RUSSIAN FEDERATION

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT

Country Information & Policy Unit
October 2001

CONTENTS

I.INTRODUCTION	
A.Scope of Document	1.1 - 1.5
II. GEOGRAPHY	
A.Location and Climate	2.1 - 2.2
B.Population	2.3 - 2.4
C.Language and Religion	2.5 - 2.5
III. HISTORY	
A.Pre-Twentieth Century Russia	3.1 - 3.3
B.The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)	3.4 - 3.11
C.The Russian Federation	3.12 - 3.17
D.Economy	3.18 - 3.21
IV. INSTRUMENTS OF THE STATE	
A.Constitution	4.1 - 4.2
B.Government	4.3 - 4.5
C.Security	4.6 - 4.9
D. Judiciary	4.10 - 4.14
E.Prisons/Detention Centres	4.15 - 4.17
V. HUMAN RIGHTS	
A.General Assessment	5.1 - 5.4
B.Chechnya	5.5 - 5.7
C.Political Opinion	5.8 - 5.12
D.Religion:	5.13 - 5.16
Christianity	5.17 - 5.21
Judaism	5.22 - 5.25
Islam	5.26 - 5.27
Cults and Sects	5.28 - 5.30
Other Religions	5.31 - 5.31
E.Ethnic Minorities:	5.32 - 5.35
Africans, Asians, Roma, Caucasians and Central Asians	5.36 - 5.36
Indigenous People	5.37 - 5.37
Cossacks	5.38 - 5.38
F.Women	5.39 - 5.39
G.Children	5.41 - 5.42
H.Homosexuals	5.43 - 5.45
VI. OTHER ISSUES	
A.Military Service	6.1 - 6.8
B.Organised Crime	6.9 - 6.12
C.Citizenship	6.13 - 6.18
D.Health	6.19 - 6.19
E.Internal Travel	6.20 - 6.23
F.External Travel	6.24 - 6.27
G.Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons	6.28 - 6.33
ANNEX A CHRONOLOGY OF MAIN EVENTS, 1917-2000	
ANNEX B MAIN POLITICAL ORGANISATIONS	
ANNEX C PROMINENT PEOPLE	
BIBLIOGRAPHY	

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Scope of Document

1.1. This assessment has been produced by the Country Information & Policy Unit of the Immigration & Nationality Directorate, Home Office, from information obtained from a variety of sources.

1.2. The assessment has been prepared for background purposes, for those involved in the asylum determination process. The information it contains is not exhaustive, nor is it intended to catalogue all human rights violations. It concentrates on the issues most commonly raised in asylum claims made in the United Kingdom.

1.3. The assessment is sourced throughout. It is intended to be used by caseworkers as a signpost to the source material, which has been made available to them. The vast majority of the source material is readily available in the public domain.

1.4. It is intended to revise the assessment on a six-monthly basis while the country remains within the top 35 asylum-producing countries in the United Kingdom.

1.5. The assessment is available on the Internet at the Immigration & Nationality Directorate website (http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/). An electronic copy of the assessment has been made available to the following organisations:

Amnesty International UK
Immigration Advisory Service
Immigration Appellate Authority
Immigration Law Practitioners' Association
Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants
JUSTICE
Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture
Refugee Council
Refugee Legal Centre
UN High Commissioner for Refugees

II. GEOGRAPHY

A. Location and Climate

2.1. The Russian Federation (until 25 December 1991, the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic of the Soviet Union) is bounded by Norway, Finland, Estonia and Latvia to the north-west and by Belarus and Ukraine to the west. The southern borders of European Russia are with the Black Sea, Georgia, Azerbaijan, the Caspian Sea and Kazakhstan. The Siberian and Far Eastern regions have southern frontiers with the People's Republic of China, Mongolia and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The eastern coastline is on the Sea of Japan, the Sea of Okhotsk, the Pacific Ocean and the Barents Sea. The northern coastline is on the Arctic Ocean. The region around Kaliningrad, on the Baltic Sea, became part of the Russian Federation in 1945. It is separated from the rest of the Federation by Lithuania and Belarus.[2]

2.2. The Russian Federation covers a total area of 17,075,400 sq km (6,592,850 sq miles), making it by far the largest country in the world. Its territory consists of 89 federal units, including the cities of Moscow, the capital, and St Petersburg, the old tsarist capital.[1] Given its size, it is not surprising that the climate of Russia is extremely varied, ranging from severe Arctic conditions in northern areas and much of Siberia to generally temperate weather in the south.[2]

B. Population

2.3. The Russians are Eastern Slavs, inhabitants of the huge Eurasian land mass, which is a territory with no great natural frontiers, a fact that has made them throughout history both vulnerable to invaders and themselves inclined to migration and expansion. Many ethnic Russians live beyond the borders of the Russian Federation, forming significant minorities in neighbouring other countries of the former Soviet Union, such as Estonia, Latvia, Belarus, Ukraine and Kazakhstan, in addition to Moldova and the Central Asian countries.[1]

