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Economic, Social and Cultural Rights under Political Pressure

Submission for the Concluding Observations of the
UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
regarding Russia submitted by OVD-Info

8 August 2025

INTRODUCTION

This submission by OVD-Info to the 78th Session of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) assesses the Russian Federation's compliance with the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). The submission emphasises critical issues outlined in the List of issues (LOIs).

OVD-Info is an independent human rights project monitoring political persecution in Russia and providing legal assistance to victims. OVD-Info operates a 24-hour federal hotline, provides legal education to activists, researches political

persecution in Russia, and conducts advocacy and strategic litigation.

OVD-Info has extensive expertise on the topics covered in the report, particularly those relating to freedom of association and political persecution. In addition, OVD-Info helps politically persecuted individuals obtain medical care in detention, and launched a project On My Terms, which helps public sector employees and university students defend their rights.

The report follows the structure of the Committee's LOIs. "General information" covers the lack of measures taken to implement the recommendations of the Human Rights Committee regarding legislation on freedom of association. Subsequent sections address issues under Articles 2(2), 7, 8, 12, 13 and 15 of the Covenant.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Russia failed to implement the 2022 Human Rights Committee recommendations to repeal legislation restricting the right to association and end prosecution based on that legislation. Instead, Russian authorities intensified their crackdown on civil society, expanded the legislation on "foreign agents," "undesirable" organisations, legislation on combating extremism and terrorism, and used them to suppress legitimate expression, associations and human rights work, undermining economic, social and cultural rights.

Misuse of extremism legislation

Russia has extensive anti-extremism legislation long criticised by human rights defenders and international experts for its ambiguity, broad nature and arbitrary application.

Participation in an “extremist” organisation, “organising” its activities, or “recruiting” people into it are punishable with up to twelve years’ imprisonment (art. 282.2 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation (CC)), Financing such a group is punishable with up to ten years’ imprisonment (art. 282.3 of the CC). First-time displays of banned symbols are punishable with up to 15 days’ detention (art. 20.3 of the Code of Administrative Offences (CAO)); repeat violations can lead to four years in prison (art. 282.4 of the CC).

Individuals suspected or convicted of a criminal extremism offence are included in the **federal register**. This also includes certain crimes motivated by “political hatred” of authorities, that is, dissent. There are more than 18,000 people on the register. Their bank accounts are frozen, and spending is capped at \$280 per month for each family member with no income, which is often insufficient to sustain basic needs; designation carries stigma and prevents employment.

In recent years, Russian authorities increasingly misused anti-extremism legislation to target dissent. SOVA Center, a prominent Russian group researching nationalism, xenophobia, and anti-extremism policy, **estimated** that in 2024, 23% of 4,714 cases for displays of “extremist” symbols were brought wrongfully, compared to 36% they deemed lawful.

Use of “undesirables” legislation

Since 2015, the Prosecutor General can arbitrarily label any foreign or international organisation “undesirable” for threatening Russia’s constitutional order, defence or security. Under this pretext, authorities banned media, human rights and opposition groups, anti-corruption, environmental and Indigenous People’s organisations.

The law prohibits “undesirable” organisations from conducting any activities in Russia, and anyone from participating in their activities, in Russia or abroad, under

threat of administrative and criminal prosecution. The maximum punishment is six years of imprisonment.

The “undesirables” list has 251 entries. OVD-Info recorded 581 people and organisations punished for participating in these organisations’ events or sharing their materials.

LGBT

In November 2023, Russia’s Supreme Court outlawed the “International Public LGBT Movement” as “extremist.” The court **based its decision** on false claims, harmful stereotypes, and the claim that it promotes LGBT people’s superiority by advocating for their equal rights. The decision specifically imputed to the movement that it prepared alternative reports to the UN Human Rights Committee on the situation of the LGBT community in Russia based on “distorted” information on LGBT people’s rights to tarnish Russia’s international image.

Since then, courts have issued at least **97** administrative convictions for displaying LGBT symbols, mostly the rainbow flag. Punishments included detention of up to 15 days. Repeat displays of any banned symbol can result in four years’ imprisonment. One person has already received such a criminal conviction after publishing a video with the rainbow flag.

Since 2024, authorities have also brought criminal charges for alleged “participation” in the “LGBT Movement” or “organising” its activities against at least 20 people for organising tourist trips for gay men, managing bars popular among LGBT people, dating people of the same sex, and speaking out in defence of LGBT rights. Two people already received **imprisonment**.

