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Nowhere is safe: exporting the rule of fear beyond borders – transnational repression by the Russian Federation

Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Mariana Katzarova*

Summary

In the present report, submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 60/21, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation examines the role of the Russian Federation as a perpetrator of transnational repression. She finds that the Russian authorities extend their system of domestic repression beyond the country's borders to silence and deter dissent and criticism directed at the Russian authorities, employing targeted physical violence and threats to life, coercion, intimidation and harassment against targets and their families, abuse of legal and administrative procedures, surveillance, digital operations and abuse of International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and international law enforcement cooperation mechanisms. These practices constitute a systematic strategy, which became widespread as it expanded and diversified markedly after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, amid the largest political emigration from the Russian Federation since the twentieth century.

This transnational repression is the continuation beyond the country's borders of the structural system of repression documented in the Special Rapporteur's previous reports. It is a comparatively low-cost, high-impact State instrument that reinforces domestic repression and undermines activism, dissent, independent media and civil society in exile, targeting the willingness of victims of repression to engage with foreign Governments and international human rights mechanisms.

In the report, the Special Rapporteur describes the increased use of hybrid attacks and reliance on proxies, as well as bureaucratic and digital methods that obscure attribution of individual responsibility for this conduct. She offers analysis and recommendations addressed to the Russian Federation, the international community and States Members of the United Nations, including the host States of victims of transnational repression, INTERPOL, banks, international financial institutions, financial regulators, compliance-database providers and regional human rights bodies.

* The present report was submitted to the conference services for processing after the deadline for technical reasons beyond the control of the submitting office.

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I. Introduction

1. Transnational repression by the Russian Federation is inseparable from the consolidation of authoritarian rule, repression at home and the war of aggression against Ukraine. As the Special Rapporteur has consistently found, repression within the Russian Federation is bound to aggression abroad as part of a deliberate strategy to silence dissent and anti-war expression.[1] The escalation of repression following the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has had a direct extraterritorial corollary. The Russian Federation has long employed extraterritorial pressure against selected critics, but until 2022 these practices largely appeared as targeted operations against a limited number of "high profile" individuals. Since February 2022, transnational repression – the act of a State reaching beyond its borders to silence, intimidate, coerce or punish individuals it perceives as political or civic opponents – has intensified dramatically in both qualitative and quantitative terms.

2. Following the invasion of Ukraine and the announcement of a "partial mobilization" in September 2022, hundreds of thousands of Russians fled the Russian Federation. Researchers estimate the post-2022 exodus at between 650,000 and 900,000 people, the largest emigration from the Russian Federation since the twentieth century.[2] In addition to those fleeing mobilization, those who left include anti-war activists, journalists, human rights defenders, advocates for Indigenous Peoples, lawyers, cultural figures and conscientious objectors. The new diaspora clustered first in the South Caucasus and Central Asia, where Russian security services retain considerable operational freedom, and then increasingly in the European Union and the United States of America.

3. The growth of diaspora activism in turn produced intensifying efforts to surveil and control Russians abroad. Repressive laws designed to censor critics and opponents in the Russian Federation are used increasingly to target critics and dismantle the opposition abroad. The "foreign agent" and "undesirable organization" designations and the "war censorship" laws ("discrediting the armed forces" and "fake news" about the army) have been expanded into a system of mass stigmatization, imposing broad professional, financial and social restrictions. Introduced in 2012 and extending beyond the borders of the Russian Federation, the "foreign agent" framework initially targeted non-governmental organizations; over the years the targeting scope has expanded to media outlets, individuals and informal associations. Under the framework, burdensome compliance requirements, administrative and criminal penalties for non-compliance, and restrictions on civic and public participation are imposed. By mid-2026, over 1,200 individuals and organizations had been designated as "foreign agents".[3] The "undesirable organization" framework prohibits activities of designated foreign and international non-governmental organizations; participation in or support for such organizations is punishable by up to six years' imprisonment. By mid-2026, over 380 organizations, including organizations founded by Russians in exile, had been designated "undesirable".[4] Adopted in March 2022, the "war censorship" laws criminalize criticism of the Russian armed forces and the dissemination of information inconsistent with government narratives, which is labelled as "false". For those who may be subject to mobilization orders, digitalized conscription and registration systems have increased fear of return, and many who have already left the country remain subject to mobilization or conscription orders and face penalties on return.

4. Since its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the Russian Federation has become one of the most prolific perpetrators of transnational repression. In particular, when it comes to direct physical attacks, it ranks third among a small group of 10 States responsible for over 70 per cent of documented incidents over the past decade.[5]

[1] A/79/508, paras. 91–99, 107 and 108. See also A/HRC/60/59, paras. 1–4.

[2] See https://www.vedomosti.ru/society/articles/2025/02/07/1090699-v-rossiyu-vernulis; and https://re-russia.net/en/review/347/.

[3] See https://minjust.gov.ru/ru/pages/reestr-inostryannykh-agentov/.

[4] See https://minjust.gov.ru/ru/pages/perechen-inostrannyh-i-mezhdunarodnyh-organizacij-deyatelnost-kotoryh-priznana-nezhelatelnoj-na-territorii-rossijskoj-federacii/.

[5] See https://freedomhouse.org/report/special-report/2026/collaboration-and-resistance-tracking-transnational-repression-2025.

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II. Methodology and definition

A. Definition of transnational repression

5. There is no universally accepted definition of transnational repression. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has described it as "acts conducted or directed by a State, or its proxy, to deter, silence or punish dissent, criticism or human rights advocacy towards it, expressed from outside its territory", and has identified various forms, which include acts of violence and intimidation outside the country, harassment through extradition requests, abuse of security laws with extraterritorial provisions, impediments to mobility, digital attacks and proxy punishment.[6]

6. In its resolution 2669 (2026), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe defined transnational repression as "a form of foreign interference by a State, its organs, proxies and/or persons whose actions can be attributed to that State, employed to intimidate, silence, harass, coerce, abduct, harm or kill individuals beyond the State's borders, including political dissidents, activists, human rights defenders, journalists, political opponents, religious and ethnic minority groups, academics, members of diaspora and exile communities and/or their relatives, regardless of their nationality". In a resolution adopted on 16 June 2026, the European Parliament defined transnational repression as "deliberate acts or threats carried out by states, including repressive or authoritarian regimes, state-affiliated entities or entities subject to the influence of, or pressure from, a state, or its proxies, to defend and advance their interests by reaching across borders to intimidate, threaten, silence, coerce, control or harm in any other way individuals or groups living abroad, or their support networks and family members".[7]

7. For the purposes of the present report, the Special Rapporteur defines transnational repression as any act or measure that violates the fundamental human rights and freedoms of individuals, groups and exiled communities beyond the borders of the Russian Federation and territories under its effective control, and that is planned, directed, instigated or supported by the Russian authorities, implemented by government agents, proxies or non-State enablers, and that has the purpose or effect of eliminating, silencing, punishing, intimidating, harassing, coercing, detaining, controlling or fragmenting those who engage in the expression of dissent, criticism or advocacy directed against the Russian authorities. Such acts and measures represent the extension beyond the borders of the Russian Federation of its structural, State-sponsored system of domestic repression. Russian transnational repression is therefore at once a violation of international human rights law and a challenge to host State sovereignty and the international legal order.

8. In the report, the Russian Federation is considered in three capacities: as the direct perpetrator of acts committed abroad by its agents or proxies; as the originating State whose internal acts – criminal prosecutions, designations and listings – are given effect beyond its borders, whether through automated cross-border data exchange, the conduct of host States, or the compliance of private actors; and as a host State enabling or facilitating transnational repression by other States against persons on its territory. The Special Rapporteur considers all three dimensions because each results in violations of the human rights of those targeted.

