

H U M A N

R I G H T S

W A T C H

Statement on the
UPR Pre-session
on the Russian
Federation
of Human Rights
Watch

29 August 2023, Geneva

Right to Healthy Environment and Environmental Defenders

- Russia remains one of the world's top 10 emitters of greenhouse gases
- Unprecedented forest fires, while a large portion of Russia's forests were explicitly excluded from fire-fighting measures
- Lack of transparency and inadequacy of environmental impact assessments sparked sustained mass protests in 2018 and 2019
- Physical attacks, harassment, intimidation, and prosecution of grassroots activists and environmental groups
- Between 2020-2022, at least 52 environmental defenders were attacked and injured with varying degrees of severity
- Environmental defenders are targeted by Russia's laws on "foreign agents" and "undesirable organizations". Greenpeace and WWF are now 'undesirable' in Russia, participation in their activities is punishable by up to 4 years in prison.

Recommendations on the Right to Healthy Environment and Environmental Defenders

Human Rights Watch recommendations:

- Ensure that environmental defenders, including grassroots activists, can in practice exercise their rights to free expression and peaceful assembly, without fear of reprisal
- Sign and accede to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity

Environmental Crisis Group recommendations:

- Stop all types of pressure on environmental human rights defenders from the state actors and protect defenders from non-state actors
- Investigate all attacks and threats to environmental human rights defenders and bring the perpetrators to justice
- Investigate all environmental violations which are associated with attacks on environmental human rights defenders
- Ensure safe and free work of environmental human rights defenders, including allowing and promoting freedom to seek, receive, and impart information on environmental issues

Rights of Older People in Russian Federation

- According to Russian government statistics, as of January 2020, Russia had 37.3 million people over the government pension age (60 for women and 65 for men). This accounted for approximately 25% of the population. The percentage of older people is expected to continue growing in the coming years.
- The Russian government was spending significantly less for home-based support services than for institutional living costs: according to government statistics, average spending per person in a nursing home is 35,000 rubles (approximately US\$472 as of 2020) a month and 34,095 rubles (US\$460) in a psychoneurological institution (PNI), compared with an average of 5,889 rubles (US\$79) for home-based services.
- As of 2020 more than 278,000 people lived in state-run residential institutions for older people and people with disabilities in Russia, but there was no publicly available government data on how many of them are older people. Journalists and advocates have reported extensively on the abuses in these institutions, including inappropriate use of psychotropic medication to control behavior, inadequate medical care, and denial of legal capacity.

Rights of Older People in the Russian Federation

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Ensure that all older people receive the support they need to live at home, if that is their choice, with dignity and autonomy.
- Ensure that regional governments have sufficient funds to provide adequate support services on a long-term basis and improve and standardize training of social workers and other service providers where needed.
- Require service providers to do more outreach to older people to inform them about available services to ensure that those most in need of support can get them.
- Federal and regional governments should improve and expand the types and availability of social services provided to older people and take measures necessary to ensure that sufficient numbers of social workers are available to provide support services for as much time as required.

Non-discrimination and rights of migrant workers

- Racial profiling by police, mass detentions of migrants of non-Slav appearance;
- Hate speech and dissemination of negative stereotypes and prejudices by state officials and media;
- Recruitment of migrant workers to fight in Russian armed forces in Ukraine, and to work on the territories of Ukraine occupied by Russia, has been accompanied by reports of authorities' use of coercion and threats, as well as threats of criminal prosecution by countries of origin if migrant workers do fight in Russian (or Ukrainian) armed forces.

Non-discrimination and rights of migrant workers

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Ensure in practice that racial discrimination and racial profiling of migrants, in particular by law enforcement officials is not tolerated and is prosecuted;
- Ensure in practice that use of racist and hate speech against migrants by officials and politicians, and the dissemination of negative stereotypes and prejudices by media outlets is not tolerated;
- Sign and accede to the Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.