Since authorities designated the LGBT movement “extremist,” any mentions online or in the media must be accompanied by the stigmatising “extremist” disclaimer.

Failure to label is a prosecutable offence; at least one media outlet has already received a fine based on that provision.

Anti-corruption

In June 2021, Moscow City Court designated organisations founded by the late anti-corruption activist and opposition leader Alexei Navalny, including the Anti-Corruption Foundation (FBK), as an “extremist” organisation. The Prosecutor General also designated the U.S.-incorporated Anti-Corruption Foundation (AFC) as “undesirable” in May 2023. In February 2024, Navalny died in a remote prison while serving a trumped-up, politically motivated sentence imposed in retaliation for his anti-corruption work and activism.

Courts **banned investigations** and granted libel **lawsuits** filed by individuals implicated in alleged corruption against anti-corruption activists to suppress the dissemination of these reports. Following the groups’ ban, authorities imposed at least **194** administrative punishments for displays of **symbols** connected to the foundation or Alexei Navalny, including his name or photograph, and reposting FBK’s corruption investigations online. **At least** 125 people faced criminal charges for alleged **participation** in these organisations, **donating** money, or other affiliation with these organisations.

In 2023, the Prosecutor General **designated** Transparency International “undesirable” for “interfering in Russia’s internal affairs,” forcing its closure in Russia.

Education

Russian authorities designated dozens of academic institutions, research centres and think tanks as “undesirable.”

Between 2021 and 2025, authorities designated as “undesirable” Bard College, Oxford Russia Fund, Central European University and Yale University. Authorities also outlawed the education company EF (Education First) and the British Council, limiting access to language training, materials, and examinations.

Since 2023, authorities have launched multiple prosecutions for academic activities allegedly connected to these “undesirable” organisations (art. 20.33 of the CAO).

In 2023, a court **fin**ed a professor for conducting a seminar at an event co-organised by Oxford Russia Fund. In 2024, a university librarian received a **fine** for apparently keeping books by German writer Heinrich Boll in the university library—a foundation bearing his name is also on the list of “undesirables.” The same year, a court **fin**ed a political scientist for listing Central European University on his profile page on ResearchGate. In 2025, authorities **fin**ed an organisation that helped apply to Central European University and Bard College.

In 2024, the German Association for East European Studies, a scientific organisation for Central and Eastern Europe, received both the “undesirable” designation and an “**extremist**” designation as part of the fictitious “Anti-Russian Separatist Movement.”

In 2023, the Prosecutor General designated “undesirable” Briva Universitate, the legal entity of Free University, a free online university founded by scholars expelled from Russian universities for dissenting views. The prosecutor cited “public criticism of actions and decisions of Russia’s leaders” as the reason for the designation. Authorities **fin**ed the university’s co-founder, a prominent constitutional law professor, for “participating” in the Free University’s activities over her lecture on Russia’s post-Soviet constitutional transition published on YouTube. In April 2025, a court in Moscow **sentenced** another co-founder to 6 years of imprisonment

in absentia on charges of leading the university (art. 284.1 of the CC).

Health

In 2025, authorities **designated** the Elton John AIDS Foundation “undesirable,” whose activities, according to the prosecutor, “aim to support public associations involved in the prevention and fight against AIDS among the most vulnerable groups, as well as to combat discrimination and neglect toward people living with HIV and those with non-traditional views.” Authorities claimed that the foundation participated in «the West’s smear campaign against Russia» and Eurasian Coalition on Health, Rights, Gender and Sexual Diversity for “**discrediting Russia’s domestic and foreign policy in the health sphere**” and “gender propaganda.” They also **outlawed** the Eurasian Harm Reduction Association without explaining their decision.

Non-discrimination: Indigenous Peoples

In 2023, the Prosecutor General designated the Free Nations League, Free Nations of PostRussia Forum, Free Buryatia Foundation, and URALIC Centre of Indigenous Peoples as “undesirable.” In 2025, the Prosecutor General **outlawed** the International Indigenous Fund for Development and Solidarity Batani for reporting on ethnic minorities’ rights violations and “supporting and preparing anti-Russian addresses in international events, including at the UN.”

In June 2024, the Supreme Court **declared** the fictitious, so-called “Anti-Russian Separatist Movement” an “extremist organisation,” along with its 55 alleged “structural units.” The ban included many unrelated regional initiatives advocating for Indigenous People’s rights and cultural rights.