2.4. The estimated total population of the Russian Federation at 1 January 1999 was 146,693,000, making the population density just 8.6 per sq km. The majority of the population lives in European Russia, the population of Siberia and the Far East being only some 32 million in 1989, approximately 22% of the total. At the 1989 census, Russians formed the largest ethnic group in the Federation, accounting for 82.6% of the population. Other major ethnic groups include Tatars (3.6%), Ukrainians (2.7%) and Chuvash (1.2%). There were also Belarusians, Bashkirs, Mordovans, Mari, Chechens, Kazakhs and Uzbeks.[1]

C. Language and Religion

2.5. The official language is Russian, but a large number of other languages are also used. Religious adherence is varied, with many religions closely connected with particular ethnic groups. Christianity is the major religion, mostly adhered to by ethnic Russians and other Slavs, with the Russian Orthodox Church the largest denomination. The main concentrations of Muslims are among Volga Tatars, Chuvash and Bashkirs, and the peoples of northern Caucasus,

including the Chechen, Ingush, Ossetians, Kabardinians and the peoples of Dagestan. Buddhism is the main religion of the Buryats, the Tyvans and the Kalmyks. The large pre-1917 Jewish population has been depleted by war and emigration, but there remain some 700,000 Jews in the Russian Federation.[2]

III. HISTORY

A. Pre-Twentieth Century Russia

3.1. The Russians' first state was established towards the end of the ninth century, around Kiev (now in Ukraine). Kievan Rus was the forerunner not only of the 'Great' Russians, but also of the Belarusians or 'White Russians' and the Ukrainians or 'Little Russians', and was a slave-holding society, which was officially Christianised in the year 988. The state did not last for long, however, as much of its population, tired of constant enemy attacks from the south and west, gradually migrated to the north and east. By the late twelfth century, the early Russians were scattered over a large area in what is now western Russia, Belarus and Ukraine, while their territory was fragmented among a large number of usually warring principalities, the most powerful centred on the town of Vladimir.[1]

3.2. This disintegration was halted in 1237, when Mongol Tartars invaded from the east, crossing the River Volga and imposing almost 250 years of subjugation on the Russian people. From the late fourteenth century, the Mongol Empire itself began to disintegrate into smaller khanates, and in 1480 a new Russian state finally emerged, when the Muscovite prince, Ivan III, proclaimed complete independence from the Tatars. However, the new state retained many of the features of the Mongol system, including the supremacy of the state over the individual and the principle of universal compulsory service to the state. Ivan IV (the 'Terrible'), who ruled from 1533 to 1584, was the first of many a Russian Tsar (Ceasar or Emperor) to use his unquestioned rights as supreme ruler to establish a despotic regime in which terror was, effectively, an instrument of state policy. Also under his rule, for the first time the Russian Empire extended into two continents, and by 1645, under the first Tsar of the Romanov dynasty, Muscovite rule reached the Sea of Okhotsk in the Far East.[1]

3.3. Over subsequent centuries, Russia's development was marked by almost continuous expansionism and by arguments over whether to follow a Western, European model of civilisation, or to create a peculiarly Russian one, informed more by the country's geographical position on the frontier between Europe and Asia. Peter I (the 'Great'), who ruled from 1682 to 1725, combined despotic methods with a determination to modernise Russia and establish it as a great European power. To symbolise this, in 1712 he moved the capital from Moscow to a newly built city on the Baltic coast, St Petersburg (Sankt Peterburg). Under Catherine II (the 'Great'), who ruled from 1762 to 1796, the Russian Empire was expanded south to the Black Sea and west into Poland. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the Tsars Alexander I and Nicholas I extended the Russian frontiers into the Caucasus and some of Central Asia, gains which were further extended in the second half of that century under Alexander II, who also conquered new territories in the Far East.[1]

B. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)

3.4. Despite the attempts of Alexander II to introduce liberal reforms, the Empire remained an autocracy until 1905.[2] Meanwhile, European liberal and revolutionary ideas increasingly threatened the political stability of late nineteenth century Russia, and the last Tsar, Nicholas II, was obliged to introduce elements of parliamentary democracy, with the establishment of a

legislative assembly, the Duma, in 1906.[1] However, this and ensuing attempts at reform failed to placate the increasingly restive workers and peasants.[2] In 1917, the pressures of defeat in the First World War and growing social and economic chaos in the country at large brought two revolutions. The first, in March, overthrew the Tsar and established a provisional government, which, however, soon found itself sharing power with the new workers' councils, known as soviets. The second, the Bolshevik Revolution on 7 November, brought the Communists to power in the capital (renamed Petrograd in 1914) and, after three years of civil war, throughout most of the territory of the Russian Empire.[1]

