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Bowring, Bill (2024) The impact (or not) of the war in Ukraine on Russian minorities and minorities policy. *European Yearbook of Minority Issues Online* 20 , ISSN 2211-6117. (In Press)

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# The impact (or not) of the war in Ukraine on Russian minorities and minorities policy

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**Abstract:**

**Keywords:**

## I. INTRODUCTION

In this article I show how the Russian Federation (Russia) seeks to sustain an impression of business as usual in its minorities policy and administration, while normalising as far as possible the results of its illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014, and its full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022. For this article, Russia's war in Ukraine started in 2014 with the illegal annexation of Crimea, and support for the separatists in the Donbas.

However, I start with the controversial All-Russian Census, 2020-2021, conducted from October to December 2021, and the disputes concerning its results, emerging much more recently, especially as regards Russia's Tatar population. Although the reason given for conducting this census was to understand the effects of the COVID Pandemic on the Russian population, the fact that the results were published on 30 May 2022, after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, made them highly relevant to the topic of this article, since they have direct relevance to important minorities in Russia.

Second, I turn to the Fifth Report submitted by Russia to the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM) on 13 April 2021. This Report should have been followed by the visit to Russia by a delegation of the FCNM Advisory Committee in 2022, followed by the FCNM's opinion and Recommendation from the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers. Russia was expelled from the Council of Europe with effect from 16 September 2023, but the FCNM is open to non-members of the Council of Europe. I analyse the resulting situation in detail.

Third, I pay close attention to the activities of the Federal Agency for Affairs of Nationalities (ethnic minorities), FADN, and its Director Igor Barinov, which have continued their programme of work. It is significant in my view that FADN was created in March 2015, after the start of Russia's war in Ukraine in 2014. These activities and their reporting in the official

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Russian state media illustrate the thesis of this article, that every effort is made by the state to show that despite the “special military operation” in Ukraine, Russian life continues as normal, especially in the field of minorities policy and its day to day implementation.

Fourth, Putin’s war on Ukraine has impacted directly on Russia’s ethnic minorities, which have supplied the great majority of young soldiers. Putin’s “partial mobilisation” in 2022 brought about a significant angry reaction from their mothers, especially in Russia’s ethnic republics. It is striking that very few white skinned young men from Moscow, St Petersburg or Yekaterinburg have been sent to fight and die in Ukraine. Life in the big cities proceeds with every appearance of normality, despite Western sanctions.

## II. THE 2021 CENSUS

According to the 2002 Federal Law "On the All-Russian Population Census"<sup>1</sup>, the census must be conducted at least once every ten years, so the original plan was to conduct the census in October 2020, exactly 10 years after the 2010 census. Because of the spread of COVID-19 the census deadlines were pushed back several times,<sup>2</sup> first to April, then to October 2021.

The main stage of the census took place from 15 October to 14 November 2021<sup>3</sup>. For the first time in the history of Russia, the census was also held online: residents of the country could answer the questionnaire through the State Services portal from October 15 to November 14, 2021<sup>4</sup>. The census in hard-to-reach areas of the country took place from 1 April to 20 December 2021. The critical moment of the census was 0000 hours on 1 October 2021. The deadline for summarizing the preliminary results of the Census was April 2022.

On 15 November 2021, the head of Rosstat, Pavel Malkov, announced that Rosstat planned to publish “the first operational data on the population” obtained as a result of the census at the end of January 2022<sup>5</sup>. However, on 17 January 2022, Mr Malkov said that "the figures require serious verification, so the publication of the first data in January is impossible", and therefore

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<sup>1</sup> Federal Law “On the All-Russian census” of 25 January 2022, No.8 FZ.

<sup>2</sup> Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation “On amending some acts of the government of the Russian Federation on the question of postponement of the All-Russian Census of 2020; and <https://www.interfax.ru/russia/754021>.

<sup>3</sup> Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation of 16 August 2021 No. 1347 “On amendments to the acts of the Government of the Russian Federation on the question of postponement on the period of carrying out the census of 2020”.

<sup>4</sup> The deadline for participation in the All-Russian Population Census on the government services portal has been extended until November 14 at <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/12825443>.

<sup>5</sup> Rosstat promises to publish the first results of the population census in January 2022, at <https://www.fontanka.ru/2021/11/15/70254554/>.

“operational data will not be published, and we should expect, as originally planned, only in April 2022 the publication of preliminary census results”.

On 30 May 2022, after the full-scale invasion, Rosstat published the preliminary results of the census, which they characterized as follows:

The presented preliminary data are estimates, upon completion of data processing, the final population according to the results of the census may slightly increase or decrease.

The final results were finally published at the end of December 2022.

There were harsh criticisms of the methodology of the census. On 30 January 2023, the former (until 2020<sup>6</sup>) adviser to the Department of Demographic Calculations of Rosstat, Alexei Igorevich Raksha, according to a Tatar web-site, *tarat-inform.ru*, expressed the opinion that the 2021 population census was “the worst” in the history of Russia.<sup>7</sup> He attributed this to the fact that the census was carried out during the coronavirus pandemic, which could not but reduce the actual participation in the census, since potential respondents naturally feared infection during the census activities.

In addition, Raksha pointed to the presence of a general downward trend in the quality of censuses in Russia: in comparison with the 1989 census conducted in the USSR, the all-Russian census of 2002 was of lower quality, and the 2010 census was even worse, so the 2021 census naturally became “the worst” in Russian history. In this regard, Raksha expressed the opinion that many census data should not be used at all. Raksha proposed “to consider that there was no census in some sense”. In order to improve the quality of the censuses, Raksha suggested making participation in the census mandatory, and non-participation punishable by penalties, deprivation of rights to significant social benefits and benefits.

The analyst Paul Goble drew attention to one startling result.<sup>8</sup> Ethnic Russians were rapidly declining in number, with many of those who had identified as Russian in the past no longer doing so, so that the percentage of Russia’s population that is ethnically Russian fell. Even though Russia’s population increased slightly between 2010 and 2021, the number of people who identified as ethnic Russians fell from 111,016,896 to 105,579,179, a decline of

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<sup>6</sup> Raksha was fired from Rosstat in July 2020 for questioning the government's reporting of coronavirus fatalities.

<sup>7</sup> Alexey Raksha: “The census was terrible, a huge number of people did not participate in it”, 23 January 2023, at <https://www.tatar-inform.ru/news/demograf-aleksei-raksa-tatary-odna-iz-samyx-ustoicivyx-nacii-v-povolze-5893897>.