B. Sources

9. The Russian authorities continue to not respond to the Special Rapporteur's requests for information or to repeated requests to visit the country.

10. The present report draws on a broad range of sources within and outside the Russian Federation, including laws and official documents; first-hand testimony of victims and their family members, witnesses and legal counsel; submissions and documentation by non-governmental organizations operating inside and outside the Russian Federation;

[6] See https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/tools-and-resources/transnational-repression.
[7] See https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-10-2026-0203_EN.html.

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open-source and digital-forensic research; and the triangulated analysis of individual cases. The Special Rapporteur reviewed prima facie evidence of transnational repression allegedly attributable to the Russian Federation and that occurred between 2004 and 2026.

11. As with previous reports, the Special Rapporteur continues to apply a gender-sensitive approach through the intersectional analysis of data collection and assessment. Those providing information on human rights violations often face a heightened risk of acts of reprisal and intimidation against themselves or their relatives, including for cooperating with United Nations mechanisms and the present mandate. Consistent with her duty to protect sources and the principle of "do no harm", the Special Rapporteur has applied confidentiality, anonymity and other risk-mitigation measures.

III. Legal and conceptual framework

A. Applicable international law

12. Transnational repression engages the obligations of on the Russian Federation, including under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Conduct involving extrajudicial killing, assault, enforced disappearance, forced rendition and abduction engages the right to life, the absolute prohibition of torture and the right to personal liberty and security of person.[8] Online harassment and threats may, where they cause severe mental and other harm and suffering, amount to torture and other ill-treatment. Surveillance and the collection and storage of personal data engage the right to privacy. The suppression of free speech, civil society, media and public participation violates the freedoms of expression, association and assembly.

13. The European Court of Human Rights and United Nations treaty bodies have found the practical implementation and consequences of the "foreign agents" framework, and the "undesirable" organization and related designations, to restrict or violate the rights to freedom of expression, association and political participation.[9]

14. The prohibition of refoulement is absolute and of central importance to the human rights framework. States may not transfer persons to a country where there are substantial grounds for believing that they would face the risk of irreparable harm, including loss of life, torture, ill-treatment and flagrant denial of justice. The principle applies irrespective of migration status[10] and constrains extradition, deportation and informal transfer, including where the request is mediated by bilateral or multilateral arrangements.

15. Federal Law No. 284-FZ of 4 August 2026,[11] which targets the property, consular and civic rights of exiled government critics, dissidents, human rights defenders and anti-war activists, authorizes conduct that constitutes serious violations of freedom of movement and a range of socioeconomic rights.

B. Conceptual framework: a human rights-based approach

16. The Special Rapporteur emphasizes that transnational repression must be understood and addressed first and foremost as a matter of human rights, and not solely through the lens of national security or foreign interference. A purely security-based approach, including the

[8] See https://iphronline.org/articles/position-paper-coe-convention-on-tnr/.

[9] See European Court of Human Rights, *Ecodefence and others v. Russia*, Applications Nos. 9988/13 and 60 others, Judgment, 14 June 2022, *Kobaliya and others v. Russia*, Applications Nos. 39446/16 and 106 others, 22 October 2024, *Anti-Corruption Foundation (FBK) and others v. Russia*, Applications Nos. 13505/20 and 138 others, Judgment, 16 December 2025 and *Novaya Gazeta and others v. Russia*, Applications Nos. 11884/22 and 161 others, Judgment, 11 February 2025; and CCPR/C/RUS/CO/8.

[10] See https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Migration/GlobalCompactMigration/ThePrincipleNon-RefoulementUnderInternationalHumanRightsLaw.pdf.

[11] Available at http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/document/0001202608040009?index=1 (in Russian).

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framing of the phenomenon principally as espionage, foreign interference or counter-intelligence, carries the risk that members of exiled communities, including the very victims of repression, will be treated as suspects and subjected to restrictions in lieu of protection.

C. Extraterritorial obligations and attribution

17. While jurisdiction is primarily territorial, acts of State agents performed abroad, or producing effects abroad, may bring affected persons within a State's jurisdiction where those agents exercise authority and control over them.[12]

18. Given the covert character of the operations, coupled with the failure of the Russian Federation to cooperate and the resulting evidentiary asymmetry, the Special Rapporteur supports the view that, once a case is shown, on the balance of probabilities, to form part of a State practice of transnational repression, a rebuttable presumption of responsibility should operate, with the burden shifting to the State to provide a satisfactory and convincing explanation.

D. Transnational repression as reprisal for cooperation with the United Nations

19. Transnational repression directly undermines cooperation with international human rights mechanisms. Fear of reprisal and intimidation deters individuals and organizations from engaging with United Nations bodies, and the Russian authorities have exploited the "foreign agent" and "undesirable" designations to obstruct or cancel the Economic and Social Council consultative status and accreditation of independent Russian organizations, excluding their voices from United Nations deliberations.[13] The Government of the Russian Federation designated the Batani International Indigenous Fund for Development and Solidarity as an "undesirable organization" in retaliation for its participation in United Nations forums and engagement with United Nations Indigenous rights mechanisms, illustrating the use of domestic repression against organizations cooperating with the United Nations.[14]

IV. Transnational repression as a State strategy of the Russian Federation

A. Structural and institutionalized nature

20. Transnational repression by the Russian Federation is not a series of isolated incidents but a systematic and institutionalized instrument of policy, embedded in and extending from the domestic repressive system serving the objectives of information control, preventing opposition mobilization and suppressing critical voices. It is implemented by a wide array of State bodies. At least nine departments of the Federal Security Service are involved, alongside the military intelligence service, the Foreign Intelligence Service, the Investigative Committee, the Office of the Prosecutor-General, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and its directorate for combating extremism, the Ministry of Justice and the communications regulator, Roskomnadzor.

21. The escalation since 2022 has been accompanied by reported investment in new, dedicated operational infrastructure for transnational repression. Investigative reporting published in March 2026 alleged the existence of "Center 795", described as a clandestine

[12] European Court of Human Rights, *Issa and others v. Turkey*, Application No. 31821/96, Judgment, 16 November 2004, paras. 68 and 69; and *Al-Skeini and others v. the United Kingdom*, Application No. 55721/07, Judgment, 7 July 2011, para. 136.

[13] A/HRC/60/59, paras. 132–134.

[14] Ibid., para. 133.

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Russian security structure created in 2022 specifically for the conduct of sensitive intelligence, abduction and assassination operations abroad. An officer connected to the structure was arrested in Colombia.[15] The Special Rapporteur notes that attribution of specific operations to this structure cannot be independently confirmed on the available evidence.

22. New legislation, such as Federal Law No. 284-FZ, on temporary restrictive measures against persons located outside the Russian Federation and evading the execution of punishment, further demonstrates the State's systematization and "whole of government" approach to transnational repression.

B. Link to domestic repression: the export of repressive tools

23. Transnational repression mirrors, extends and reinforces the domestic toolkit. The same instruments deployed at home – arbitrary detention, surveillance, legal and administrative harassment and the confiscation of assets – are aimed outward.