3.5. Led by Vladimir Ulyanov (Lenin) until 1924, the Communists established the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) with Moscow as its capital in 1922, in which Russia (the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic or RSFSR) became just one of eventually fifteen national republics, itself containing 31 ethnically defined autonomous republics or regions. In the 1920s, genuine attempts were made to encourage other nationalities to develop their own identities and cultures under local leadership, but under Stalin (Iosif Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili) between 1924 and 1953, the accepted dogma was that the Soviet nations would merge, which most understood to mean the subjugation of other nations by the Russian people.[1]

3.6. Russia, together with the other republics of the USSR experienced considerable hardship under Stalin's collectivisation campaign of the early 1930s and the accompanying widespread repression that came to characterise his brutal dictatorship.[3] Under the Nazi-Soviet Treaty of Non-Aggression in 1939, the USSR annexed the Baltic states as well as other territories, and victory over Germany and Japan in the Second World War led to further territorial gains for Russia. In the west, it gained part of East Prussia, now Kaliningrad, from Germany, a small amount of territory from Estonia and those parts of Finland annexed during the Soviet-Finnish War between 1939 and 1940. In the east, it acquired the strategically important Kurile Islands from Japan. In addition, the nominally independent People's Republic of Tuva (now the Republic of Tyva), situated between the USSR and Mongolia, was annexed in 1944, and subsequently became an autonomous republic within the Russian Federation. The present territorial extent of the Russian Federation was achieved in 1954, when Crimea was ceded to the Ukrainian SSR.[2]

3.7. Despite concessions to the other nations in terms of limited cultural, linguistic and administrative rights, Russians remained the colonial masters, their Empire simply renamed the USSR.[3] Russia ensured the loyalty of non-Russian parts of the Soviet Empire by the appointment of Russian second secretaries in all republican Communist Party organisations, by establishing Russian as the language of the Soviet state, and by making the republics' economies dependent on each other and on the all-Union government in Moscow. Meanwhile, Russian migration to other republics was encouraged.[1]

3.8. Stalin died in 1953 and was succeeded by Nikita Khrushchev who began a process of cautious liberalisation, released thousands of prisoners, and admitted for the first time that there had been large-scale repressions under Stalin. However, Krushchev's attempts to reform the Soviet bureaucracy, his erratic plans for economic reform and his conduct of international relations led to his dismissal in 1964. He was replaced by Leonid Brezhnev, who until the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, managed to improve relations with the West, which since the late 1940s had been generally characterised by the intense mutual hostility of the Cold War era. Upon his death in 1982, Brezhnev was succeeded by Yurii Andropov, who undertook an anti-corruption campaign and attempted very cautious economic reforms. He was succeeded upon

his death, in 1984, by Konstantin Chernenko, a former close ally of Brezhnev, who achieved little before his death in 1985.[2]

3.9. Chernenko's successor as General Secretary was Mikhail Gorbachev, who embarked upon a programme of changes, replacing many leading state and Communist party officials and appointing several reformists to the Politburo.[3] In addition, a policy of *glasnost* (openness) provided for a greater degree of freedom for the mass media and freer discussion of previously censored aspects of Soviet and Russian history, as well as more critical views of contemporary politics. Gorbachev's programme of gradual political and economic reform came to be known as *perestroika* (restructuring). In 1988, Gorbachev announced plans for comprehensive changes to the political system, with the introduction of a two-tier legislature, elected largely by competitive elections. In the subsequent elections to the new USSR Congress of People's Deputies, held in March 1989, many conservative candidates were defeated by reformist politicians, among them Boris Yeltsin, who won an overwhelming victory in the Moscow constituency. In May 1989, the Congress elected Gorbachev to the new post of executive President of the USSR.[2]

3.10. The first stage in the process of achieving Russian sovereignty from all-Union institutions was the election of the RSFSR Congress of People's Deputies in March 1990 by largely free and competitive elections. In May 1990, the Congress elected Yeltsin Chairman of the Supreme Soviet (the permanent working body of the Congress), the highest state post in the RSFSR and a position from which Yeltsin could effectively challenge the authority of Gorbachev and the all-Union institutions which he represented. In June 1990, the Congress adopted a declaration of sovereignty, asserting that the RSFSR was a sovereign republic and that the laws of the RSFSR had primacy over all-Union legislation. In mid-1990, the Russian Communist Party (RCP) was established and the political, cultural and scientific institutions that Russia had lacked began to be established. In June 1991, Yeltsin was elected President of the RSFSR, which gave him the executive power necessary to effect his policies as well as a sufficient popular mandate to challenge the jurisdiction of Gorbachev and the all-Union authorities.[2]

3.11. On 19 August 1991, a self-proclaimed State Committee for the State of Emergency (SCSE), led by the Soviet Vice-President, Gennadii Yanayev, seized power in Moscow, but within three days the attempted coup collapsed. Yeltsin's position was strengthened by his part in bringing about the collapse of the coup, and while the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and RCP were suspended, he asserted control over all-Union bodies, appointing RSFSR ministers to head central institutions. By the end of 1991, the USSR had ceased to exist. On 25 December 1991, Gorbachev resigned as its last President and the Russian Supreme Soviet formally changed the name of the RSFSR to the Russian Federation. Meanwhile, eleven former members of the USSR joined the newly established Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).[2]