<sup>8</sup> Paul Goble “5 Million Fewer Than in 2010, Ethnic Russians Make Up Only 72 Percent of Russia’s Population” *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 10 January 2023 Vol: 20 Issue: 6 at <https://jamestown.org/program/5-million-fewer-than-in-2010-ethnic-russians-make-up-only-72-percent-of-russias-population/>.

5,437,717—or almost 5 percent<sup>9</sup>. And, in turn, this decline meant that the share of that country’s population identifying as ethnic Russian fell from 77.71 percent in the 2010 census to 71.73 percent in the current one, far below the 80 percent that the Kremlin routinely claims. This was despite the illegal annexation of Crimea in August 2014, which had brought more ethnic Russians into the Federation.

The veteran Valery Tishkov, well known to students of minorities in Russia, the former director of the Moscow Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology and former minister for nationality affairs in the 1990s, weighed in to the debate on the website *Milliard Tatar* (a billion Tatars) with an article dated 19 January 2021 and entitled “The last census in Russia did not take into account at least half a million Tatars”.<sup>10</sup> He wrote that among the 17 million people who did not indicate their nationality, Tatars make up at least half a million. Those 13 million were 13% of Russia’s population, and included at least 13.5 million ethnic Russians at at least 0.5 million ethnic Tatars. In his view, census takers did a more complete and accurate job of recording the nationality of the inhabitants of Russia’s “titular” ethnic republics, than they did of people living outside their “own” republics, or those with none of their own. These included Mordvins and Tatars.

An unexpected result was that the number of respondents declaring themselves to be Circassians rose according to the Census from 73,184 in 2010 to “almost 115,000” in 2021, according to Akhmet Yalykapov, a senior scholar at the Center for Eurasian Research at MGIMO.<sup>11</sup> This reflected both high natural growth rates among the Cherkess, and also the campaign of Circassian activists to get other Circassian nationalities, including the Kabardins, Adygs, and Shapsugs, to declare their common ethnonym rather than the nationality officials preferred.<sup>12</sup>

On the other hand Tatars discovered that their numbers had declined by more than 600,000 since 2020, and that they were now a smaller number in every federal subject except Tatarstan. The Tatar population in Russia peaked at 5.55 million in the 2002 census, at the end of the

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<sup>9</sup> “The Number of Russians in Russia has reduced by 5 million people over 11 years” 5 January 2023 at <https://nazaccent.ru/content/39783-chislennost-russkih-v-rossii-za-11-let-sokratilas-na-5-mln-chelovek.html>

<sup>10</sup> Valery Tishkov: “At least half a million Tatars were not counted in the latest census in Russia” *Billion Tatars*, 19 January 2023, at <https://milliard.tatar/news/valerii-tiskov-v-poslednei-perepisi-v-rossii-ne-ucteno-kak-minimum-polmilliona-tatar-2765>

<sup>11</sup> As reported by Paul Goble at <https://windowoneurasia2.blogspot.com/2023/01/drive-to-have-circassians-declare.html>.

<sup>12</sup> “Analysts have questioned the results of the All-Russian Census”, *Caucasian Knot* 23 January 2023, at <https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/385200/>.

period of Tatarstan's exceptional autonomy, fell to 5.3 million in the 2010 census, and to 4.7 million in the latest census.

On 5 February 2023 Robert Coalson reported for *RFE/RL*<sup>13</sup>, that the deputy head of the government's Rosstat statistics agency, Pavel Smelov, claimed in November 2021, a few days before the data gathering was completed, that "more than 99 percent" of the population had participated in the census.<sup>14</sup> However, nongovernmental analysts argued that the actual participation was much lower and that the methods used invalidated the results. The independent Levada Center polling agency found that 42% of Russians said they did not take part in the census at all, and that figure reaching a staggering 73% in Moscow.

*RFE/RL* interviewed census workers who confirmed that much of the data was fictional.

"I wouldn't rely much on the results of this census," sociologist and visiting professor at Canada's Carleton University Guzel Yusupova said. "Not only do members of the Tatar intelligentsia and activists in other ethnic republics have questions about it, but so also do members of the academic community."

The Russian sociologist Igor Yakovenko stressed that polling is impossible "in totalitarian and fascist regimes... People take any interviewer - a person violating their personal space and asking personal questions - as a representative of the government or the security forces. Sociologists say up to 90 percent of people refuse to answer questions. As for the census, many don't want to answer, while others provide answers that distort reality."

Tatar historian and ethnographer Damir Iskhakov said that "leading demographers have conceded that this statistical material is worthless. "Even in Kazan," he said "they didn't go around to people's residences. I saw this for myself. No one I know was visited."

"Russia in the national context: how the composition of the country's population has changed over 100 years" was the title of an article published on 21 February 2023 by the weekly *Profil* commentator Liudmila Ivanova-Shvets.<sup>15</sup>

She started with the first All-Russian census conducted in 1897. This included questions about the religion that a person professes and about the language in which he speaks and considers his mother tongue. The results of this census were published in 1905.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Robert Coalson "Russia's 2021 Census Results Raise Red Flags Among Experts And Ethnic-Minority Activists" *RFE/RL* 5 February 2023 at

<https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-census-ethnic-minorities-undercounted/32256506.html>

<sup>14</sup> Rosstat reported that it has already enumerated 99% of the population, Kommersant 12 November 2021 at

<https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/5066574>

<sup>15</sup> <https://profile.ru/society/rossiya-v-nacionalnom-razreze-kak-za-sto-let-izmenilsya-sostav-naseleniya-strany-1260325/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.coe.int/en/web/minorities/russian-federation>.

In the USSR the national question was given serious importance. During the All-Russian census of 1920, which covered only 73% of the population, since the Civil War was still ongoing in the rest of the territory, people were asked their nationality. Thus, for the first time, more or less reliable statistics appeared on ethnic composition.

Three All-Union censuses were conducted in the second half of the 20th century. There was a steady increase in the numbers who declared themselves to be ethnic Russians. In particular, during the period between the All-Union censuses of 1959 and 1970, they increased by 15.7 million. Ukrainians came second, followed by Belarusians, Kazakhs and Uzbeks.

Three censuses of the post-Soviet period showed the opposite trend - the number of Russians was constantly declining. So, for the period between the All-Russian censuses of 2002 and 2010, the decline amounted to 4.87 million people. The top 5 most numerous nations living in Russia have also changed. If the first place was retained by the Russians, then Tatars came second, Ukrainians third, Bashkirs fourth, and Chuvashes fifth.