24. Russian authorities have used charges relating to "foreign agent" and "undesirable" designations, "war censorship" charges and fabricated non-political charges to seek the extradition of exiled dissidents to the Russian Federation[16] and to place foreign nationals, including the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court and eight judges of that Court, be placed on international wanted lists.[17]

25. Trials and arrests in absentia, while not unlawful per se, have increasingly been used as instruments of transnational repression where proceedings lack basic safeguards and produce politically motivated convictions. The number of documented in absentia sentences rose from 4 in 2022 to 157 in 2025;[18] the expanded use has primarily targeted anti-war speech, journalism and opposition activity conducted abroad. Cases include that of anti-war activist Alexandra Pugach, sentenced in 2026 for speaking at a rally in Georgia, and film producer Alexander Rodnyansky, sentenced in October 2024 to eight and a half years' imprisonment for social media posts about civilian casualties in Ukraine. In March 2026, Nina Volokhonskaya, an aide to Alexei Navalny, was sentenced in absentia to five and a half years' imprisonment for participation in an "extremist community". Cumulatively, these proceedings enable the Russian authorities to punish, intimidate and constrain critics and their relatives beyond the country's borders, while possibly securing their detention or return.

C. Expansion of transnational repression since 2022

26. As noted, the full-scale invasion of Ukraine marked a sharp rise in transnational repression. Civil-society data sets show an approximately eightfold increase in the average annual number of incidents when comparing the period 2014–2021 with the period 2022–2024; the numbers tripled in absolute terms (from 29 incidents over eight years to 89 over three).[19]

27. Methods have shifted from overt violence towards covert, administrative and digital tools and a widening of both the geographical reach and the range of targets, including, in addition to the former insiders and Chechen dissidents targeted prior to 2022, ordinary anti-war emigrants, journalists, non-governmental organizations and conscientious objectors. While targeting remains most prevalent in South Caucasus and Central Asian States, documented incidents have dramatically increased in Europe and beyond.

[15] See https://theins.press/en/inv/290235.

[16] See https://www.freiheit.org/sites/default/files/2025-12/exiled-and-at-risk.pdf; and https://icds.ee/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/2025/05/ICDS_Policy_Paper_Distance_is_Not_a_Shield_Ivan_Klyszcz_May_2025.pdf.

[17] See https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2026/02/russia-must-end-reprisals-and-intimidation-icc-prosecutor-and-judges-un.

[18] Submission from OVD-info.

[19] See https://reports.ovd.info/en/transnational-repression-russian-federation-threats-tendencies-solutions.

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28. The 2023 Supreme Court designation of the "international LGBT movement" as "extremist" heightened the risk of criminal prosecution for LGBT activism. Since exile does not remove association with the designation, the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and other law enforcement cooperation mechanisms can be weaponized to pursue "extremism" charges abroad.

V. Patterns of transnational repression attributed to the Russian Federation

29. In the present section, the Special Rapporteur sets out the principal patterns of Russian transnational repression, with examples drawn from a database containing close to 400 documented cases. The cases are not exhaustive. Where relevant, the Special Rapporteur expressly notes the limits of attribution.

A. Targeted threats to life

30. The most serious, but also comparatively rare, forms are targeted violence and threats to life: assassinations, attempted killings, assaults and poisonings. The Russian Federation has a long history of political assassinations,[20] including the killing of Alexander Litvinenko with the radioactive isotope polonium-210 in London in 2006,[21] and assassination attempts, including the use of a military-grade nerve agent against Sergei and Yulia Skripal in Salisbury, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, in 2018.[22] In 2019, the former Chechen fighter and national of Georgia, Zelimkhan Khangoshvili, was shot dead in Berlin by Federal Security Service operative Vadim Krasikov, who, according to German courts, was acting under orders from the Russian authorities and was released from prison in August 2024 pursuant to a request from the Russian Federation in exchange for a group of Russian political prisoners.

31. In February 2024, Maxim Kuzminov, a Russian military pilot who had defected to Ukraine, was murdered in Spain in what Spanish authorities assessed as a targeted assassination. The head of the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service publicly described him as a "moral corpse".[23] Suspected poisonings have also targeted independent journalists and human rights defenders in exile: in October 2022, a *Novaya Gazeta* journalist, Elena Kostyuchenko, fell ill with symptoms of poisoning after travelling to Munich, Germany, and a former journalist at the Echo of Moscow radio station, Irina Babloyan, was similarly targeted a week later, in Tbilisi. The Special Rapporteur notes that attribution remains pending the outcome of investigation. In 2023, Natalia Arno, who is a Buryat human rights defender, and the President of the Free Russia Foundation, based in the United States, reported suspected poisonings during her trips to Czechia and Germany.[24] United States authorities investigating the alleged poisoning of Ms. Arno refused to reveal the findings, claiming it was a matter of United States "national security". Although no definitive causes have been publicly established, these incidents have resulted in serious health consequences, raising concerns regarding the security of Russian human rights defenders and pro-democracy activists in exile.

[20] See https://iphronline.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/iphr_rule-443-intervention_ukraine-v-russia_final.pdf.

[21] See European Court of Human Rights, *Carter v. Russia*, Application No. 20914/07, Judgment, 21 September 2021.

[22] See https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6981f8438c1e89ed1e91bb7d/E03283426_Project_Orbit_Accessible_v2.pdf.

[23] See https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-68337794.

[24] Submission from Free Russia Foundation.

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32. Other violent assaults that have been documented include the 2020 hammer attack, in Sweden, on the Chechen opposition blogger Tumso Abdurakhmanov and the 2025 assassination plot, in France, against human rights defender Vladimir Osechkin, who helped reveal torture in Russian prisons.[25]

B. Forcible returns, refoulement and abuse of International Criminal Police Organization and international cooperation mechanisms

33. The forcible return of individuals to the Russian Federation through extradition, deportation, expulsion, rendition or abduction is among the most dangerous forms of transnational repression, as it delivers the target into the hands of the very authorities from whom protection is sought. It is most prevalent in countries where the Russian Federation retains influence and cooperation from local authorities and where multilateral and bilateral mechanisms enable detention with minimal safeguards.

34. The Commonwealth of Independent States inter-State wanted-list system allows for a person to be placed on a wanted list and detained across member States without the political-motivation screening that applies, at least nominally, within INTERPOL. The system is based on the conventions on legal assistance and legal relations in civil, family and criminal matters signed by members of the Commonwealth of Independent States in Minsk in 1993 and in Chisinau in 2002, and the 2010 agreement on the inter-State search for persons system, none of which contains adequate human rights safeguards against refoulement. Member countries where the system applies include Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism, and Extremism, adopted by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which includes China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, provides that, in their mutual relations, the Parties are to consider acts referred to in article 1 (1) of the Convention (terrorism, separatism and extremism) as extraditable offences (art. 2 (2)) and requires Parties to cooperate on those matters (art. 2 (3)). Responses to Russian extradition requests by these countries vary by country. The Russian Federation is also a Party to 96 bilateral extradition agreements and around 20 international extradition treaties.[26]

35. The above-mentioned mechanisms have been used to detain Russian dissidents, among them Yulia Yemelyanova (a supporter of Alexei Navalny) and Mansur Movlayev (a vocal critic of the head of Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov). Ms. Emelyanova was detained in Kazakhstan in August 2025 on a theft charge, while Mr. Movlayev was detained in May 2025 on an extradition request made by the Russian Federation related to extortion charges; both deny the charges, calling them fabricated. Mansur Movlayev was previously abducted, arbitrarily detained and tortured by Chechen security forces, and faces imminent risk of torture or death upon return. In February 2026, the Human Rights Committee requested the implementation of urgent interim measures with regard to Mr. Movlayev; the request was followed by a decision by the Supreme Court of Kazakhstan halting his extradition, pending an appeal regarding his asylum request.