C. The Russian Federation

3.12. During 1992, while Yeltsin accelerated his economic reform programme, there were increasing threats of conflict between the executive and the legislature, and his position remained precarious. By the beginning of May 1993, anti-Yeltsin demonstrations in Moscow by neo-Communist and nationalist groups had degenerated into violent clashes. Aleksandr Rutskoi, Vice-President of the Russian Federation, denounced corruption in Yeltsin's administration and

amidst arguments over proposals to amend the Constitution, Yeltsin divested Rutskoi of his official responsibilities. By September 1993, the situation had deteriorated to a point where Yeltsin suspended the Congress of People's Deputies and the Supreme Soviet on the grounds that they were obstructing both economic and constitutional reform. He also announced elections to a new bicameral Federal Assembly as envisaged in his draft Constitution.[2]

3.13. The Supreme Soviet responded by appointing Rutskoi as President in Yeltsin's place and this was ratified by the Congress of People's Deputies, which also voted to impeach Yeltsin. On 27 September 1993, Rutskoi and his supporters became besieged in the parliament building, while Yeltsin declared a state of emergency. On 4 October, tanks opened fire on the parliament building, forcing the surrender of the rebels, whose leaders were imprisoned and subsequently charged with inciting mass disorder. Meanwhile, Yeltsin announced that presidential elections, provisionally scheduled for mid-1994, would not take place and that he would fulfil his mandate until June 1996. In December 1993, the revised Constitution, increasing presidential power at the expense of the Federal Assembly, was endorsed by referendum held concurrently with elections to the Federal Assembly. No single party or bloc won a decisive majority of seats in the Duma.[2]

3.14. In November 1994, the Russian Security Council agreed to intervene militarily in the separatist republic of Chechnya, which, in November 1991, had declared its independence from Russia. In December 1994, Russian troops were sent in to Chechnya to introduce "constitutional rule". The conflict continued with varied intensity until negotiations achieved a ceasefire and Russian withdrawal in August 1996. However, despite the official cessation of hostilities in Chechnya, atrocities, including abductions and murders, continued and the political status of Chechnya remained unresolved.[2]

3.15. During 1994 and 1995, amidst continuing economic problems, the Chechen crisis, and a growing crime rate, it became clear that Yeltsin had serious health problems. This further undermined his position and in elections to the Duma in December 1995 the Communist Party emerged as the largest single party. However, Yeltsin proceeded to win the presidential elections, emerging from the second round in July 1996 with 54% of the votes cast. However, political infighting, economic problems, persistent speculation over the health of Yeltsin, and a series of financial scandals during 1997 all threatened to undermine the credibility of the government.[2] During 1998, Yeltsin dismissed the government twice, first in March and then again in August. On the first occasion, widely interpreted as an attempt to reassert his authority, he replaced Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin with Sergei Kiriyenko, who was then dismissed in August amidst financial crisis. Then Yeltsin again appointed Chernomyrdin as acting Prime Minister, but was unable to secure parliamentary approval. Eventually, in September 1998, Foreign Minister, Yevgenii Primakov was appointed as a compromise Prime Minister.[1]

3.16. In August 1999, Vladimir Putin was appointed Prime Minister.[2] Subsequently, a total of 26 parties and blocs contested the Duma elections on 19 December 1999.[33] On 31 December 1999, Yeltsin unexpectedly resigned as President and Putin became acting President until elections in March 2000, which saw him confirmed in the position with over 52% of the vote. In April 2000, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe voted to suspend Russia's membership unless progress were made to end human rights abuses in Chechnya. In May 2000, Putin was inaugurated as President and formed a government headed by the former First Deputy Prime Minister, Mikhail Kasyanov.[1]

3.17. These changes took place in the context of renewed conflict in Chechnya. A 1997 accord had established an uneasy peace there, but in early August 1999 the status quo was broken when Chechen-backed Islamist guerrillas carried out an insurgent raid on neighbouring Dagestan. They withdrew after Russian troops were dispatched to the region, but there were renewed incursions and fighting in September 1999. Subsequent fatal terrorist bombings throughout Russia, allegedly the work of Chechens, led the government to launch a full-scale attack on Chechnya, in an attempt to reassert federal control there. This began in September 1999 and resulted in heavy casualties on both sides and the displacement of a large proportion of the Chechen population. In early February 2000, Putin announced victory when federal troops recaptured the Chechen capital, Grozny, but the rebels claimed that their withdrawal from the capital had been tactical and warned of a long guerrilla war.[2] This continued in the mountainous south of the republic, where Chechen guerrilla tactics met with some success, forcing Russian officials to admit that military control in parts of the republic was much weaker than officially acknowledged.[1]