The latest census showed that the number of Russians decreased by another 5.44 million. The top 5 most numerous nationalities in Russia have also changed slightly over 11 years. It includes Russians, Tatars, Chechens, Bashkirs, Chuvashes. Following them on the list are Avars, Armenians, Ukrainians, Dargins, and Kazakhs.

But talk of a collapse of the Russian nation would be premature, she says. A significant number of participants - 16.6 million people - did not indicate their nationality at all, in 2010 there were fewer "refuseniks" - about 7 million. It is likely that for many citizens this issue does not have a fundamental value, so they skipped that item on the questionnaire.

### III. RUSSIA'S FIFTH REPORT to the COE's FCNM

Russia signed the Council of Europe (CoE)'s Framework Convention on National Minorities (FCNM) on 28 February 1996, and ratified it on 21 August 1998. It entered into force for Russia on 1 December 1998. As noted above, the Fifth Report was submitted by Russia in 13 April 2021.

What should have happened next? For the Fourth Cycle<sup>17</sup>, Russia's 4th Report was received on 20 December 2016. The Advisory Committee delegation's visit to Russia took place from 16-24 October 2017. The Advisory Committee's Opinion was adopted on 20 February 2018, and was published in English, French and Russian on 15 January 2019. Government comments

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.coe.int/en/web/minorities/russian-federation>.

had been received on 24 December 2018. The Advisory Committee's Resolution was adopted by the Committee of Ministers (CoM) of the CoE on 8 December 2020.

So the visit of a delegation should have taken place in late 2022, with an Opinion published in 2024. But Russia's all-out invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 (a continuation of the illegal annexation of Ukraine in 2014), a continuing flagrant violation of the UN Charter, supervened.

On 16 March 2022 the CoM voted to expel Russia from the council with immediate effect. On 23 March 2022 the CoM and the Plenary of the Strasbourg Court decided, separately but almost simultaneously, that Russia would cease to be a Contracting Party to the European Convention on Human Rights on 16 September 2022. Given that the FCNM is open to non-member states, the Russian Federation has remained a Contracting Party to the FCNM and has been consequently bound by its obligations and subject to its monitoring procedure.

This was reflected in the Statement of the Advisory Committee of the FCNM on the Russian aggression against Ukraine, dated 20 May 2022.<sup>18</sup> In this context and circumstances permitting, the Advisory Committee announced that it would continue to follow closely the repercussions of these developments on persons belonging to national minorities in the Russian Federation.

On 17 January 2023, President Putin submitted to the State Duma a draft law on the termination of international treaties of the Council of Europe with respect to Russia.<sup>19</sup> Russia's subscription to the CoE for 2022 would have been €37.2 million (Russia has been one of the main contributors to the budget of the CoE). The draft law envisaged termination of a number of treaties in relation to the Russian Federation, including the Charter of the Council of Europe of May 5, 1949, the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR) of November 4, 1950, the European Convention for the Suppression of Terrorism of January 27, 1977, the Charter of Local Self-Government of October 15, 1985 and the Social Charter of May 3, 1996.

On 15 February 2023, Sergey Lavrov, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, stated that "We wanted to stay in the Council of Europe in those conventions that are open to countries that do not participate in this organization, but even there they began to make claims against us, trying already in those conventions to infringe on our rights that belong to all countries participating in these documents. Right now, we are withdrawing from the international convention on

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<sup>18</sup> <https://www.coe.int/en/web/minorities/-/advisory-committee-deplores-russia-s-usage-of-minority-rights-as-a-pretext-for-invading-ukraine-concerned-about-the-war-deepening-mistrust-in-intereth>

<sup>19</sup> <http://duma.gov.ru/news/56180/>



criminal liability for corruption, the so-called GRECO group, precisely for this reason ... Another number of agreements that fall into this category, under which they are trying to infringe on our rights, is under consideration by the government.”<sup>20</sup>

He did not mention the FCNM. As a result of Russia’s expulsion from the Council of Europe, the fact that all civil society activity has been closed down in Russia, and the increasing intensity of the armed conflict within occupied Ukraine, Russian minorities are now deprived of access to the Council of Europe instruments and mechanisms which had served them so well since 1996.

On 17 February 2023 it was reported that the law had been adopted.<sup>21</sup> The explanatory note noted that the ECHR and other international treaties had ceased to be valid for Russia since 16 March 2022, after the adoption of the resolution of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the termination of Russia's membership. Putin signed the draft law on 28 February 2023.<sup>22</sup> The Law was published in the *Rossiiskaya Gazeta* on 2 March 2023.<sup>23</sup>

The Advisory Committee has not given up, despite Russia’s all-out invasion of Ukraine. On 16 December 2022 it was reported that members of the AC, amidst power outages in Ukraine due to intense Russian attacks on energy infrastructure, held online meetings with some 30 minority representatives as well as researchers, the Ukrainian Parliamentary Ombudsman’s Office and the Ukrainian State Agency for Ethnic Policy and Freedom of Conscience, on 21-22 November.<sup>24</sup> The fight for survival and coping with basic humanitarian needs was the biggest challenge for them. The killing and injury of civilians and the destruction of civilian infrastructure such as residential buildings, hospitals and schools had affected everyone in Ukraine, and persons belonging to national minorities are no exception to this. Among the many national minorities present in the most affected Eastern and Southern regions of the country, Azov Greeks as well as Ukraine’s indigenous peoples (Crimean Tatars, Karaites and Krymchaks) were highlighted as particularly at risk, including in the territories under temporary Russian occupation.

Despite efforts undertaken by the authorities and the Ombudsman and positive examples of solidarity, Roma were in an extremely vulnerable situation and their already precarious

<sup>20</sup> <https://ria.ru/20230215/se-1852183732.html?in=t>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.advgazeta.ru/novosti/prinyat-zakon-o-prekrashchenii-deystviya-mezhdunarodnykh-dogovorov-soveta-evropy-v-otnoshenii-ri/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://ria.ru/20230228/zakon-1854947568.html>

<sup>23</sup> <https://rg.ru/documents/2023/03/02/document-soglasheniya.html>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.coe.int/en/web/minorities/-/advisory-committee-met-with-national-minority-representatives-from-ukraine-1>

situation in access to social services, housing and education has deteriorated. Roma IDPs particularly faced difficulties finding accommodation in other parts of the country. The closure of local schools and difficulties in accessing remote education affected Roma disproportionately, a situation likely to further increase the gaps already apparent during the Covid-19 pandemic. The lack of public funds earmarked for improving the humanitarian situation of Roma, including from international donors, was raised.