36. In October 2023, Russian authorities unsuccessfully sought the extradition of Vjaceslavs Dombrovskis – a former Latvian Member of Parliament and government minister – from Kyrgyzstan, where he was teaching. Russian authorities issued international arrest warrants against him and other Latvian parliamentarians for having voted, in 2022, in favour of the demolition of Soviet monuments in Latvia. In April 2025, Azerbaijan extradited Sotim Savlatov, a dual Tajik-Russian national, on desertion charges. Between March 2025 and June 2026, several Russian dissidents and anti-war activists were detained in Armenia on the basis of requests from the Russian Federation, but were subsequently released.

[25] See https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2025/10/16/france-arrests-four-men-suspected-of-plotting-the-assassination-of-a-russian-dissident_6746501_4.html.

[26] See https://www.freiheit.org/human-rights-hub-geneva/exiled-and-risk-russian-and-belarusian-dissidents-non-eu-states.

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37. Where extradition is unavailable, Russian authorities have used diplomatic and administrative channels to obtain the expulsion of its targets from foreign States, thus circumventing formal extraditions and depriving the individual of criminal procedure safeguards. In February 2026, Kazakhstan expelled information and technology specialist Alexander Kachkurkin, a dual Ukrainian-Russian national from Crimea, to the Russian Federation on pretextual charges of smoking in enclosed premises and jaywalking – both misdemeanor offences in Kazakhstan. In the Russian Federation, he was immediately arrested on charges of treason in connection with alleged donations to Ukraine. If convicted, he faces up to life imprisonment under article 275 of the Russian Criminal Code.

38. Even more illicit methods of refoulement are also used, including alleged illegal transfers potentially amounting to abductions. In December 2025, Semyon Bazhukov, who had deserted the Russian military, was detained by police in Kazakhstan and handed over to Russian police, who went to Kazakhstan. The latter tortured him on the territory of Kazakhstan and moved him to a Russian military base, from which he managed to escape. He was again detained, however, by Kazakh police and returned to the Russian Federation in 2026 through an illicit transfer. In December 2023, Russian military abducted, from Armenia, Dmitry Setrakov, who had deserted the army. In May 2023, Alexey Rozhkov, an anti-war activist, was illicitly transferred from Kyrgyzstan to the Russian Federation, where he alleges he was tortured and threatened with rape. In May 2025 he was sentenced to 16 years' imprisonment on charges of "justifying terrorism" and spreading "fake news" about the army. Georgy Pirogov, a Russian national who had lived abroad since 2022, disappeared in Uzbekistan in July 2024 and resurfaced several days later in pretrial detention in Moscow. In July 2026, he was sentenced to 23 years' imprisonment on treason charges.

39. According to documents leaked to the media, the Russian Federation is the leading abuser of INTERPOL systems and mechanisms. The documents demonstrate that the Russian Federation is the most prolific user of INTERPOL Red Notices, and roughly half of the Russian Federation-related cases reviewed by the INTERPOL oversight body in 2024 were found non-compliant with the organization's Constitution. Some recent examples of the State's abuse of INTERPOL mechanisms include the case of Russian businessman Igor Pestrikov, who fled to France in 2022 after refusing to support the State's war effort, was subsequently charged with fraud and was made the subject of an INTERPOL Red Notice.[27] In April 2024, the Commission for the Control of INTERPOL's Files found the case to be predominantly political and ordered the deletion of the Red Notice. Andemirkan Guchaev, a Chechen political refugee in the United Kingdom, was arrested while vacationing in Italy in August 2023 pursuant to an INTERPOL Red Notice; he was subsequently released after a hearing on the extradition in an Italian court.[28]

40. The criminalization of Indigenous activism creates distinct vulnerabilities to transnational repression, with Russian authorities often relying on fabricated terrorism, weapons or other criminal charges rather than extremism-related offences to facilitate cross-border coercion. Circassian activist Khasan Matuev, from Kabardino-Balkaria, Russian Federation, was detained in May 2025 in Türkiye on terrorism and weapons-related charges pursuant to a Russian request and subsequently released. Bashkir independence activist Artur Zaripov, who fled the Russian Federation for Poland in 2018 after imprisonment on terrorism-related charges, has been detained in Poland four times during a period of 18 months following Russian Federation abuse of INTERPOL systems.[29]

C. Surveillance of the diaspora

41. Russian security services dedicate substantial resources to monitoring Russians, Ukrainians and other foreign nationals abroad, using human intelligence, recruited operatives, infiltration of émigré and activist circles, and technical and digital surveillance. In Germany, Pablo González, an intelligence officer posing as a Spanish journalist, infiltrated

[27] See https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c20gg729y1yo.
[28] See https://www.palermotoday.it/cronaca/scarcerato-russo-arrestato-aeroporto.html.
[29] See https://www.interpolrednotice.com/news-1/interpol-being-used-by-kremlin-to-arrest-critics-outside-of-russia%2C-opponents-say.

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the close circle of Zhanna Nemtsova, a human rights defender and the daughter of murdered Russian opposition politician Boris Nemtsov, monitoring her activities. In July 2026, Igor Rogov, an exiled political activist, was sentenced in Poland to seven years' imprisonment for espionage, including through the transmission of information on Russian opposition activists.[30] Surveillance abroad has been reported in Armenia, Georgia, Switzerland and several European Union States, frequently preceding harassment or attack.

42. Diplomatic missions have been implicated as platforms for surveillance activity. Investigations indicate that Russian intelligence has tracked the identities of citizens attending anti-government protests by cross-referencing intercepted mobile traffic with closed-circuit footage. Evidence exists that the Federal Security Service covertly installs spyware on devices of detainees and continues to spy on their cyberactivities after their release. Notably, forensic analysis conducted by The Citizen Lab in 2024 confirmed that an updated version of the Monokle spyware – enabling continued surveillance – had been covertly installed on the device of a Russian programmer, Kirill Parubets. He had been living abroad since 2020 and was detained during a visit Moscow relating to humanitarian donations to Ukraine. The Service allegedly attempted to recruit him as an informant and he was released after agreeing to cooperate; his phone, which had been confiscated, was returned to him by the Service.

D. Denial of government services, documents and asset freezes

43. Russian authorities deny or withdraw consular services and travel documents to citizens abroad as an instrument of pressure. An open criminal case, or an unpaid administrative fine of the kind routinely imposed under the "foreign agent" legislation, can result in the withdrawal or non-renewal of a passport, leaving exiles unable to regularize their status abroad. In January 2023, the Russian Embassy in Canada refused consular services to Elena Pushkareva, citing a "security threat", after she had taken part in a Facebook group and demonstrations advocating for the release of Alexei Navalny and other political prisoners.

44. Federal Law No. 284-FZ, which codifies and systematizes this form of transnational repression, is applied to Russian nationals abroad convicted of any criminal offence or found liable under politically motivated administrative provisions, including those relating to "foreign agent" or "undesirable organization" designations, "war censorship" laws and calls for sanctions or to violate the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation. In substance this is a targeted punishment of anti-war activists and government critics en masse, designed to make life outside the Russian Federation unsustainable. Those affected retain the duties of citizenship but lose most of its content, and are thus rendered de facto stateless. The Ministry of Justice maintains a public list of affected Russians abroad. Once listed, they face 14 categories of restrictions, including the freezing of funds and property; withdrawal of most consular services, including the issuing and renewal of passports; refusal of all digital State services; suspension of licences and accreditation; and bans relating to driving, vehicle registration, property transactions, notarial acts, powers of attorney, credit, self-employment and remote banking.[31]

E. Abuse of legal and administrative tools and banks and other financial institutions

45. Russian authorities make extensive use of legal and administrative processes as instruments of extraterritorial coercion: the placement of individuals on terrorist and extremist registers, the holding of prosecutions and trials in absentia, the submission of requests for international arrest warrants and the freezing of assets and bank accounts. Even

[30] See https://www.gov.pl/web/prokuratura-krajowa/akt-oskarzenia-wobec-dwoch-obywateli-rosji-za-szpiegostwo-na-rzecz-rosyjskiego-wywiadu (in Polish) and https://www.theguardian.com/news/ng-interactive/2026/aug/13/a-bungled-bomb-plot-in-poland-exposed-a-spy-but-whose-spy-was-he.