D. Economy

3.18. Following the dissolution of the USSR in 1991, a programme of economic reforms was initiated to effect the transition from a centrally-planned economy to a market-orientated system. Prices were liberalised, precipitating high inflation, while a programme of mass privatisation was inaugurated, and proposals were made to reduce central government expenditure.[2]

3.19. The economy performed better than expected following the August 1998 financial crisis and the sharp devaluation of the rouble, and economic recovery continued to exceed expectations during 2000. Gross domestic product (GDP) grew by 3.5% in 1999, and according to preliminary estimates was 7.6% in 2000. Industrial production increased by 9% in 2000. In 1999, inflation was 36.5%; by the end of 2000, it was 20.2%. Economic growth during 2000 was led by a recovery in domestic demand, with net exports contributing less than in previous years.[14a]

3.20. Real income grew by 8.7% in the first half of 2000, compared with the same period in 1999, but remained 10% lower than in 1998 and 25% lower than in 1997. Average wages increased to $89 per month by the end of 2000, compared with $66 per month at the end of 1999. However, approximately 36% of citizens continue to live below the official monthly subsistence level of $35. Official unemployment in 2000 was 10.2%, down from 12% at the beginning of the year. Corruption continues to be a negative factor in the development of the economy and commercial relations.[14a]

3.21. Poverty is particularly bad in Russia's Arctic and Far Eastern regions, where ten million people live, most sent there during the Soviet era, to facilitate a plan to industrialise the area. Since the demise of the central planning system that kept these communities economically active, with access to affordable fuel and food, the task of removing most of the population has grown increasingly urgent with each passing year. While each winter brings severe weather and insufficient supplies, the government has sought to offer housing credits and other aid to those wishing to relocate to the south, and hundreds of thousands of people are on the waiting list.[20]

IV. INSTRUMENTS OF THE STATE

A. Constitution

4.1. The current Constitution of the Russian Federation came into force on 12 December 1993, following its approval by the majority of participants in a nationwide plebiscite. It replaced the Constitution originally passed on 12 April 1978 but amended many times after 1990. The new Constitution declares that the Russian Federation (Russia) is a democratic, federative, law-based state, with a republican form of government. State power in the Russian Federation is divided between the legislative, executive and judicial branches, which are independent of one another. Ideological pluralism and a multi-party political system are recognised.[2]

4.2. The Constitution also states that the basic human rights and freedoms of the Russian citizen are guaranteed, regardless of sex, race, nationality or religion. It declares the right to life and to freedom and personal inviolability. The principles of freedom of movement, expression and conscience are upheld. Censorship is prohibited. Citizens are guaranteed the right to vote and stand in state and local elections and to participate in referendums. Individuals are to have equal access to state employment, and the establishment of trade unions and public associations is permitted. The Constitution commits the state to protection of motherhood and childhood and to granting social security, state pensions and social benefits. Each person has the right to housing. Health care and education are free of charge. Basic general education is compulsory. Citizens are guaranteed the right to receive qualified legal assistance. Payment of statutory taxes and levies is obligatory, as is military service.[2]

B. Government

4.3. The 1993 Constitution established a governmental structure with a strong head of state (president), a government headed by a prime minister, and a bicameral legislature (Federal Assembly), consisting of the State Duma (lower house) and the Federation Council (upper house). Unlike its predecessor, the current Duma is characterised by a strong pro-presidential centre that puts a majority within reach of almost all presidential priorities. Both the President (in March 2000) and the Duma (in December 1999) were selected in competitive elections, with a broad range of political parties and movements contesting offices. Both elections were judged by international observers to be largely free and fair, although pre-election manipulation of the media was a problem in both cases. President Vladimir Putin was elected in March 2000, and Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov took office in May 2000.[14a]

4.4. While there have been some modifications to the legislature and administrative structures, democratic institution building continues to face serious challenges, in part due to significant limitations on the state's financial resources.[14a] Furthermore, of the 21 regions that have drawn up their own Constitutions, 19 infringe the Federal Constitution.[27] Conflicts between federal and local laws can have far reaching consequences for the functioning of the rule of law, including the application and respect of principles embodied in international instruments ratified by Russia, for two main reasons. First, because those regions which are

in a position of political and/or economical strength vis-à-vis the central government, do not always feel obliged to comply with the federal law, even in instances when the Constitutional Court expressly declares regional laws and rules unconstitutional. Secondly, the functioning of the principle of dual subordination of local governments' civil servants, which requires that the latter be under the hierarchical authority of both their federal ministry and the local executive, tends to give predominance to the local bodies. It results that civil servants from local law enforcement agencies will in practice apply local normative acts, even if those are in violation of federal laws.[13c]