Nevertheless, the Fifth Report<sup>25</sup> bears close examination.

The FCNM's title page made it clear that 1) the report had been prepared under the sole responsibility of the Russian Federation, and 2) that the Council of Europe does not recognise any alteration of status of the Autonomous republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol.

The three "Main Directions of Implantation" of the FCNM in Russia, Part I of the Report, were:

- 1, The indigenous small-numbered peoples of the RF (p.13-17),
2. The work of the Ombudsman for rights of indigenous small-numbered peoples (p.17 – 26)
3. Protection of national minorities in the Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol (p.26-37)

The largest ethnic group on the Crimean Peninsula according to the Report are Russians, 1.49 million people, 68% of the population; Ukrainians, 344.5 thousand people, 15.7%; and Crimean Tatars, 232.3 thousand, 10.6%. I have written about the fate of the Crimean Tatars, their homeland annexed twice by Russia, in 1783 and in 2014, their persecution by the Russian Empire, and the large Crimean Tatar diasporas in Turkey and Bulgaria; the genocide perpetrated against them by Stalin in 1944, with their deportation en masse to Central Asia in cattle trucks; and the obstacles placed in the way of their return after 1991, by the Ukrainian authorities, denying them citizenship on their return from exile in Central Asia; and failing to protect them after the creation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, within the unitary state of Ukraine.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> <https://rm.coe.int/5th-sr-russian-federation-en/1680a2234b>

<sup>26</sup> See Bill Bowring (2018) "Who Are the "Crimean People" or "People of Crimea"? The Fate of the Crimean Tatars, Russia's Legal Justification for Annexation, and Pandora's Box" in Sergey Sayapin and Evhen Tsybulenko (eds) *The Use of Force against Ukraine and International Law* "Jus Ad Bellum, Jus In Bello, Jus Post Bellum" (T M C Asser / Springer) pp. 21-40; Bill Bowring (2005) "The Crimean autonomy: innovation or anomaly?" in Marc Weller and Stefan Wolff *Autonomy, Self-governance and Conflict Resolution: Innovative approaches to institutional design in divided societies* (Routledge, 2005) pp.75-97; Bill Bowring (2002) "Between a (Russian) rock and a (Crimean Tatar) hard place? Ethnic, linguistic and minority issues" in Ann Lewis (ed) *Ukraine and the EU: Neighbours, Friends, Partners?* (The Federal Trust) pp.61-70,

Russia emphasises<sup>27</sup> the failure of Ukraine for more than two decades to adopt a law on the status of the Crimean Tatar people and the law on rehabilitation. However, on the following page we learn that on 21 April 2014 President Putin signed a decree “*On Measures of Rehabilitation of Armenian, Bulgarian, Crimean Tatar, German, Greek and Italian Peoples and State Support for Their Revival and Development*”. It is obvious that the special status of the Crimean Tatar people as the indigenous people of Crimea, more than 10% of the population, with at least the same number who have not yet been able to return from Uzbekistan, is not recognised by Russia.

Sadly, it was only 12 November 2015, after Russia’s annexation in 2014, that the Ukrainian Parliament at last recognised the destruction of the Crimean Tatar nation by the Soviet Army in 1944 as a genocide.<sup>28</sup>

Some sense of the reality of Russian rule if to be found on p.31 of the Report.

... 547 general educational institutions are operating in the Republic of Crimea in the 2020/2021 school year with a total of 219,600 children. Of these, 16 schools use the Crimean Tatar language (4,800 students) and one uses the Ukrainian language (162 students).

In general education institutions with Russian as the language of instruction, there are classes in the Crimean Tatar language of instruction (1,809 students) and in the Ukrainian language of instruction (52 students).

Thus, in the 2020/2021 school year, 6.7 thousand students receive instruction in the Crimean Tatar language (3 per cent of the total enrollment), 214 students receive instruction in the Ukrainian language (0.1 per cent).

General educational institutions in the Republic of Crimea provide instruction in the Crimean Tatar language for 30,475 students and in the Ukrainian language for 4,155 students.

Compare that to the size of the Crimean Tatar population as shown above.

On 1 June 2022 the Secretary General of the United Nations published a Report on the situation of human rights in the temporarily occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine.<sup>29</sup> The Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights of the UN (OHCHR) was not permitted to have access to Crimea.

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<sup>27</sup> Report p.26

<sup>28</sup> Brian Glyn Williams “Ukraine (finally) recognizes the hidden genocide of the Crimean Tatars” OUP Blog 10 January 2016 at <https://blog.oup.com/2016/01/crimean-tatars-genocide/>; and see Brian Glyn Williams (2015) *The Crimean Tatars: From Soviet Genocide to Putin's Conquest* (C Hurst & Co)

<sup>29</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/attachments/25282cda-e01a-4275-9b55-c378ae5588e0/EN.pdf> and <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/situation-human-rights-temporarily-occupied-autonomous-republic-crimea-and-city-sevastopol-ukraine-report-secretary-general-ahrc5065advance-edited-version>

The present report is therefore based on information collected through remote monitoring by OHCHR by means of the human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine. The mission has worked in Ukraine and monitored the situation in Crimea remotely on a continuous basis since March 2014, including through visits to the Administrative Boundary Line between Crimea and other parts of Ukraine. The report is primarily based on direct interviews with victims of alleged human rights violations in Crimea, which were further verified by multiple sources, including interviews with relatives of victims, witnesses, lawyers, government officials and representatives of civil society. It also draws on court documents, official records, legislation, open sources and other relevant material. The findings were based on verified information collected from sources that, in accordance with OHCHR methodology, were assessed to be credible and reliable. Information was included in the report when the “reasonable grounds to believe” standard of proof was met.

The Report presented multiple violation of fundamental human rights by the Russian authorities.

For example, as well as multiple violations of the right to a fair trial, OHCHR received complaints about the use of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment against Crimean residents by Russian law enforcement officers (both in Crimea and in the Russian Federation in the case of transferees). It verified five cases (all concerning men) occurring during the period under review. In three of the cases, officers of the Federal Security Service (FSB) of the Russian Federation used torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment on Crimean residents with the objective of obtaining self-incriminatory statements and testimony against others or to coerce them into undergoing a polygraph test. Two survivors consistently described to OHCHR how a group of FSB officers electrocuted them in the basement of an unknown building by attaching electric wires to their ears and switching on the current. Both were forced to undergo polygraph tests, following which the officers released them. OHCHR notes that the alleged perpetrators wore balaclavas to conceal their identities, bragged to the victims about impunity for their actions and on at least one occasion called themselves “those who untie tongues”. At least one survivor, as a condition for his release, was forced to write a statement in which he denied that any force had been used on him.