[31] See https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2026/08/new-russian-law-inflicts-civic-death-government-critics-abroad-traitors.

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where a request for extradition fails, the request itself causes serious harm to the target, through detention, legal costs, prolonged uncertainty and restrictions on movement.

46. Russian authorities rely increasingly on the Federal Financial Monitoring Service (Rosfinmonitoring) list of "terrorists and extremists" to enact political repression at home and transnational repression abroad. Banks and other financial-service providers in the Americas and Europe have treated the listing of persons in the "terrorists and extremists" registers of the Russian Federation as a legitimate anti-terrorism financing red flag, blocking accounts even when they have no evidence connecting the account holder to terrorism or violent extremism. Thus, private actors give effect to Russian designations. As of mid-2026, the Rosfinmonitoring list of "terrorists and extremists" contained 21,541 individuals designated as terrorists or extremists, 247 organizations designated as "terrorist" and 556 organizations designated as "extremist". At least 5,063 (23.5 per cent) of the individuals were prosecuted on politically motivated administrative or criminal charges. The share of new politically motivated listings has increased, from 9 per cent prior to February 2022 to 41 per cent in 2024.[32] In October 2025, a criminal case on terrorism-related charges was opened against members of the Russian Antiwar Committee, among them former political prisoners Mikhail Khodorkovsky, Vladimir Kara-Murza and Anastasia Shevchenko, political scientist Ekaterina Shulman and 19 others. Inclusion in the list also increasingly affects foreign nationals, among them citizens of Ukraine, the United States and States in the European Union, reflecting the growing extraterritorial reach of the Government of the Russian Federation and its abuse of national security, counter-terrorism and extremism-related legislation.

47. The Special Rapporteur is aware that information entered by Rosfinmonitoring into its list of "terrorists and extremists" is automatically disseminated through global know-your-customer and anti-money-laundering compliance databases, including the LSEG World-Check (formally known as Refinitiv), LexisNexis and Dow Jones Risk & Compliance databases, extending the effects of Russian designations across jurisdictions. For example, lawyers representing exiled opposition politician Leonid Gozman contacted LSEG World-Check following the inclusion of Mr. Gozman on the list of "terrorists and extremists" in January 2025. Charged with "justifying terrorism" for his public anti-war statements, Mr. Gozman was subsequently sentenced in absentia to 10 years' imprisonment in November 2025. LSEG World-Check stated that information is collected from publicly available government sources, such as Rosfinmonitoring, and sent automatically – without verification of or a vetting process for individual cases – to subscribers from banks and financial institutions.

F. Digital transnational repression

48. Digital transnational repression has intensified and now constitutes a central instrument of Russian government repression against exiles. It includes the control of online platforms and infrastructure; targeted technical attacks, such as deploying spyware, conducting phishing campaigns and hacking; and social and informational attacks, including online harassment, doxxing and coordinated online smear campaigns.

49. In 2024 a phishing campaign attributed by researchers, including The Citizen Lab and Access Now, to actors aligned with the Government of the Russian Federation targeted the opposition in exile, media and non-governmental organizations in the United States and Europe. [33] Furthermore, in early 2026, civil society exposed a campaign against secure-messaging accounts (Proton) that compromised human rights defenders, journalists and over 300 European politicians.

50. Doxxing of activists in documented cases has been carried out by an active Federal Security Service officer and amplified by a member of the State Duma. The "Underside" platform has, since 2021, served as a repository for data stolen from European donors and

[32] See https://antiwarcommittee.info/en/russias-list-of-terrorists-and-extremists-political-designations-compliance-risks-and-cross-border-effects/.

[33] See https://www.accessnow.org/russian-phishing-campaigns/.

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non-governmental organizations and released through a methodology that includes tainted leaks.[34] Journalists in exile have received threats that included photographs of and travel data relating to relatives. The Special Rapporteur notes that three exiled independent journalists (from iStories and *The Insider*) targeted with digital threats in 2023 – Marfa Smirnova, Irina Dolinina and Alesya Marokhovskaya – received messages including their residential addresses and information regarding their travel plans and daily routines, indicating that they were under surveillance.

51. Lastly, the Russian Federation exports surveillance and censorship technology, including deep-packet-inspection and facial-recognition systems, and global-positioning jamming and spoofing, to other States, normalizing authoritarian practice and creating a shared ecosystem in which authoritarian States assist one another in neutralizing exiled civil society.

G. Backed by Moscow: repression by Chechnya beyond borders

52. A distinct and especially brutal form of transnational repression is directed against the Chechen diaspora by the leadership of Chechnya, with the acquiescence of Russian federal authorities. Unlike relatively low key and targeted Russian transnational repression prior to 2022, activities undertaken by Chechen authorities during the past two decades have targeted the diaspora in its entirety through surveillance, infiltration and violent coercion by proxy against relatives remaining in the Russian Federation.

53. The killings of Chechen government critics abroad, including Zelimkhan Khangoshvili in Berlin (2019), Umar Israilov in Vienna (2009), Imran Aliyev in Lille, France (2020) and Mamikhan Umarov near Vienna (2020), and the assault on Tumso Abdurakhmanov in Gävle, Sweden (2020) present a recognizable pattern of violence and intimidation. The head of Chechnya has openly threatened exiled critics, declaring that "this modern age and technology allow us to know everything and we can find any of you".[35]

54. There is a documented trend of women fleeing forced marriage or domestic violence being pursued by family members,[36] often abroad and often with the acquiescence or direct complicity of Chechen authorities, including through accusations of criminal offences to secure the women's return to Chechnya. Where such conduct is directed, encouraged or facilitated by the Chechen authorities or Russian federal authorities, or forms part of the broader Chechen policy and Russian State policy of regulating sexuality, family relations or gender roles through coercion, intimidation or punishment (even if implemented by private actors), the Special Rapporteur considers such conduct to constitute transnational repression.

55. For example, Selima Khadisova, a Chechen woman who had fled domestic violence, was detained upon arrival in Bosnia and Herzegovina in September 2024 pursuant to an INTERPOL Red Notice requested by the Russian Federation on terrorism-related charges, clearly indicating the federal authorities' backing. In December 2024, Bosnia and Herzegovina rejected the extradition request made by the Russian Federation and granted her asylum, recognizing the protection risks she faced.

56. LGBT individuals, routinely tortured in Chechnya, are also targeted abroad with the assistance of the governments of the Russian Federation and Chechnya. After fleeing alleged torture in Chechnya in 2020, Salman Mukaev, perceived to be gay, was detained in Armenia in 2024 on Russian weapons-related charges, before being granted refugee status.

[34] See https://icds.ee/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/2025/05/ICDS_Policy_Paper_Distance_is_Not_a_Shield_Ivan_Klyszcz_May_2025.pdf.

[35] See https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2021-02/Complete_FH_TransnationalRepressionReport2021_rev020221.pdf.

[36] A/HRC/57/59, paras. 128–130.

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H. Use of proxies

57. As host States have expelled Russian diplomats and spies, the Russian Federation has increasingly "outsourced" its transnational repression operations to private proxies (thus deliberately obscuring attribution), including recruited activists and coerced collaborators, informal operatives, oligarchs supporting Russian government policies, and members of criminal networks and diaspora structures. The United Kingdom has uncovered and prosecuted a network of Bulgarian nationals working for Russian intelligence involved in a range of destabilization activities, such as assassination plots (including one targeting Christo Grozev, a Bellingcat researcher), surveillance, sabotage and intimidation.

