

Protecting the Rights of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples in the Russian Federation: Challenges and Ways Forward

Recommendations to the Government of Russia

International standards

- Devise a comprehensive implementation plan for the Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM) and ratify the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Coordination between the central authorities and the regional/local authorities in realizing these standards should be intensified.
- Include clear and where possible measurable targets to ensure that programmes that are part of FCNM implementation are evaluated to highlight their practical impact and/or shortcomings. Reports to the Advisory Committee on the FCNM (ACFC) should include data on the impact of programmes that contribute to the FCNM's implementation, and involve persons belonging to minorities in their preparation.
- Adopt a cooperative approach in exchanges with the relevant bodies from the Council of Europe and the UN to incorporate the recommendations arising from international monitoring into minority and indigenous policies.

Domestic legislation and implementation

- Adopt clearly defined and comprehensive antidiscrimination legislation, with an independent body to monitor and raise awareness of instances where minorities and indigenous peoples have been excluded from accessing services, employment, housing and land rights, with a particular focus on the inter-sectional challenges faced by minority and indigenous women.
 - Designate indigenous areas as a 'territory of traditional nature use' at the federal level, as provided by Russian legislation. Regional legislatures could also adopt laws foreseeing the 'ethnological assessment' of planned projects that may affect indigenous people.
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- Cease any form of intimidation and harassment of NGOs through legal means, including the ‘Foreign Agents’ Law, to ensure that civil society can operate in a favourable and free environment.
- Ensure clarity in legal provisions relating to minority and indigenous rights and provide training to judges to effectively deal with cases relating to these groups.

Integration and protection of vulnerable minorities and indigenous peoples

- Implement programmes for the social and economic integration of particularly disadvantaged and marginalized minorities or indigenous groups, such as Roma and Meskhetian Turks. In particular, the practice of segregating Roma children in schools should be fully eradicated.
- Simplify the procedures for the legalization of migrant workers, ensuring that all those who have entered the country legally to work are able to formalize their status. Procedures for residence registration should be simplified, without unnecessary or arbitrary bureaucratic hurdles, and the quota system for foreign workers abolished or relaxed.
- Introduce a system to urgently provide citizenship to those persons who remain stateless, and ensure that refugees and asylum-seekers are issued legal documentation that allows them to access basic rights and services.
- Ensure that physical attacks against persons belonging to minorities are fully investigated, with a view to bringing the perpetrators to justice.

Law-enforcement officials

- Provide training to law-enforcement officials, with a view to eradicating the practice of ‘ethnic profiling’. In particular, ensure that persons belonging to minorities are not subjected to discriminatory treatment in the form of unjustified fingerprinting, photographing and collection of data. Steps should also be taken to guarantee that persons are arrested and detained only in strict compliance with the law, and that detention conditions are humane.
 - Ensure that instances of harassment, mistreatment and arbitrary arrest by law-enforcement officials of representatives of minorities are investigated, with a view to bringing the perpetrators to justice. Authorities should signal that these practices will not be tolerated by instituting severe penalties for corruption and abuse of power by law-enforcement officials, including extortion of bribes and failure to protect persons belonging to minorities and indigenous groups.
 - Ensure the full enforcement of the provisions contained in the Law ‘On Police’ prohibiting illtreatment of ethnic minorities, including unjustified anti-immigrant and anti-Roma ‘pogroms’.
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Procedures should be in place to ensure that minority and indigenous women in particular are protected from abusive or exploitative treatment.

Media, education and inter-cultural understanding

- Challenge the ‘normalization’ of racial prejudice and facilitate the use of the media as a means towards inter-cultural dialogue and the promotion of awareness about diversity. Among other measures, journalists should receive basic training in the reporting of inter-ethnic relations and the positive activities of the Guild of Inter-ethnic Journalism should be expanded.
- Create the conditions for greater diversity in the media to promote understanding of the cultures and concerns of persons belonging to other groups. In particular, representatives of minorities should have the opportunity to feed into decision-making on broadcasts and print media outputs to contain possible ethnic bias and make coverage more culturally sensitive.
- Prosecute instances of hate speech disseminated through the media and publicly denounce any xenophobic remark made by politicians and other public figures.

Promoting diversity

- Develop a comprehensive language policy, in consultation with persons belonging to minorities and indigenous groups, with sufficient resources allocated to ensure that schools are able to operate in and/or teach non-majority languages.
- Raise the awareness of persons belonging to minorities and indigenous peoples of their rights to request education of their native language for their children. Students who have studied through the medium of a minority language should also be able to take a final examination in the same language.

Participation

- Devise clear and streamlined mechanisms that can effectively incorporate the views of minorities and indigenous peoples into decision-making. Authorities should engage in dialogue in the preparation of policies, especially those that directly affect representatives of minorities.
 - Amend legislation so as to permit the formation of political parties on the basis of ethnicity.
 - Ensure that the incorporation of the views of minorities and indigenous peoples into policy-making is done systematically. This should include the establishment of mechanisms to guarantee their political representation at the regional and local levels.
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- Ensure that decisions on the allocation and use of funds for programmes promoting the rights of minorities and indigenous people are fully transparent, and reached in consultation with said groups.

This text is an extract of a publication. The original document is available [here](#)

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