There are many such examples.

On 16 June 2022 in a decision adopted in the light of a report<sup>30</sup> by Council of Europe Secretary General Marija Pejčinović Burić, the Coe’s Committee of Ministers condemned human rights violations committed by the Russian occupying authorities, against ethnic Ukrainians, Crimean

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<sup>30</sup> <https://rm.coe.int/human-rights-situation-in-the-autonomous-republic-of-crimea/1680a66483>

Tatars and other residents of temporarily occupied Crimea.<sup>31</sup> “Under the temporary Russian occupation, the human rights situation in Crimea has deteriorated significantly.”

On 16 December 2022 it was reported that the FCNM Advisory Committee had met with national minority representatives from Ukraine.<sup>32</sup>

Among the many national minorities present in the most affected Eastern and Southern regions of the country, Azov Greeks as well as Ukraine’s indigenous peoples (Crimean Tatars, Karaites and Krymchaks) were highlighted as particularly at risk, including in the territories under temporary Russian occupation. Many of these were reported as being affected as groups, with persons belonging to them now living mostly abroad and their cultural heritage destroyed. Countless buildings and monuments of cultural significance for persons belonging to national minorities across Ukraine have been damaged or destroyed.

On 20 December 2022, a round table was held in Strasbourg to examine the Human Rights situation in the occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine.<sup>33</sup> Participants included the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People as well as prominent NGOs. And on 28 February, at the office of the Majlis of the Crimean Tatar People, Mrs. Miatovych and her colleagues discussed issues related to the preparation by the commissioner of a special report on the state of human rights in the occupied Crimea and the position of the indigenous Crimean Tatar People. The report was scheduled to appear in April 2023.

These recent events reflect very well on the FCNM and its Advisory Committee, continuing its important work in impossible circumstances.

#### IV. BUSINESS AS USUAL? THE FADN IN RUSSIA, AND ITS HEAD, MR BARINOV

I mentioned Mr Barinov in my Introduction. In 2015 my contribution to EYMI included a comment on the creation on 31 March 2015, by the President’s Decree No.168, of a new Federal Agency, FADN, the Federal Agency for Affairs of Nationalities (ethnic minorities), with the function of realizing state national (ethnic) policy, and the implementation of state and federal special purpose (*tselevikh*) programmes in the sphere of interethnic relations.<sup>34</sup> The

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/secretary-general-s-report-on-the-human-rights-situation-in-crimea-committee-of-ministers-gravely-concerned>

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.coe.int/en/web/minorities/-/advisory-committee-met-with-national-minority-representatives-from-ukraine-1>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.coe.int/et/web/portal/-/round-table-surveys-human-rights-situation-in-crimea-and-sevastopol>

<sup>34</sup> <http://fadn.gov.ru/>

retired Colonel of the FSB (Federal Security Service) and former soldier in the second Chechen War, Igor Vyacheslavovich Barinov was appointed Head of the new Agency.<sup>35</sup>

FADN, like every arm of government in Russia, has its obligations to the Kremlin's policy in Ukraine.

On 10 September 2022 the official Russian government newspaper *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* reported Mr Barinov's words at the Eastern Economic Forum (EEF) in Vladivostok.<sup>36</sup> He appealed to all those present, and especially regional officials and deputies, to go to the Donbass or other liberated territories in order to better understand the difficulties that citizens living there face.

I would advise my colleagues in the regions - deputies and officials, to visit the Donbass or the newly liberated territories at least once in order to feel and feel how hard it has been for people there in recent years, what they have gone through and are going through, then there will be more empathy and a desire to help.

He added that the Group "Zemlyane" had donated 8 million rubles to a hospital in Donbass

He urged everyone to unite as much as possible, noting that the complex work of the media and social networks is important in this matter. "There can be no other point of view, except for supporting one's own homeland."

The following month, Mr Barinov returned to the pages of the *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* with an article entitled "The head of the FADN Igor Barinov spoke about the peculiarities of the indigenous peoples of Russia".<sup>37</sup> His remarks were addressed to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII).<sup>38</sup> The article continued: "The FADN of Russia develops and implements the state national policy of our country. Why does the state pay such increased attention to indigenous peoples and how are their demographic indicators characterized today?" Mr Barinov explained:

193 peoples live in Russia. Each of them has its own characteristics and faces different challenges. Among them are 47 indigenous peoples numbering 316 thousand people.

Due to their way of life, peculiarities of settlement and ways of self-sufficiency, they are more vulnerable than the rest. Many live in hard-to-reach and remote areas. Because of this, the implementation of state mechanisms for maintaining their life support systems, including food security, social protection, and domestic infrastructure, is difficult or impossible.

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<sup>35</sup> Bill Bowring "National Developments – Russia. Emphasis on Crimea, Russian Language, and National Security" (2017) vol.14 (2015) *European Yearbook of Minority Issues*, 186-198

<sup>36</sup> <https://rg.ru/2022/09/10/glava-fadn-prizval-chinovnikov-sezdit-v-donbass-chtoby-ponimat-liudej.html>

<sup>37</sup> <https://rg.ru/2022/10/10/reg-szfo/glava-federalnogo-agentstva-po-delam-nacionalnostej-igor-barinov-rasskazal-ob-osobennostyah-korennyh-narodov-rossii-i-ih-otnosheniiah-s-promyshlennymi-kompaniyami.html>

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/unpfii-sessions-2.html>

Under these conditions, the state has assumed obligations to support the traditional ways of self-sufficiency that are customary and uncontested for them.

It was on the basis of the principle of social justice, and not on a national basis, that the state singled them out into a separate category and endowed them with additional rights in order to equalize the guarantees of their life activity to the all-Russian level.

He asked whether the international situation had influenced the interest of foreign participants in the Forum and, in general, in the indigenous peoples of Russia. Mr Barinov argued that despite the difficult circumstances, the organisers of the Forum had ensured the participation of representatives of key international bodies on indigenous issues, including the UN system and independent experts. At the same time, despite the high interest, many could not take part in its work precisely for external reasons.

The article concluded:

We must test and integrate into Russian practices new instruments of state and corporate regulation of social responsibility in terms of ensuring human rights, ESG principles, and Global Sustainable Development Goals... Increasing their effectiveness and recognition by local communities also depend on their further standardization based on approaches that have been successfully tested in certain regions of Russia.