I. Coercion by proxy and family intimidation

58. Intimidation of relatives who remain in the Russian Federation is used as a tool to silence those abroad or entice their return to the Russian Federation to face detention and torture. Rare before 2022 (outside of the Chechen context), such intimidation as a means of coercion has become increasingly documented ; it is common for families of exiles to receive "visits" and threats from security services, to have family members' assets seized, to face the prospect of the mobilization of male relatives and the criminal prosecution of family members, and even to be subjected to abduction and torture.

59. In December 2021, several relatives of opposition blogger Tumso Abdurakhmanov were abducted in Chechnya and threatened with violence, for the purpose of eliciting apologies from Mr. Abdurakhmanov to the head of Chechnya. They were released within a month. Relatives of another blogger, Khasan Khalitov, were abducted, while in June 2024 his father and two brothers were arbitrarily detained and disappeared. In January 2022, Zarema Musaeva, the mother of exiled Chechen opposition activists Abubakar and Ibrahim Yangulbaev, was forcibly taken from Nizhny Novgorod to Chechnya and imprisoned; in a judgment dated 28 May 2024, the European Court of Human Rights found that her detention was in retaliation for her sons' activities. In December 2021, at least 37 relatives of the Yangulbaevs had been arbitrarily detained in Chechnya. Most of them were released within three days, while others were not released until February 2022, after publicly dissociating themselves from the two brothers. In June 2026, the parents of Mansur Movlayev were abducted and his brother tortured by Chechen authorities to pressure Mr. Movlayev, who was resisting extradition from Kazakhstan.

60. The fathers of Ivan Zhdanov and Leonid Volkov, Alexei Navalny associates who had held positions in the Anti-Corruption Foundation, faced various charges, including for fundraising for "extremist" organizations; in Bashkortostan, the brother of exiled dissident Ruslan Gabbasov – Rustam Fararitdinov – has been incarcerated since November 2023 on terrorism charges, while Mr. Gabbasov himself is wanted for extremism.

J. Strategic litigation against public participation as a tool of Russian transnational repression

61. Strategic litigation against public participation has increasingly been used worldwide to impede the work of journalists, human rights defenders and other individuals expressing themselves on matters of public interest. Such litigation takes the form of defamation lawsuits, breach of privacy actions, data protection claims, harassment and tort claims, intentionally overwhelming the defendant with costly and protracted litigation by a claimant with significantly greater economic resources in order to secure silence and self-censorship. Private individuals, rather than States, typically initiate such lawsuits; however, evidence indicates that it is increasingly used by States as a tactic of transnational repression, particularly where credible evidence shows that it is brought, directed, encouraged or materially supported by a State or its proxies. The close interrelationship between political power, State-controlled enterprises and politically connected private actors in the Russian Federation means that litigation brought by private individuals seeking to suppress reporting on corruption, human rights abuses or sanction evasion may, in many cases, be carried out directly or indirectly on behalf of the Government of the Russian Federation.

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62. Cases reviewed by the Special Rapporteur demonstrate a growing number of such legal proceedings against investigative journalists and media outlets operating outside the Russian Federation. In 2021, Russian oligarchs Roman Abramovich, Petr Aven, Mikhail Fridman and Shalva Chigirinsky and the State-controlled company Rosneft initiated proceedings, including for libel, in the United Kingdom against journalist Catherine Belton and HarperCollins Publishers, following the publication of her book *Putin's People: How the KGB Took Back Russia and Then Took on the West*, seeking amendments to or retractions of passages in the book. The participation in the lawsuit of the State-controlled company Rosneft provides strong evidence that the lawsuit was State-directed.

63. In December 2021, Yevgeny Prigozhin, founder of the Russian paramilitary company Wagner Group, brought a defamation lawsuit in the United Kingdom against Bellingcat founder Eliot Higgins for social media posts exposing Mr. Prigozhin's connection with the Wagner Group. Although nominally a private company, the Wagner Group was fully funded from the defence budget of the Russian Federation, substantially integrated into the State's Ministry of Defence structures and hierarchies and acted as an arms-length proxy of the Government of the Russian Federation. Although the proceedings were discontinued in 2022, they resulted in substantial legal costs for the defendant.

K. Russian Federation as host State: enabling transnational repression by third States

64. The Special Rapporteur finds that the Russian Federation is both the region's principal perpetrator of transnational repression and its principal enabler. Submissions received by the Special Rapporteur documented at least 140 incidents between 2004 and 2025 involving allegations of involvement by the Russian Federation in transnational repression against nationals of Azerbaijan, Belarus, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. These politically motivated cases reveal recurring patterns of detention and extradition, abduction and enforced disappearance. To circumvent extradition, Russian authorities use deportation and deprivation of nationality to facilitate removals.

65. The Russian Federation has maintained particularly close cooperation with Belarus, reportedly granting over 80 per cent of its extradition requests. Following the 2020 presidential elections, Belarusian protesters who sought refuge in the Russian Federation were forcibly returned despite credible risks of torture and arbitrary detention. In 2021, approximately 20 protesters were deported to Belarus, including in contravention of interim measures issued by the European Court of Human Rights. In several cases, the Russian authorities used alleged migration or registration violations to remove opposition figures from its territory despite the manifestly political nature of the charges against them.[37]

66. The same legal and institutional infrastructure that the Russian Federation employs to pursue its own critics abroad is also used to facilitate transnational repression by other States. Amriddin Alovatshoev, an opposition activist from Kŭhistoni Badakhshon Autonomous Oblast, Tajikistan, was apprehended in Moscow in January 2022 after a protest at the Tajik embassy and illicitly transferred to Tajikistan, where he was sentenced to 18 years' imprisonment. Zhetkerbay Abdiramanov, an activist from Karakalpakstan, Uzbekistan, was detained seeking asylum at Sheremetyevo International Airport in the Russian Federation in December 2024 and later deported to Uzbekistan, despite an earlier decision to deny an extradition request. Turdu Akmataliev, a Kyrgyz opposition activist residing in the Russian Federation, was detained in Krasnoyarsk in March 2024, and extradited to Kyrgyzstan in October 2024, on the basis of charges of publicly calling for the violent seizure of power stemming from his Facebook posts critical of the Government, and placed in pretrial detention. Ashyrbay Bekiev, a Turkmen religious activist who had lived in the Russian Federation legally since 2009, was declared wanted by Turkmenistan in 2015 for alleged religious "extremism". Despite a European Court of Human Rights ruling prohibiting his

[37] See https://pace.coe.int/en/files/36058/html.

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removal, he was deported from the Russian Federation in August 2023. In October 2023, a court in Dashoguz, Turkmenistan, sentenced him to 23 years' imprisonment.

VI. Accountability and protection gaps

A. Impunity

67. Accountability for transnational repression in the Russian Federation is non-existent. Investigations are absent, superficial or obstructed. Russian authorities deny involvement even where evidence is unambiguous and have at times promoted or honoured alleged perpetrators. Furthermore, the Russian Federation often relies on proxies and hybrid methods to obscure attribution (see para. 57 above).[38]

68. The impunity gap extends to the accountability infrastructure itself. In June 2026, OVD-Info – whose monitoring has provided an essential evidentiary foundation for international reporting on Russian repression, including for reporting carried out under the present mandate – was added to the Rosfinmonitoring list of "terrorists and extremists", a designation that automatically propagates through global banking compliance databases and that threatens to result in the severance of the organization's international financial relationships and funding. The designation of an organization as "extremist" for documenting abuses is a reprisal against cooperation with international human rights mechanisms and a deliberate attempt to degrade the evidentiary record on which accountability depends. It is, moreover, self-reinforcing: by criminalizing sources, the Russian Federation renders independent verification of its own conduct harder over time.