4.5. President Putin has sought to reassert the control of the centre over Russia's unruly regions.[7a] In May 2001, he issued a decree dividing Russia's 89 constituent regions and republics between seven federal districts, each one of which was to come under the control of a presidential envoy who was to oversee local regions' compliance with federal legislation and receive funding from Moscow, in order to prevent local governors from acting in contravention of central policy. At the same time, three pieces of legislation, proposed by Putin to extend the powers of the President and curtail those of the regional governors, were passed by the Duma. The first proposed that regional governors should lose their seats in the Federation Council, and be replaced by representatives elected from regional legislatures, and its ratification in July 2000 requires that all existing Council members be replaced by the beginning of 2002. The second bill accorded the President the right to dismiss regional governors, and the third allowed governors to remove from office elected officials who were subordinate to them.[1] The President also established an advisory State Council consisting of the leaders of all 89 regions of the Russian Federation,[14a] which include 21 ethnically-based republics.[7a]

C. Security

4.6. The Soviet Union was generally regarded as a police state where law existed for the benefit of the state, and instead of protecting the rights of the individual, internal security agencies were designed above all to uphold the Communist Party's monopoly on political power. Since the failed coup attempt of August 1991, there has been much change, with the KGB disbanded in October that year and replaced by a number of new agencies.[9e]

4.7. The Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD), the Federal Security Service (FSB), the Procuracy, and the Federal Tax Police are responsible for law enforcement at all levels of government throughout the Russian Federation. The FSB has broad law enforcement functions, including fighting crime and corruption, in addition to its core responsibilities of security, counter-intelligence and counter-terrorism. The FSB operates with only limited oversight by the Procuracy and the courts. The military's primary mission is national defence, although it has been employed in local conflicts, for which it was prepared inadequately, and is available to control civil disturbances. More recently, internal security threats in parts of the Russian Federation have been dealt with by militarised elements of the security services. These same organisations are tasked with domestic law enforcement.[14a]

4.8. Members of the security forces, particularly within the internal affairs apparatus, are responsible for numerous and serious human rights abuses. Arbitrary arrest and detention remain particular problems. There are credible reports that police throughout the country detain people without observing mandated procedures, and fail to issue proper arrest warrants or receipts for confiscated property. This is especially true for people from the Caucasus. Furthermore,

reports indicate the use of physical abuse by officers during such arrests. Police are also reported to plant drugs and other false evidence as pretexts for arrests, to arrest and detain people based on their political views and religious beliefs, to conduct illegal searches of homes, and often to extort money from suspects, their friends, and their relatives. Institutions such as the MVD have attempted to educate officers about safeguarding human rights during law enforcement activities through training provided by other countries, but they remain largely unreformed and have not yet adopted practices fully consistent with standards of law enforcement in a democratic society. The President and the government are mostly silent about violations of human rights and democratic practice. While the President has made statements about the need for a "dictatorship of law," the government has not institutionalised the rule of law required to protect human rights. Most abuses occur at lower levels, but government officials do not investigate the majority of cases of abuse and rarely dismiss or discipline the perpetrators.[14a]

4.9. Since the demise of the Soviet system, the northern Caucasus has emerged as the most volatile region of the Russian Federation. The area is rife with territorial and border disputes involving many of the more than sixty distinct national, ethnic and religious groups. The Caucasus has experienced some major conflicts, creating more than two million refugees and internally displaced persons. While most of the conflicts are relatively quiescent, none of them appears close to finding a lasting solution.[13c]

D. Judiciary

4.10. The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary, but while its development continues and there are signs of limited independence, the judiciary does not yet act as an effective counterweight to other branches of government. The judiciary is divided into three branches: the courts of general jurisdiction, subordinated to the Supreme Court; the arbitration court system, under the High Court of Arbitration; and the Constitutional Court. Over 90% of all civil and criminal cases are heard by the municipal courts, the lowest level of the general jurisdiction courts. Meanwhile, jury trials have been introduced in only nine of the 89 regions and, where they have not been introduced criminal procedures are weighted heavily in favour of the procurator.[14a]

4.11. Judges remain subject to influence from the executive, military and security forces, especially in high profile or political cases. Burdened by large case backlogs and trial delays, the judiciary also lacks resources and is subject to corruption. Low salaries and scant prestige make it difficult to attract talented new judges and contribute to the vulnerability of existing judges to bribery and corruption. As judges generally bear responsibility both for reaching a verdict and handing down a sentence, they are logical targets for intimidation. Reports indicate that the constitutionally mandated presumption of innocence is often disregarded, and judges are known to return poorly developed cases to the prosecution for additional investigation rather than risk confrontation with powerful prosecutors. Furthermore, the Independent Council of Legal Expertise has reported that during 2000 defence lawyers were increasingly the targets of police harassment, including beatings and arrests. Professional associations at both the local and federal levels report abuses throughout the country and charge that police are trying both to intimidate defence lawyers and to cover up their own criminal activities. There are also instances in which the right to due process and a fair trial are violated.[14a]