These goals can be facilitated by the consolidation of all interested participants through the formation of a national expert platform. Equal participation of government, business, public and expert structures will allow formulating and promoting balanced practice-oriented approaches.

This statement in bureaucratic language was intended to show that despite the ongoing War, not mentioned as such, Russia would continue to participate in international mechanisms.

In November 2022 the *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* reported that “The Council for Interethnic Relations is 10 years old”.<sup>39</sup> Valery Tishkov was reported as saying (to his shame)

The force that holds us together, which causes sympathy and, alas, envy in the world, these are two factors - the paradigm "I am a Russian [Rosiyandin – civic, not ethnic Russian]<sup>40</sup>" and our common history. The world is studying how Russian [Rossiyskaya] identity does not contradict national self-consciousness, and the formula "friendly people" has become a formula of all-Russian [obshcherossiyskovo] patriotism. And we show this patriotism and solidarity during the “Special Military Operation” in Ukraine. What the world sees is that patriotism and solidarity are not theoretical, they are the formula of a worldview.

These surprising words bear thinking about. Mr Tishkov has had the reputation of a serious scholar. Should he be taken to be describing Russian minorities policy since 2022? In any event, this statement is somewhat self-contradictory, referring as it must to civic Russian-ness.

<sup>39</sup> <https://rg.ru/2022/11/14/soiuz-193-narodov.html>

<sup>40</sup> Note that he does not use “Russkiy”, which is properly the word for ethnicity, language, cuisine, but not citizens of the Russian (Rossiiskaya) Federation



On 9-12 December 2022 the VI Forum “Language Policy in Russia” took place in Moscow.<sup>41</sup> The Forum started with a welcome from Gennadiy Semigin, the Chairman of the Duma Committee on Ethnic Affairs, Anna Kotova, the Deputy Head of FADN, and the Director of the House of Peoples of Russia, Anna Polezhevaeva. The Forum included three directions of work:

- “Possibilities of the parental community to involve children in the language environment”;
- “Electronic Writing: Language Technologies and Technologies for Languages”;
- “Traditions and innovations to promote reading in the languages of the peoples of Russia.”

This agenda says nothing, of course, about the ongoing aggression in Ukraine, and projects “business as usual”. The usual work of FADN and the Duma Committee are continuing as before. But at the same time, as has been shown, Mr Baranov encourages his staff to visit the territories which Russia has purported to annex from Ukraine.

Despite Russia’s flagrant violation of the UN Charter, Mr Barinov was in Paris on 13 December 2022 at the headquarters of UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, for the opening of the International Decade of Languages of Indigenous Peoples.<sup>42</sup> This was the Official High-level launch event.<sup>43</sup>

On 12 December 2022 FADN published an extensive report on Mr Barinov’s presentation.<sup>44</sup> He declared that for Russia, as one of the most multinational and multilingual countries in the world, the preservation and development of the languages of peoples is a long-term and absolute priority of state policy, enshrined in federal and regional legislation. He drew the attention of those present to the fact that Russia was one of the first to initiate the International Decade and to adopt the National Action Plan for its implementation.

He presented with pride the following (true) facts about Russia:

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<sup>41</sup> <https://fadn.gov.ru/press-centr/news/v-moskve-sostoyalsya-vi-forum-yazyikovaya-politika>

<sup>42</sup> The United Nations General Assembly (Resolution A/RES/74/135) proclaimed the period between 2022 and 2032 as the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (IDIL 2022-2032), to draw global attention on the critical situation of many indigenous languages and to mobilize stakeholders and resources for their preservation, revitalization and promotion.

<sup>43</sup> <https://events.unesco.org/event?id=1420492281>

<sup>44</sup> <https://fadn.gov.ru/press-centr/news/rukovoditel-fadn-rossii-vyistupil>



- 193 peoples who speak 277 languages and dialects, while almost all - 99 percent - are fluent in the state language - Russian;
- 105 languages that are used in the state system of preschool, school and secondary education;
- 35 languages recognized as state languages in the areas of their existence;
- 23 languages in which you can get higher education, mainly historical and philological;
- 50 languages in which television and radio broadcasting is conducted;
- 380 newspapers in 51 languages;
- 130 titles of magazines and almanacs in 30 languages.
- 70 languages are written, in which more than a thousand titles of books are published annually, including languages with only a few dozen speakers

This was followed on 14 December 2022 by “The Head of FADN: Russian experience in preserving indigenous languages has attracted attention at UNESCO”.<sup>45</sup> FADN boasted that

The Russian representative was invited to speak at the official opening ceremony of this forum, convened at the headquarters of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (in Paris). He took part in the ministerial segment of the conference, giving specific examples of Russia's leading positions in the preservation of multilingualism.

He did not mention the War in Ukraine, or the situation of the indigenous people of temporarily occupied Crimea – the Crimean Tatars.

On 27 December, shortly after Mr Barinov’s return, FADN reported that the House of the Peoples of Russia hosted a meeting of the Advisory Council for National Cultural Autonomies (NKAs)<sup>46</sup> under the FADN of Russia.<sup>47</sup> The meeting was attended by representatives of 21

<sup>45</sup> <https://fadn.gov.ru/press-centr/news/glava-fadn-rossijskij-opyit-soxraneniya>

<sup>46</sup> National (non-territorial) Cultural Autonomies, an invention of Austro-Marxism and the Jewish Bund, which had been anathema to the Bolsheviks, were established by law, under President Yeltsin, in 1996, for the representation of minorities without their own territory – Russia has 21 ethnic republics – or living outside it – especially Jews, Roma, people from former Soviet Republics, and even Tatars outside Tatarstan. See Bill Bowring (2008) “The Tatars of the Russian Federation and National-Cultural Autonomy: A Contradiction in Terms?” in Karl Cordell and David Smith (eds) *Cultural Autonomy in Contemporary Europe* (Abingdon: Routledge), pp.81-100; Bill Bowring (2005) “Burial and Resurrection: Karl Renner’s controversial influence on the ‘National Question’ in Russia” in Ephraim Nimni (ed) *National-Cultural Autonomy and its Contemporary Critics* (Routledge) pp.191-206; Bill Bowring (2002) "Austro-Marxism's Last Laugh?: The Struggle for Recognition of National-Cultural Autonomy for Rossians and Russians" v.54, n.2 *Europe-Asia Studies* pp.229-250

<sup>47</sup> <https://fadn.gov.ru/press-centr/news/sostoyalos-zasedanie-konsultativnogo-soveta-po-delam-naczionalno-kulturnyix-avtonomij>

federal national-cultural autonomies.<sup>48</sup> During the meeting, State Secretary and Deputy Head of FADN, Anna Kotova, made a presentation on the implementation by the Agency of new powers to maintain a register of national-cultural autonomies. Thus, as of 23 December 2022, the register contained information on 1,245 national-cultural autonomies, of which 22 were federal, 284 were regional, and 927 were local. The new public organization "Federal National-Cultural Autonomy of the Uzbeks of Russia" was registered by the Ministry of Justice of Russia in December 2022.