B. Weak protection

69. Protection for those at risk is insufficient and inconsistent. Studies of host-State national capacity to tackle Russian transnational repression identify the absence of a clear understanding of and a strategy against transnational repression, limited awareness among officials, fragmented inter-agency coordination and a lack of dedicated reporting mechanisms for victims.[39]

C. Obligations of States, including host States of victims

70. All States, and in particular host States, bear a positive obligation to protect individuals from transnational repression within their jurisdiction. They must do so by providing protection to identified targets where there is a real and immediate risk, by refraining from complicity in violations by foreign States and by investigating and prosecuting those responsible. Host States must ensure that extradition, deportation and other expulsion or removal proceedings and mutual legal assistance procedures comply with fair-trial guarantees and the absolute prohibition on refoulement. Any information-sharing or interference with property and other rights effected pursuant to mutual legal assistance and law enforcement cooperation must be subject to fair and impartial processes.

D. Good practice

71. Canada provides a good example of a public awareness campaign on a specific transnational repression threat targeted at an exiled community, which includes information published in the language of the community.[40] Meanwhile, the Australian Federal Police has

[38] See also A/HRC/60/59, para. 33.

[39] See, for example, https://www.state-capture.org/s/assessing-germanys-capacity-to-counter-russian-transnational-repression.pdf.

[40] See https://www.canada.ca/en/privy-council/news/2025/04/transnational-repression-operation0.html.

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developed community interference fact sheets, available in over 40 languages, to assist in educating communities on transnational repression and foreign interference.

72. In 2023, the United Kingdom introduced a legislative provision establishing a criminal offence to target transnational repression. The provision criminalizes, among other things, coercion of any kind, including using or threatening to use violence, damaging or destroying property, damaging or threatening to damage a person's reputation, causing or threatening financial loss to a person and causing spiritual injury to, or placing undue spiritual pressure on, a person. It applies where the conduct is carried out for or on behalf of a foreign power and where the person knows or ought reasonably to know that to be the case. The conduct must interfere with the exercise by a particular person of a right under the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (European Convention on Human Rights) in the United Kingdom, and more broadly prejudicing the safety or interests of the United Kingdom.[41] The country's Defending Democracy Taskforce reviews legislation and government policy for countering foreign interference and transnational repression. It acts as a cross-government policy advisory and monitoring group.

73. In 2025, a new provision of the Criminal Code of the Kingdom of the Netherlands came into force, criminalizing digital and diaspora-targeted espionage.

74. Poland adopted the Act on Special Protection Measures in Civil Proceedings for Persons Participating in Public Debate in June 2026. The Act implements Directive (EU) 2024/1069 of the European Parliament and of the Council, on protection against strategic litigation against public participation,[42] while covering both domestic and cross-border lawsuits. It provides for the early dismissal of unfounded or abusive claims, establishes criteria for identifying strategic litigation against public participation and enables defendants to recover legal costs, thereby reducing the chilling effect of abusive litigation on public participation.

75. In April 2026, Germany enacted new legislation to criminalize transnational repression, increasing penalties for intentional illegal acts committed on behalf of foreign states. Measures also include regular inter-agency meetings on transnational repression, enhanced inter-agency information exchange and rapid response, and the creation of a designated coordination unit in the Federal Foreign Office for foreign policy countermeasures. Germany also initiated the joint statement on transnational repression as a human rights threat presented to the Human Rights Council at its sixtieth session.

VII. Conclusions and recommendations

76. **The Special Rapporteur concludes that the Russian Federation conducts a widespread, systematic, institutionalized, purposeful and adaptive policy of transnational repression that represents the continuation, beyond the country's borders, of the structural system of repression by the Government. The practice of pursuing political émigrés has been a feature of Soviet and Russian statecraft for well over a century. However, since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, that practice has expanded in scale, diversified in method and widened in geographical reach, shifting towards covert, administrative and digital tools and the use of proxies, obscuring attribution. The "foreign agent" and "undesirable organization" designations and the "war censorship" laws – once targeted frameworks – have been expanded into a system of mass stigmatization, imposing broad professional, financial and social restrictions.**

77. **The defining features of this transnational repression are violence and intimidation, instrumentalization of legal and administrative process, including through extradition and other forcible removal mechanisms; abuse of INTERPOL and mutual legal assistance mechanisms and tools used by private financial institutions; the denial of travel documents and consular services; the intensification of digital repression; the confiscation of assets; and the intimidation or persecution of relatives who remain in the country. The practice violates the whole array of rights of those**

[41] See https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/32/contents.
[42] See https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/1069/oj.

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targeted, chills civic space and engagement with international mechanisms and undermines the sovereignty of, and rule of law in, host States.

78. **There is credible information indicating that global financial institutions, including banks and other private entities, are denying services to targets of Russian transnational repression, or flagging them as high risk, as a result of the institutions' reliance on information from compliance databases, such as those of LSEG World-Check and LexisNexis, that had been taken directly, and without verification, from official Rosfinmonitoring designations of "terrorists and extremists".**

79. **Transnational repression inflicts profound and lasting harm on individuals, groups and States. Rendered de facto stateless, which amounts to "civic death", victims describe constant fear, self-censorship, curtailed public and online activity, loss of banking and consular services, property rights and livelihoods, and forced displacement. Advocates for Indigenous Peoples, and LGBT persons, face heightened risks, as Russian authorities criminalize their activities as "extremist", extending repression beyond the country's borders. Transnational repression erodes trust and spreads fear and suspicion throughout entire communities, the diaspora and activist networks, thus intentionally weakening independent media and civil society in exile. Transnational repression in host States distorts asylum and residence procedures, challenges the rule of law and subverts domestic legal systems.**

80. **The abuse of international law enforcement cooperation and mutual legal assistance constitutes an impermissible assertion of extraterritorial criminal jurisdiction over the peaceful exercise of freedom of expression, association and political participation in exile. The use of in absentia proceedings (in particular to generate international arrest warrants), property freezes, international wanted lists and travel restrictions against diaspora critics transforms international legal cooperation mechanisms into instruments of persecution and must be assessed as such by host States before any effect is given to the resulting requests.**

81. **Transnational repression engages the obligations of both the originating State and the State on whose territory it takes place. Host States are required, at a minimum, to refrain from complicity in foreign transnational repression, to protect those on their territory from physical and mental harm, to investigate acts and threats that give rise to such harm and to refrain from giving effect to foreign measures that punish the legitimate exercise of fundamental freedoms.**

82. **No binding international instrument specifically addresses transnational repression, and few States define the concept in domestic law. While transnational repression breaches existing human rights obligations, a dangerous protection gap exists in the absence of harmonized definitions, host-State duties and frameworks for inter-State cooperation, leaving victims exposed, particularly to the bureaucratic, digital and low-visibility forms of transnational repression that now prevail.**

83. **There is nothing inevitable about transnational repression: where host States meet their obligations to prevent, refrain from contributing to, and investigate transnational repression and to protect its victims, transnational repression fails in its objectives. Accountability and protection therefore require the active engagement of host States and the international community as a whole. The protection of vulnerable individuals and the protection of the sovereignty of, and democracy and rule of law in, host States are complementary rather than competing objectives; consequently, a State achieves the most durable security by upholding the rights of those targeted on its territory. A victim-centred, gender-sensitive and intersectional approach should guide both protection and accountability.**

