Minister as a compromise candidate in December 1992, after the reformist, Gaidar, had been rejected by parliament. Following Chernomyrdin's 1998 dismissal as Prime Minister, there were calls for his resignation as leader of Our Home is Russia, of which, however, he has remained leader.[8c]

ANATOLY CHUBAIS

Chubais is an economist by training, and was the driving force behind Russia's 1992-1994 privatisation programme. He also masterminded Yeltsin's 1996 re-election campaign and was brought back into government by Yeltsin as First Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister in charge of economic reform in March 1997. Chubais pushed forward an ambitious programme of structural reform that provoked the wrath of the Duma and other powerful groups. His influence gradually waned and he lost the finance portfolio in November 1997, and then saw some of his responsibilities redistributed in January 1998. He was removed from the government in March 1998 and became chairman of the country's electricity monopoly, Russian Unified Energy Systems. He is currently one of the leaders of the Just Cause political movement.[8c]

YEGOR GAIDAR

Gaidar is an academic economist best known for introducing the "shock therapy" economic reform programme of 1992, during his tenure as acting Prime Minister which lasted barely a year. In response to the opposition his programme aroused, Gaidar set

up Russia's Choice, which did well in the 1993 parliamentary election, becoming the second largest party in the Duma. However, it won only nine seats in the 1995 election, when Gaidar himself failed to win a seat. He is currently one of the leaders of the Just Cause political movement.[8c]

MIKHAIL GORBACHEV

Gorbachev, who became General Secretary of the Communist Party and leader of the Soviet Union in 1985, embarked upon a programme of sweeping changes. A policy of *glasnost* (openness) provided for a greater degree of freedom for the mass media and freer discussion of previously censored aspects of Soviet and Russian history, as well as more critical views of contemporary politics. Gorbachev's programme of gradual political and economic reform came to be known as *perestroika* (restructuring). In 1988, Gorbachev announced plans for comprehensive changes to the political system, with the introduction of a two-tier legislature, elected largely by competitive elections. Following these, the Congress elected Gorbachev to the new post of executive President of the USSR in May 1989. By the end of 1991, following Russia's assertion of sovereignty, the USSR had ceased to exist. On 25 December 1991, Gorbachev resigned as its last President and the Russian Supreme Soviet formally changed the name of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) to the Russian Federation.[2]

IRINA KHAKAMADA

Khakamada is a well-respected political reformer, who was first elected to the Duma in 1993. She has led the Common Cause movement since 1995. She does not currently hold a Duma seat, as she gave it up to serve in the government as head of the State Commission for Supporting and Developing Small Businesses from 1997 until the commission was abolished in autumn 1998. She is a champion of small business and a vocal campaigner for tax, economic and governmental reform. She is also currently one of the leaders of the Just Cause political movement.[8c]

SERGEI KIRIYENKO

Kiriyenko is a ship-builder by training. He graduated from the Academy of the National Economy in 1993, and became chairman of the board of "Garantia," a Nizhny Novgorod bank, in 1994 when his association with Nemtsov began. In 1997, he became president of the local NORSI oil refinery, and Nemtsov made Kiriyenko his deputy at the ministry of fuel and energy later that year. Prime Minister for four months in 1998, Kiriyenko attempted to continue the programme of economic reform, but in August 1998 was dismissed by Yeltsin for failing to solve the financial crisis. He is currently one of the leaders of the Just Cause political movement.[8c]

EKATERINA LAKHOVA

Lakhova is a paediatrician by profession. Before entering politics, she was deputy head of Sverdlovsk health authority, and was elected to the Russian Supreme Soviet in 1990. She served as Yeltsin's adviser on issues concerning the family, motherhood and children until she was elected to the Duma in 1993. She was re-elected in 1995 and is currently leader of the Women of Russia Political Movement.[8c]

MIKHAIL LAPSHIN

Formerly a state farm director, Lapshin was first elected to the RSFSR parliament in 1990. He was re-elected to its successor, the Duma, in 1993, the year he was also elected chairman of the Agrarian Party, which he currently leads.[8c]