4.12. The Criminal Procedure Code specifies that only two months should elapse between the date an investigation is initiated and the date the file is transferred to the procurator so that he can file formal charges against the suspect in court. However, investigations are seldom completed that quickly, and some suspects spend 18 months or longer in detention under harsh conditions while the criminal investigation is conducted. There are reports that terms of pre-trial detention can be extended to three years, with the average ranging from seven to ten months. In some extreme cases, detention periods can be extended to five years, due to financial difficulties and poor investigative and court work. The Code provides that a prosecutor may extend the period of criminal investigation to six months in "complex" cases, and if more time is required in "exceptional" cases, the Procurator General can personally extend the period up to 18 months. Extensions of the investigation period are often issued without explanation to the detainee and, until the investigation is completed, the suspect is under the jurisdiction of the procurator's office, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. There is no procedure for a suspect to plead guilty during the investigative period, although if a suspect informs the investigator that he is guilty, the period of the investigation is usually shorter than if he maintains his innocence. Suspects frequently fear exercising their rights to request judicial review of their detention out of fear of angering the investigating officer.[14a]

4.13. There have also been credible reports that persons have been detained far in excess of the permissible periods for administrative offences, in some cases so that police officials can extort money from friends or relatives. The situation has improved somewhat since a decree was issued in the summer of 1997 that annulled a previous decree that had allowed for 30-day detentions. However, the practice of detaining individuals in excess of permissible periods is still not uncommon, and this is often done for the purpose of extorting money. The use of bail is rare, even if suspects are not flight risks or have not been charged with violent crimes. This aggravates overcrowding in pre-trial detention and, due to delays in bringing cases to trial, results in many suspects remaining in pre-trial detention for longer than the maximum penalty they might face if convicted.[14a]

4.14. Delays also plague the trial stage. Although the Criminal Procedure Code requires court consideration to begin no more than 14 days after the judge issues the order designating the location of the trial, congestion in the court system frequently leads to long postponements. Some suspects actually serve the length of their sentences while awaiting trial. Judges often do not dismiss cases involving improper investigations or indictments, particularly if the procurator's case has political support or the case is controversial. Instead, such cases are often returned to the procurator for further investigation. Some authorities have taken advantage of the system’s procedural weaknesses to arrest people on false pretexts for expressing views critical of the government.[14a]

E. Prisons/Detention Centres

4.15. Conditions for detainees and prisoners in most government facilities remain extremely harsh and even life-threatening, and the authorities frequently employ physical abuse and torture to coerce confessions. Prisons also remain extremely overcrowded. By the end of 2000, there was a prison population of 912,000 people. Severe overcrowding, together with poor ventilation, and low health, nutrition and sanitation standards have led to serious health problems among prisoners. There are believed to be 96,000 tuberculosis sufferers within the prison population, approximately 42% of all tuberculosis patients in Russia. HIV/AIDS infection rates are also

a source of concern: there are estimated to be 8,000 prisoners infected with HIV or who have developed AIDS, but the lack of adequate health care precludes estimating the true number of such prisoners. Space shortages do not allow for separate facilities for prisoners with AIDS.[14a]

4.16. There are five basic forms of custody in the criminal justice system: SIZOs hold those awaiting the completion of criminal investigation, trial, sentencing or appeal. Correctional labour colonies (ITKs) hold the bulk of convicts. "Prisons" are penitentiary institutions for those who repeatedly violate the rules in effect in the ITKs. Educational labour colonies for juveniles (VTKs) are prisons for juveniles of 14 to 20 years of age, where conditions are significantly better than in ITKs, but where torture, beatings and rape still occur. Finally, there are the police detention centres, where conditions vary considerably but are generally harsh. In most cases, detainees are not fed and have no bedding, sleeping place, running water or toilet. Human rights groups have estimated that approximately 11,000 detainees and prisoners die each year in penitentiary facilities. Some die due to beatings, but most as a result of overcrowding, poor sanitary conditions, disease and lack of medical care. Violence among inmates, including beatings and rape, is common.[14a]

4.17. To alleviate overcrowding, the government announced an amnesty which resulted in the release of more than 99,000 inmates in September 2000, and the total number amnestied was expected to reach 120,000 by the end of the year. While the amnesty has affected the overall number of prisoners, by most accounts the greatest decrease is due to the increased use of alternative punishments such as selective parole for certain offences. Moscow-based human rights groups make infrequent visits to prisons in the Moscow area; they have neither the resources nor a national network to investigate conditions in all 89 regions.[14]

V. HUMAN RIGHTS

A. General Assessment

5.1. Russia's accession to the Council of Europe in 1996 prompted the government to take some promising steps to improve its human rights record. The Council of Europe continues to monitor and investigate abuses of human rights carried out in Russia and engages the Russian government in implementing required improvements. Nonetheless, the Council has been concerned by the slow pace of reform[8c] and, in April 2000, voted to suspend Russia's membership unless progress were made towards ending human rights abuses in Chechnya.[1] During 2000, long-standing problems of police torture, appalling prison conditions, and significant restrictions on freedom of the media, religion and movement continued,[14a] together with other serious abuses in Chechnya.[8a] As a result of the geographical scale of the country and the cultural, economic, social and political differences existing within the Russian Federation, as well as the conflicts often still existing between federal and regional laws, it is difficult to identify clear categories of people who are more likely than others to be at risk of harassment or persecution, particularly as the situation may vary quite substantially from one region to another.[13c]