84. **The Special Rapporteur recommends that the Russian Federation:**

(a) **Cooperate and engage in good faith with the mandate of the Special Rapporteur and grant her unhindered access to the country, including all territories under the State's effective control, enable full engagement with all stakeholders and take urgent steps to implement the recommendations contained in the present report and previous reports of the Special Rapporteur;**

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(b) **Immediately cease all acts of transnational repression, including surveillance operations, digital attacks, targeted violence, threats to life, coercion of relatives and the extraterritorial abuse of legal and administrative procedures, and ensure accountability and effective remedy and reparation for victims;**

(c) **Cease the practice of sentencing individuals in absentia, the placement of individuals on "terrorists and extremists" lists and the issuance of international arrest warrants for the peaceful and legitimate exercise of human rights, and refrain from seeking extraditions, expulsions or returns on such grounds;**

(d) **Rescind politically motivated designations of individuals and organizations, such as of human rights defenders, LGBT persons and members of Indigenous Peoples and national minorities and other groups as "extremist" and "terrorist" where they are legitimately and peacefully exercising their human rights, and reverse other decisions that amount to the deliberate and systematic abuse of anti-terrorism and counter-extremism regulatory frameworks;**

(e) **Repeal the legislation on "foreign agents" and "undesirable organizations" and the "war censorship" laws, and end the abuse of national security and public safety legislation to silence dissent and anti-war expression;**

(f) **Repeal Federal Law No. 284-FZ of 4 August 2026 and other legislation that restricts the rights of individuals abroad, including through the revocation of nationality, to punish dissent;**

(g) **Put an end to the campaign of transnational repression of the Chechen diaspora carried out by the Russian federal authorities and the Chechen authorities;**

(h) **Immediately cease the abuse of INTERPOL and other law enforcement cooperation and mutual legal assistance agreements to target critics and opponents of the Government of the Russian Federation, its strategy of repression at home and aggression against Ukraine. Adhere to the INTERPOL Constitution by refraining from using INTERPOL to channel politically motivated cases and cases that result, in substance or procedure, in human rights violations.**

85. **The Special Rapporteur recommends that the international community and States Members of the United Nations, including host States of victims of transnational repression:**

(a) **Elaborate and adopt, in international and national law, a comprehensive, victim-centred definition of transnational repression, and a whole-of-government strategy with a dedicated focal point and provision for systematic monitoring recording of incidents, and training for law enforcement, security, immigration and asylum authorities;**

(b) **Ensure that data-collection, monitoring and risk-assessment frameworks disaggregate incidents by gender, sexual orientation and gender identity, ethnicity and migration status, to enable evidence-based understanding of who bears the greatest burden of transnational repression and to design protective measures accordingly;**

(c) **Strengthen support to Russian independent media workers, human rights defenders, lawyers and members of civil society organizations in exile, including through funding, flexible assistance and digital security, and protect them and their families against reprisals, ensure that designation by the Government of the Russian Federation of human rights groups and other civil society organizations and individual human rights defenders, activists and dissidents as "extremist" or "terrorist" is adequately assessed and qualified as a form of politically motivated transnational repression and adopt protection mechanisms or frameworks to shield those groups and individuals from the adverse negative effects of such actions taken by the Russian authorities, while avoiding securitized approaches that treat members of exiled communities as suspects;**

(d) **Apply targeted sanctions against those responsible for or who facilitate transnational repression, such as government, law enforcement and security service officials, judges and prosecutors, including through controls on exports to the Russian**

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Federation of surveillance and censorship technology, screen requests for diplomatic accreditation for such conduct and deny accreditation to personnel implicated in such conduct;

(e) **Strengthen protections against strategic litigation against public participation and against the abuse of mutual legal assistance and asset-freezing mechanisms;**

(f) **Refrain from any complicity in acts of transnational repression and ensure full compliance with the principle of non-refoulement, declining to extradite, deport, expel or otherwise transfer persons to the Russian Federation where there is a real risk of torture and ill-treatment, persecution or flagrant denial of justice or to third countries that would expose individuals to such risks, regardless of the origin or destination country of deportation, and ensure adequate assessment of extradition requests from the Russian Federation and the availability of alternatives to detention, so as to prevent prolonged detention in cases of politically motivated persecution;**

(g) **Apply enhanced vetting to INTERPOL notices and diffusions and to mutual legal assistance requests from the Russian Federation, and decline to effectuate those connected to the peaceful exercise of human rights ;**

(h) **Introduce a central vetting system to prevent politically motivated and non-human rights compliant entries from being included in the Commonwealth of Independent States inter-State wanted list system; in its absence, member States of the Commonwealth must vet Russian arrest warrants and decline to cooperate in instances of transnational repression;**

(i) **Investigate cases of transnational repression, prosecute alleged perpetrators and inform victims about the outcome of the investigations, ensure prompt access to healthcare, including specialized toxicological and neurological examinations, for victims regardless of health insurance coverage or migration status, and ensure protection for victims in respect of acts and threats of violence and threats to life, surveillance and harassment on their territory or jurisdiction, and treat a connection to transnational repression as an aggravating factor;**

(j) **Introduce regulation requiring banks, financial institutions and other private actors, including financial technology (fintech) platforms, trading platforms and other regulated sector entities that must perform anti-money laundering and anti-terrorism checks and that can deny services (such as accounting, legal, and trust and company formation service providers), to apply enhanced due diligence and verification for persons flagged in Russian designations and listings, to determine whether they are being pursued for political reasons, and provide effective remedy where access to services is denied;**

(k) **Ensure that asylum and immigration enforcement procedures properly identify Russian transnational repression as grounds for protection and ensure that courts and prosecutorial authorities treat in absentia judgments and politically motivated criminal charges as high-risk indicators of transnational repression.**

86. **The Special Rapporteur recommends that United Nations entities:**

(a) **Build on the guidance on transnational repression issued by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner in 2025, on Human Rights Council resolution 58/23, entitled "Human rights defenders and new and emerging technologies: protecting human rights defenders, including women human rights defenders, in the digital age" and on the joint statement on transnational repression as a human rights threat presented at the sixtieth session of the Human Rights Council, and take note of the transnational repression addressed in a number of other Human Rights Council resolutions;**

(b) **Integrate the analysis of transnational repression and reprisals into monitoring and reporting, and strengthen the protection of individuals and organizations who cooperate, or seek to cooperate, with the United Nations and other international human rights mechanisms;**

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(c) **Support the elaboration of a dedicated United Nations international human rights instrument – a binding United Nations convention – on transnational repression, with a monitoring and review mechanism, establishing a definition, provisions for prevention, accountability and the responsibility of Member States, to close the protection gap.**

87. **The Special Rapporteur recommends that regional human rights bodies develop binding regional standards on transnational repression, including a legally binding instrument establishing the duties of host States, a framework for inter-State cooperation and a monitoring mechanism, together with targeted sanctions frameworks.**

88. **The Special Rapporteur recommends that INTERPOL:**

(a) **Impose without delay the full spectrum of corrective measures against the Russian Federation introduced in 2022 and adopt all other possible safeguards against abuse of INTERPOL mechanisms, especially of diffusions;**

(b) **Suspend all processing rights of the Russian National Central Bureau, in accordance with article 131 (3) of the INTERPOL Rules on the Processing of Data, until the Russian Federation ceases its abuse of the criminal justice system for the purpose of repression.**

89. **The Special Rapporteur recommends that banks, other international financial institutions, financial regulators and compliance-database providers urgently introduce enhanced verification procedures for information provided by the Russian authorities, in particular information provided through Rosfinmonitoring, and refrain from publishing or otherwise disseminating such information prior to due verification.**

Advance edited version