The analyst Paul Goble commented<sup>49</sup> on 24 January 2022 on the FADN Press release<sup>50</sup> on the publication of the census results – see above.

According to FADN one of the reasons so many people did not declare a nationality [in the recent census] is that in Russia today, nationality is not as important as it was in Soviet times. In Soviet times, people indicated their nationality ‘according to what was in their passports,’ that is, it was specifically defined,” the press release says. And “it is no secret that nationality gave definite preferences to some and sometimes ‘put a cross’ on the careers of others.” (...)

But the Agency’s recognition of the declining meaning of nationality in the Russian Federation is far and away the most important aspect of this statement, not only because it undercuts the mission of the agency as such but because it highlights the fact that other identities or no identities at all are growing in importance. While that development may help the Kremlin in some respects by reducing the claims nationalities make on the state, it will undercut the center in at least two ways. On the one hand, it will raise serious questions about how the Russian state is to be organized; and on the other, it is a confession that alternative identities including regional ones, are growing in importance.

FADN returned to – illegally occupied - Ukraine on 9 February 2023: “On the territory of the DPR and Zaporozhye, the action "Peoples together - through the years" was held.”<sup>51</sup> According to the press release “In Melitopol and Mariupol, the traditional action "Peoples Together - Through the Years" was held, this time timed to coincide with the 80th anniversary of the defeat of the Nazi troops near Stalingrad.” The press release was accompanied by many photographs. There was of course no mention of the War or the complete destruction of Mariupol during the long siege.

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<sup>48</sup> There are federal NKAs of Bashkirs, Chuvash, Greeks, Nogais, Didoitsi, Assyrians, Jews, Lezgins, Azerbaijanis, Belarussians, Cossacks, Georgians, Karachaevs, Kurds, Lithuanians, Russian Koreans, Russian Germans, Tatars (my special subject), Roma (Tsigani), Moldovans, Ukrainians of Russia, and Poles in Russia. It seems that they were all present except the Ukrainians.

<sup>49</sup> <https://windowoneurasia2.blogspot.com/2023/01/ethnic-nationality-less-important-in.html>

<sup>50</sup> <https://fadn.gov.ru/press-centr/news/fadn-rossii-ob-itogax-vsrossijskoj-perepisi-naseleniya-2020-v-chastinacziionalnogo-sostava>

<sup>51</sup> <https://fadn.gov.ru/press-centr/news/na-territorii-dnr-i-zaporozhya>

On 2 March 2023 a meeting of the Interdepartmental Working Group on Questions of Interethnic Relations in the Russian Federation took place, chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, Dmitry Cherishenko.<sup>52</sup> The participants included FADN's Igor Barinov, as well as representatives of Federal government bodies, and of the "executive organs" of the "Luhansk Peoples Republic" (LNR), and Federal National-Cultural Autonomies, etc. The meeting considered questions of the realisation of state national (ethnic) policy in connection with the inclusion into the Russian Federation of its "new subjects", the Ukrainian territories illegally annexed by Russia since February 2022, the results of the realisation of programmes of scientific research on question of inter-ethnic relations, and the results of the first year of implementation in Russia of the UN International Decade of Languages of Indigenous Peoples. The Deputy Prime Minister instructed FADN with the other ministries to supplement the plan for realisation of the Strategy for State National (ethnic) policy of the Russian Federation for measures for the strengthening of inter-ethnic unity in the new subjects of the Federation, also working out a complex of activities for realising state national policy in the Donetsk Peoples Republic (DNR), the LBR, and the Zaporozhsky and Khersonsky Oblasts.

There was no mention of the invasion of Ukraine from 2014, Russian military support for separatists in Donbas, thereafter, and the full-scale invasion of 24 February 2022, and the War continuing to the time of writing, more than a year. Not even of the "special military operation" for the "denazification and demilitarisation of Ukraine".

#### V. PROTESTS IN THE ETHNIC REPUBLICS: THE EFFECT OF PUTIN'S "PARTIAL MOBILISATION" IN DAGESTAN AND THE REST OF NORTH CAUCASUS

On 21 September 2022 *The Guardian* reported as follows: "Putin announces partial mobilisation and threatens nuclear retaliation in escalation of Ukraine war."<sup>53</sup> According to the report, Mr Putin said that Russia's first mobilisation since the second world war was a direct response to the dangers posed by the West, which "wants to destroy our country", and claimed that the West had tried to "turn Ukraine's people into cannon fodder".

He added that military service would apply only to citizens who are currently in the reserve, especially those who have served in the armed forces, have certain military professions and

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<sup>52</sup> <https://fادن.gov.ru/press-centr/news/rabochaya-vstrecha-rukovoditelya-fادن-rossii-igorya-barinova-s-predsdatelem-komiteta-gd>

<sup>53</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/21/putin-announces-partial-mobilisation-in-russia-in-escalation-of-ukraine-war>

relevant experience. Shortly after Mr Putin's announcement, the Minister of Defence, Sergei Shoigu, said 300,000 citizens would be called up as part of the mobilisation that will apply to "those with previous military experience".

There were protests in many parts of Russia, with 650 arrests. The protests come after Putin declared that 300,000 reservists would be drafted under an immediate "partial mobilization," in a bid to reinforce his faltering invasion of Ukraine. Though Russian authorities have said it would only affect Russians with previous military experience, the decree on partial mobilisation itself gave much broader terms, sowing fear among Russians of a wider draft in the future – and of deeply disturbing implications for ethnic minorities.

Those sent to die in Ukraine are, significantly, young people with dark skins, from the North Caucasus, the Far East, and, in general, the ethnic republics. Very few young people from the big cities of 'European Russia', Moscow, St Petersburg and Yekaterinburg have been conscripted.