In December 2024, the Supreme Court **declared** the Free Nations of PostRussia Forum a terrorist organisation and listed 172 supposed organisations as its supposed structural

units, including Indigenous People's groups, Aborigen-Forum, the International Committee of Indigenous Peoples of Russia, and media outlet Komi Daily. These harsh and broad bans are baseless and allow authorities to arbitrarily extend them to any Indigenous People's rights advocacy.

Non-discrimination: political opinion

Authorities use the legislation on “undesirables” to extrajudicially ban activities conflicting with the state's political agenda, often **citing** their misalignment with Russian “traditional values” or failure to support state policies. Also, since 2022, courts designated as “extremist” the youth democratic movement Vesna for peaceful opposition to Russia's war against Ukraine, protest movements Omsk Civic Association and I am/We are Sergei Furgal, and the LGBT Movement.

Environment

In 2018, the Prosecutor General designated US-based environmental protection group Pacific Environment “undesirable” without explanation. In 2023, it outlawed Greenpeace, the World Wildlife Fund, Bellona, the Altai Project and the Wild Salmon Center. The prosecutor **claimed** that these groups “shaped negative public opinion and hindered the implementation of profitable infrastructure and energy projects.” He also **accused** them of failing to support Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Environmentalists received fines for sharing their materials.

ARTICLE 2(2): NON-DISCRIMINATION

Following the 2023 decision designating the “International LGBT Movement” as an extremist organisation, authorities intensified persecution of LGBT people.

Police raids targeting LGBT people have become a regular practice. In 2024, law enforcement raided at least **51** clubs, cultural spaces and events related to the LGBT community. These actions were accompanied by detentions, ill-treatment, and administrative fines. Several venues, such as gay clubs Central Station in Saint Petersburg and Black Clover in Kirov, were forced to **close** after these raids, and owners and organisers of some events were **charged** with organising the activities of an extremist organisation (art. 282.2 of the CC).

There have been several cases of harassment of parents of LGBT children: in two cases, their mothers were **charged** with “improper fulfilment of parental duties” (art. **5.35** of the CAO) because of social media posts featuring LGBT symbols, and in **one case** the father of a transgender teenager was deprived of parental rights.

Recently, the authorities started persecuting publishing houses for distributing LGBT-themed books. On 14 May 2025, the Investigative Committee searched the premises of former and current employees of Eksmo, Popcorn Books and Individuum. Three people were charged with organising, participating in, and recruiting into an extremist organisation (art. 282.2 of the CC). The formal basis for the charge of “promoting LGBT ideology” was the distribution of queer literature. Popcorn Books specialises in books discussing identity, body image, discrimination, inequality, sexism, racism, and others.

In 2023, the State Duma outlawed gender-affirming healthcare for transgender people, changing gender markers in documents, banning trans people from adopting children or becoming foster parents. Existing marriages of transgender people are now automatically **dissolved** (although courts previously annulled marriages of transgender people on prosecutors’ requests).

A 2022 law extended the ban on “propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations” (art. 6.21 of the CAO) to people of all ages. It also outlawed propaganda of “non-traditional sexual preferences” and gender transitioning. Amendments introduced harsher punishments under this article and new art. 6.21.2 of the CAO prohibiting “displaying” LGBT people to children. In 2023 and 2024, courts imposed 257 fines and short-term detention under these articles.

OVD-Info has recorded increased pressure on Crimean Tatar organisations since 2022. It started immediately after the occupation of Crimea, and in April 2016, the Supreme Court of Crimea under Russian authorities’ control recognised the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People as an extremist organisation and banned its activities in Russia and Crimea. Mejlis is an executive and representative body of the Crimean Tatars that, *inter alia*, represented their interests before the Ukrainian government. That decision put around 2,500 of the Mejlis’ members at risk of direct prosecution for participating in the activities of an extremist organisation.

Another way of persecuting Crimean Tatar activists became prosecuting them on (largely trumped-up) charges of participating in the activities of Hizb ut-Tahrir, an Islamist political party legal in Ukraine but declared a terrorist organisation in Russia. Unlike the persecution of those involved in the Hizb ut-Tahrir cases in Russia, in Crimea such repression is directed not against representatives of the Islam-related movement, but against a group of Crimean Tatars activists.

Prosecution on charges of involvement in Hizb ut-Tahrir activities has enabled the Russian authorities to use anti-terrorism legislation to suppress Crimean activists and destroy horizontal ties and solidarity. Despite this, in April 2016, an association of wives and other relatives of political prisoners, as well as lawyers, was formed, which met monthly to discuss court cases and seek ways to influence the

situation. Over time, the movement turned into the human rights platform Crimean Solidarity. The Russian authorities later started prosecuting its members as well, and many of its members themselves became targets of prosecution in Hizb ut-Tahrir cases.