YURII LUZHKOV

Luzhkov spent most of his career in the oil and gas industry. He was appointed deputy mayor of Moscow in 1991, and was promoted to mayor in 1992, when the first incumbent resigned. In 1996, almost 90% of voters supported him in a direct ballot. His efforts to modernise Moscow have made him extremely popular in the city. In December 1998, he founded the Fatherland movement, of which he has been leader since.[8c]

BORIS NEMTSOV

One of the leaders of the Just Cause political movement. Nemtsov trained as a radiophysicist and graduated from Gorky (now Nizhny Novgorod) University in 1981. He subsequently held various positions at the USSR Academy of Sciences. In 1991, he joined in the defence of the Russian parliament during the August attempted coup. He was rewarded with his appointment first as Yeltsin's special representative, and then as governor of Nizhny Novgorod between 1991 and 1997. Having supported Yeltsin in the 1996 presidential election, Nemtsov was appointed First Deputy Prime Minister and minister for fuel and energy in March 1997. He lost office when Kiriyenko, his close associate, was sacked from his post as Prime Minister following the August 1998 financial crisis.[8c]

VLADIMIR PUTIN

Former head of the Federal Security Service and Secretary of the Security Council, whose firm stance on Russia's military campaign in Chechnya helped to raise his initially low profile as Prime Minister, the post to which he was appointed in August 1999. On President Yeltsin's resignation on 31 December 1999, Putin was appointed acting President, and was confirmed in the position in the presidential election of 26 March 2000, which he won with 53% of the vote.[1]

SERGEI SHOIGU

Emergencies Minister who became leader of the Kremlin-backed Unity bloc, created in September 1999 to contest the December 1999 elections. Nine times world wrestling champion, he has built up a good reputation, but his control over members of his party is thought to be weak.[18]

GRIGORY YAVLINSKY

Born in Ukraine, Yavlinsky studied at the Institute of the National Economy in Moscow. He came to prominence in 1990 as a co-author of the radical "500 Days" economic reform programme that Gorbachev and Yeltsin briefly supported. He was Deputy Prime Minister in the last USSR government, and has since refused offers of government office. Yavlinsky stood for the presidency in 1996, receiving 7% of the vote in the first round. He is currently leader of the Yabloko party.[8c]

BORIS YELTSIN

Yeltsin, who won an overwhelming victory in the Moscow constituency during the March 1989 elections to the new USSR Congress of People's Deputies, was subsequently elected Chairman of the Supreme Soviet (the permanent working body of the Congress), the highest state post in the RSFSR, in May 1990. In June 1990, the Congress adopted a declaration of sovereignty, asserting that the RSFSR was a sovereign republic and that the laws of the RSFSR had primacy over all-Union legislation. In June 1991, Yeltsin was elected President of the RSFSR, which gave him the executive power necessary to effect his policies as well as a sufficient popular mandate to challenge the jurisdiction of Gorbachev and the all-Union authorities. Yeltsin's position was strengthened by his part in bringing about the collapse of the August 1991 attempted coup, and while the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and Russian Communist Party (RCP) were suspended, he asserted control over all-Union bodies, appointing RSFSR ministers to head central institutions. By the end of 1991, the USSR had ceased to exist. On 25 December 1991, Gorbachev resigned as its last President and the Russian Supreme Soviet formally changed the name of the RSFSR to the Russian Federation,[2] of which Yeltsin was President until his resignation on 31 December 1999.[1]

VLADIMIR ZHIRINOVSKY

Zhirinovsky has proved himself to be a durable figure in Russian politics. He is leader of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, over which he wields total control, having been elected chairman with unrestricted power for ten years in 1994. He failed in his 1999 attempt to win a provincial governorship.[8c]

GENNADY ZYUGANOV

Zyuganov is a lifelong Communist. Having been a member of the Communist Party's youth wing, he joined the Party's apparatus first in his native region (Orel) and then in Moscow, where he built a career in the propaganda department of the CPSU Central Committee, ending up as its deputy head. Once the Communist Party of the RSFSR emerged, he quickly became one of its leaders, and was elected chairman of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation in 1993, a position he has since retained.[8c]

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