This was especially the case in the North Caucasus republic of Dagestan, which is predominantly Muslim. On 26 September 2022 *CNN* reported that "Protests erupt in Russia's Dagestan region as minorities say they are being targeted by Putin's mobilization orders."<sup>54</sup> Heated protests had broken out in some ethnic minority regions in Russia against Mr Putin's mobilization orders, with activist groups and Ukrainian officials saying these minorities are being disproportionately targeted for conscription in the war.

Several videos posted to social media, which *CNN* geo-located to Dagestan, showed women in the capital Makhachkala pleading with police outside a theatre. "Why are you taking our children? Who attacked who? It's Russia that attacked Ukraine," they can be heard saying in the video. Groups of women then begin chanting "No war!", as a police officer walks away.

In other confrontations in the city, police can be seen pushing back against the protesters, with people being violently detained by police while others flee on foot. The independent Russian monitoring group OVD-Info reported that several arrests were made, including that of a local journalist who was reporting on the day's protests. Furthermore:

Makhachkala Mayor Salman Dadayev called for calm on Sunday, urging people not to "succumb to the provocations of persons engaged in anti-state activities. I urge you not to commit illegal acts, each of which will be assessed by the law enforcement agencies for legal consequences." In another video, filmed in the

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<sup>54</sup> <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/09/26/europe/russia-dagestan-protests-mobilization-intl-hnk/index.html>

town of Endirei in Dagestan, a police officer is seen shooting his rifle into the air in an apparent attempt to disperse a crowd of protesters.

“Since mobilization started, we are actually seeing a much greater push to get people from those (ethnic minority) republics to go to war,” said Anton Barbashin, the editorial director at Riddle Russia, an online journal on Russian affairs. Mobilization there seems to be in much greater disarray – people are being grabbed from universities. It’s already starting to make people question the policy, like in Dagestan.”

Also on 26 September 2022, *France24* reported that: “Women, minorities in Russia's Dagestan protest Putin’s mobilisation, fight police.”<sup>55</sup> On 1 October 2022 *Caucasian Knot* published an article entitled: “Muslims claim disproportionate mobilization in Northern Caucasus”.<sup>56</sup> And on 14 October 2022 *Foreign Policy* reported: “Russia’s Minorities Don’t Want to Be Putin’s Foot Soldiers. A hasty mobilization is sparking fear and resistance.”<sup>57</sup> The article continued:

Putin’s regime can send Buryats, Chechens, and Dagestanis to die in Ukraine because of centuries of violent colonial expansion. The first official Russian incursion into Siberia occurred in 1581, but the subjugation of the immense eastern region took centuries of military occupation, economic exploitation, and settler colonialism beforehand to accomplish. No less violent was Russia’s invasion of the North Caucasus in 1817, which led to decades of bloody conflict and genocide against the Circassian people. (...)

Another part of the North Caucasus also affected by the war is the Republic of Chechnya. The Head of Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov, a reliable ally of Mr Putin, has been sending his own private army, the “Kadyrovtsy” to fight in Ukraine. Furthermore, on 10 November 2022 *RFE/RL* reported that “Authorities In Chechnya Use Aggressive Shaming To Boost Number Of Volunteers For Russia's Ukraine War.”<sup>58</sup> The article continued:

Russian forces have sustained heavy losses in the war in Ukraine, and fighters from Chechnya are no exception: On October 24, dozens of Chechen men were killed in an artillery strike on the building where they were staying in the Kherson region town of Kayiry.

However, there are also many Chechens fighting with Ukraine’s army, as *ABC News* reported on 13 April 2023, in the Dzhokhar Dudayev battalion, named after Chechnya’s leader in the 1990s, who declared its independence, and who led Chechens in the First Chechen War.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>55</sup> <https://observers.france24.com/en/europe/20220926-russia-putin-partial-military-mobilisation-protests-dagestan-minorities-women>

<sup>56</sup> <https://eng.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/61439/>

<sup>57</sup> <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/10/14/russia-minorities-putin-partial-mobilization/>

<sup>58</sup> <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-chechnya-ukraine-war-recruitment-kadyrov-shaming/32124093.html>

<sup>59</sup> <https://abcnews.go.com/International/chechen-volunteer-fighters-back-ukraines-russian-resistance/story?id=98528574>

One consequence of Mr Putin's announcement was that the notorious mercenary Wagner Group of the close Putin ally Yevgeny Prigozhin, announced that it was recruiting prisoners to fight in Ukraine. On 26 September 2022 the BBC reported: "Russia's Wagner boss: It's prisoners fighting in Ukraine, or your children."

On 21 December 2022 *The Guardian* reported<sup>60</sup> that "Russian defence minister proposes raising conscription age, expanding military. Russia's defence minister, Sergei Shoigu, has called for his country's military to be expanded from its current 1 million servicemen to 1.5 million amid the fighting in Ukraine."

## VI. CONCLUSION

It is always dangerous, and probably a waste of time, to try to make predictions for Russia. But my own guess is that it will be increasingly difficult for the Russian government, and FADN in particular, to maintain a show of "business as usual". The Russian mass media have not reported on the protests which I have presented in detail, from a number of sources. The events staged by FADN in the ruined city of Mariupol and in Melitopol are, in the actual context, obscene.

The Putin regime continues to insist that what is happening in Ukraine is a "special military operation for the denazification and demilitarisation of Ukraine". There has accordingly been no general mobilisation. One consequence of Russia's aggression has ironically been the militarisation of Ukraine, which had no serious armed forces in 2014, but has since then created a professional army, with experience for more than 12 years of fighting Russian backed separatists in Donbas. Not only has Putin brought NATO back to life, and saved the career of President Zelensky, but he has roused ethno-nationalism in Ukraine, where people who previously spoke Russian (they did not wish to live in Russia) now insist on speaking Ukrainian. The Hungarian minority in Transcarpathia are having a particularly uncomfortable time, given Hungary's sympathy for Russia.<sup>61</sup>

Meanwhile, the actions of Putin, who has no visible successor, have created an existential crisis for Russia itself. While the Tatar and other nationalisms of the 1990s have largely retreated, religion is now a much more worrying factor for the Russian Federation, with its large Muslim populations.

<sup>60</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/live/2022/dec/21/russia-ukraine-war-live-zelenskiy-expected-to-arrive-in-washington-in-first-trip-outside-ukraine-since-start-of-war>

<sup>61</sup> <https://www.economist.com/europe/2023/03/16/ethnic-hungarians-have-been-having-a-tricky-time-in-ukraine>

As they say in Russian “посмотрим”, “We shall see”.