Repression against the Crimean Tatar population remained one of the main forms of pressure exerted by the Russian authorities even after the start of the full-scale war. Most criminal cases against Crimean Tatars are related to accusations of involvement in Hizb ut-Tahrir. Since 2022, OVD-Info recorded **38** new prosecutions in cases of involvement with Hizb ut-Tahrir.

Russian authorities systematically **blocked** webpages that contained information on the disproportionate targeting of ethnic minorities in the forced conscription campaigns.

Authorities systematically discriminate against people based on their political views. OVD-Info extensively documented such practices in its **reports**, for instance, “**Persecution of the anti-war movement report: Three Years into Russia’s Full-Scale Invasion of Ukraine**” and “**Repression in Russia in 2024: OVD-Info Overview.**”

ARTICLE 13: RIGHT TO EDUCATION

In violation of its obligations to respect academic freedom and the right to work, Russian authorities have established a system of education that promotes political propaganda, state-endorsed views and dissemination of hate speech, and persecute students and teachers for criticising the authorities or expressing anti-war views. A striking example is the introduction of a historical narrative aligned with the interests of the authorities into the educational system through the standardisation of curricula and study materials.

Russia continued its efforts to **standardise** history textbooks; following the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, this process intensified. The Ministry of Education has **developed** uniform educational programmes for all core subjects, including History, eliminating the possibility for academic institutions to create subject content. Uniform educational programmes were introduced in September 2023. Currently, one of the topics in the history **curriculum** for grades 5-9 is “The revival of the country since the 2000s. The reunification of Crimea with Russia.” The new in-depth **programme** for grades 10-11 includes a more detailed study of contemporary historical processes, which, among other things, proposes to teach that “Ukraine is a neo-Nazi state” and “Russia is a country of heroes.”

In 2023, schools began using a state-produced history textbook edited by Vladimir Medinskiy. The textbook **repeats** state narratives about “neo-Nazi Ukraine” and “the West’s obsession” with destabilising the situation within Russia, and justifies the full-scale invasion of Ukraine as “protecting Donbas and pre-emptively ensuring Russia’s security”. The textbook also has sections devoted to “fakes” about the war and “foreign agents.” Other privately published textbooks received similar **revisions** to remove mentions of Kyiv and Ukraine further limiting academic freedom and imposing the state narrative. The Ministry of Education also **recommended** pro-war literature, such as “Heroes of the SVO. Symbols of Russian courage” (SVO is short for “Special Military Operation,” the term used by the Russian authorities to describe the invasion of Ukraine), as extracurricular reading.

Authorities increasingly militarised school education. In 2024, Basics of Security and Homeland Defence replaced Basics of Life Safety. It **covers** basic military training, including methods for the combat use of UAVs. The educational programme of Shop Classes already **includes**

robotics, computer graphics and technical drawing, and “autonomous automated systems.”

War propaganda and militarisation are also carried out through other activities. Conversations about Important Things, mandatory weekly classes introduced in 2022, cover issues such as patriotism, “heroes of the special military operation,” and “traditional values.” The Ministry of Education selects topics and **creates** methodological materials for teachers. “Traditional values” are actively promoted through other extracurricular activities. For example, in 2024, an extracurricular subject called “Family Studies” was **introduced**, with the main purpose of “forming pro-family values and attitudes, including marriage, large families, and chastity.” Such a programme promotes a narrow set of values and marginalises LGBT individuals and those who choose alternative forms of family life, including celibacy or childlessness. Other examples of propaganda in schools include **meetings** with Russian soldiers participating in the invasion of Ukraine, **memorial complexes** dedicated to “heroes” of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, **parades**, **military competitions**, **collecting “humanitarian aid”** and **writing letters, etc.**

Through extracurricular activities, children are **recruited** to work on supplying the **frontline**. A 2023 law **allowed** involving students of any level in “socially useful work” as part of their educational programme. In addition, the law allowed teachers to involve children in work not provided for in the educational programme without parental consent, but in accordance with labour law regulations. The law does not define “socially useful work.” Propaganda is implemented at all levels of education, including pre-school and higher education. With the introduction of the Federal Pre-school Education Programme, “patriotic education” has become an **integral part** of it. As in schools, pre-schools hold meetings with soldiers, children participate in parades, collect “humanitarian aid” and gifts for soldiers, and draw war-

themed pictures. According to Novaya Gazeta, in 2024 alone, pre-school institutions held **19,000 events** dedicated to war. Conversations about Important Things classes also **started** to take place in pre-schools.

Authorities also standardise university curricula. In 2022, the Ministry of Higher Education and Science, acting on the President's **directive**, developed and introduced a compulsory **course** "Fundamentals of Russian Statehood" into all higher education programmes. **A course** on the History of Russia has also become mandatory for all programmes, and its content is based on a unified concept. As the Centre for Independent Social Research **concluded**, "the content of all these courses is designed to 'scientifically' justify and promote the idea of a 'special Russian path'—Russia as a 'special civilisation' based on the principles of imperialism, 'traditional values' and the sacralisation of state power."

Students and teachers face politically motivated prosecution for criticising authorities, expressing their political views and anti-war stance during lessons or related to educational activities. For example, a history teacher from Krasnoyarsk **was fined** approximately \$375 for discussing the territorial status of Crimea and Russia-occupied regions in Eastern Ukraine in an online chat with students. According to OVD-Info monitoring, at least 29 teachers have faced administrative prosecutions under art. 20.3.3 of the CAO ("discrediting the use of the Russian army") related to their professional activities. In June 2024, a **criminal case** was opened under art. **207.3** of the CC (spreading "fakes" about the Russian army) against a Russian language and literature teacher, who, during a lesson, told children about atrocities Russia committed in Bucha. An 11-year-old schoolgirl and her mother were **interrogated and searched** after the daughter failed to attend Conversations about Important Things classes, and posted a pro-Ukraine message in a school chat using a pro-Ukrainian profile picture. These are not isolated incidents; since 2017, OVD-Info has documented that at least

5 teachers faced politically motivated criminal prosecution for their professional activities.

Educational institutions' administrations **threaten students and expel them** on fictitious grounds. Teachers **face** dismissals, public harassment, denunciation campaigns, threats, and vandalism by administrations and pro-government or pro-war activists. Such persecution is particularly **active in occupied Crimea** due to pro-war activists affiliated with the authorities.

OVD-Info documented political persecution of students and teachers in its reports “**‘The government’s way or the highway’: how Russian authorities persecute teachers with an anti-war stance**” and “**Universities and the system**” (with Groza, an independent student media outlet).

ARTICLES 7 AND 8: JUST AND FAVOURABLE CONDITIONS OF WORK AND TRADE UNION RIGHTS

In Russia, trade union members and individuals advocating for the right to fair and favourable working conditions may face pressure from employers and authorities. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, medical professionals who raised concerns about shortages of personal protective equipment (PPE) and essential medical supplies, or who refused to work in unsafe conditions, were **subjected** to disciplinary measures and threats of dismissal by their employers. In some cases, they were forced to give **public apologies**. A head of the Leningrad branch of the Alliance of Doctors trade union, was **dismissed** after publicly spoke out about the lack of PPE in their hospital and launched a **petition** addressing the issue.

Medical professionals also **faced prosecution** (part 9, art. **13.15** of the CAO and art. 207.1 of the CC) for “spreading

false information” about the coronavirus. At least one case involved a journalist who reported on shortages of PPE. Although the charges were eventually **dropped**, they had a chilling effect on criticising the government’s anti-COVID measures.

I.D., a human rights defender, trade union activist and journalist who reports on issues within the healthcare system in Crimea, including the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, was abducted in April 2022. Her detention was acknowledged only 13 days later. During a search of her personal belongings, authorities allegedly found explosives. She was convicted of transportation of explosives (part 1, **art. 222.1** of the CC) and sentenced to 6 years and 11 months in prison. Political Prisoners Support. Memorial **recognised** I.D. as a political prisoner, due to strong indications that the case was fabricated.

Other trade union activists have also faced criminal prosecution for their union-related activities. After a large delivery platform introduced a new payment system, which significantly reduced couriers’ earnings, Courier union announced a strike. A union’s chair, was **imprisoned** for a repeated assembly law violation (**art. 212.1** of the CC) after posting a call to protest online without first receiving the state’s authorisation.

On My Terms, a project that defends workplace rights, told OVD-Info that in the four months since launch they helped over 23 people whose rights at work were violated. Most often, employers coerced participation in pro-government, pro-war events and contributions, discriminated based on political views and retaliated for attempts to defend labour rights.

ARTICLE 12: RIGHT TO HEALTH

Currently, OVD-Info represents over a hundred individuals in politically motivated criminal cases, including many who are imprisoned. We consistently encounter issues related to the provision of medical care for such individuals.

One prisoner with cancer was denied a necessary medical operation for an entire year, the situation only changed after the UN Human Rights Committee indicated urgent measures. One defendant with a chronic heart condition did not receive medical care for at least a year, despite consistently complaining of pain and discomfort. It is a common practice to place political prisoners in a punishment cell, where the low temperatures weaken their immune systems and lead to the development of various illnesses. Correctional facility staff routinely confiscate previously approved medications as a form of punishment, as was the case with a female prisoner suffering from severe spinal issues and requiring ongoing pain treatment.

The mental health of prisoners also suffers: a female prisoner, despite experiencing panic attacks and attempting suicide, was not provided with psychological support. The psychiatric practices applied in her case were more punitive than therapeutic in nature.

ARTICLE 15: CULTURAL LIFE

In recent years, the prosecution of artists has intensified, and new repressive laws expanded censorship.

Individuals in the Russian cultural sphere who are “disloyal” to the Russian authorities have been long facing persecution, but the situation escalated after the full-scale invasion in Ukraine, with the number of criminal cases opened against individuals in the art scene **increasing** 6-fold since 2022. For example, in July 2024, a Moscow court sentenced a playwright and a director to six years of imprisonment on charges of “justifying terrorism” for staging a play about

criminal cases against women who married radical Islamists and moved to Syria with them. The play was accused—based on a pseudo-expert “destructology” report—of glorifying ISIS and simultaneously promoting radical feminism. Russian authorities have opened criminal cases against **at least** 56 people in the arts sphere for their anti-war expression. Currently, 41 people from the art sphere **are imprisoned** for their professional activities.

State censorship and prosecution encourages private harassment. Pro-government activists often block or disrupt exhibitions and cultural events they perceive as contradicting the state’s narrative on traditional values, such as those related to LGBT issues, religion, and feminism. The attacks usually target art exhibitions, plays, lectures, and public discussions. Artists that find themselves on **lists**—reportedly linked to the Kremlin—of prohibited artists face canceled concerts and venues refusing to work with them, sometimes forcing them to emigrate.

A 2025 **law** banned granting distribution licenses for films containing content that “discredits traditional Russian spiritual and moral values” or promotes their rejection. The government is now empowered not only to deny licenses to such films but also to revoke issued licenses, including retroactively altering age ratings. The requirement will also extend to major online platforms, who will be legally obligated to remove or block such films within 24 hours upon request from Russia’s communications regulator.

OVD-Info has elaborated on the subject in “**Persecution of ‘disloyal’ individuals in culture industry in Russia**” and “**No Laughing Matter: A Full Timeline of Pressure and Persecution Against Comedians in Russia.**”

ARTICLE 15: SCIENTIFIC PROGRESS AND COOPERATION

Scientific activities are stifled and international scientific cooperation is increasingly controlled.

A 2025 **law** expanded the Federal Security Service's (FSB) oversight over international collaboration in universities and research institutes. Under these amendments, the Ministry of Education must now register all contracts of scientific organisations with foreign partners. The government also defines a list of fields in which any international contact must be approved by FSB officers. A digital system tracks planned scientific activities involving foreign entities, and FSB personnel have access to monitor, evaluate, and approve these interactions from within the system.

The measure chills academic freedom and reduces student and scientific mobility. In practice, the law also has negative impacts on students' participation in international scientific publishing and conferences—even though they seem to be formally excluded from the scope of the law. The violation of the regulation on the oversight over international collaboration is punishable with fines, while alleged “confidential” collaborations deemed contrary to national security is punishable with up to eight years in prison, or 20 years on treason charges. From 2022 to 2024 there were **at least** 14 cases of treason charges against scientists for allegedly disclosing state secrets, most receiving prison terms and two dying in custody. Many of these cases rely on questionable evidence and frequently involve retrospective classification of information previously approved as non-sensitive. The vague language of “national security interests” **grants** overly broad authority, leads to arbitrary enforcement, burdens researchers with bureaucracy, and may foster self-censorship and academic isolation. In June 2025, the FSB issued **warnings** to 15 university staff in four Russian regions, accusing them of promoting LGBT values under the influence of the banned Oxford Russia Fund. Academics studying or supporting LGBT topics face growing pressure: dismissals, blocked

dissertations, and publication bans. Though queer research was restricted earlier, repression intensified with the 2022 “LGBT propaganda” ban expansion and the 2023 designation of LGBT as “extremist organisation” and was notably extended to research on transgender issues.