5.2. Citizens can file appeals to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in Strasbourg about alleged human rights violations that occurred after Russia's accession to the Council of Europe. Complainants no longer need to exhaust all appeals in Russian courts before they can turn to the European Court. According to the press, during 2000 the ECHR received 914 complaints from Russia, 60 of which are based on human rights violations in Chechnya. However, because the government has refused to respond to the initial complaints accepted by the ECHR (a procedural requirement), no cases have yet been heard. Meanwhile, government human rights institutions are still weak and lack independence, but are becoming more active. Although the Human Rights Ombudsman, Oleg Mironov, was not known previously for any expertise in human rights, he has taken an increasingly active and public role in promoting human rights. He has established an office with 150 members of staff, who are responsible for investigating human rights complaints and promoting human rights education. In addition, many domestic and international human rights groups operate freely, although some have experienced harassment from local officials. Because of the risk of kidnapping and ongoing military conflict, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have largely withdrawn from Chechnya; some still operate but on a limited basis, working from Ingushetia.[14a]

5.3. While the Constitution prohibits torture, violence, and other brutal or humiliating treatment or punishment, there are credible reports that law enforcement personnel regularly use torture to coerce confessions from suspects and that the government does not hold most of them accountable for these actions. Human rights groups have documented numerous cases in which law enforcement and correctional officials tortured and beat detainees and suspects. Meanwhile, the Permanent Human Rights Chamber, an advisory presidential committee, has concluded that torture is "common" among representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and that it is "widespread and systematic," especially in the pretrial stages of law enforcement.[14a] In a 1997 report, Amnesty International refers to several methods of torture used by law enforcement officials, either to gain confessions or simply to control or abuse prisoners.[5d] A Human Rights Watch report, released in November 1999, appears to support the conclusions reached by

Amnesty International, and refers to beatings, asphyxiation using gas masks or bags, electric shocks and suspension by the wrists.[14a] Amnesty International also refers to the "press-camera" method, whereby violent prisoners are co-opted by guards and used to control or punish other prisoners. The co-opted prisoners are permitted to torture prisoners (sometimes to gain confessions) or deal with "difficult" prisoners. Another method of torture used is known as the "crucifixion of Christ" and involves the victim being secured in a spread-eagle position to either a metal cot or prison bars, to which powerful electric shocks are applied.[5d]

5.4. Despite a *de facto* moratorium on the death penalty, there were no steps taken during 2000 to abolish the death penalty in law. There were several calls by senior officials for the lifting of the *de facto* moratorium on the death penalty. In September 2000, some sixty deputies of the Duma appealed to the President to lift the moratorium on the grounds of rising crime throughout Russia, the series of apartment bombings in 1999 and a number of contract killings.[5a]

B. Chechnya

5.5. In response to international criticism of the human rights situation in Chechnya, where the conflict between government forces and separatist elements has continued since September 1999, several official Russian organisations were established to examine alleged human rights violations there. The office of Vladimir Kalamanov, the Presidential Representative for Securing and Defending Human Rights and Freedoms in Chechnya, was set up in February 2000, but is understaffed, underfunded, and has as limited mandate. While Kalamanov has worked with the Council of Europe and the non-governmental human rights organisation, Memorial, he lacks a prosecutorial mandate and even the independence and resources to monitor human rights abuses adequately. Meanwhile, the government has not complied with the resolution of the UN Commission on Human Rights, calling for a broad-based, independent commission of inquiry to investigate alleged human rights violations and breaches of international humanitarian law in Chechnya.[14a]

5.6. There have been credible reports of serious violations by Russia's forces in Chechnya, including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detention, torture, rape looting and extortion. They have also been accused of indiscriminate force in areas of significant civilian populations, resulting in numerous deaths, the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people and massive destruction of housing, commercial and administrative buildings, as well as the breakdown of gas and water supply facilities and other types of infrastructure. Representatives of international organisations and NGOs who visited Chechnya have reported little evidence of federal assistance for rebuilding war-torn areas. Meanwhile, only a fraction of reported abuses have been investigated, and there has been little progress in accountability.[14a]

5.7. There are also credible reports of Chechen rebels torturing and killing captured Russian troops, killing civilians and officials loyal to the federal government as well as those who would not assist them, using civilians as human shields, forcing civilians to build fortifications, preventing civilians from fleeing Chechnya, provoking Russian counterattacks on civilian areas, and beating or firing on villagers when they protested. Some rebel commanders are believed to have resorted to drug smuggling, kidnapping and ransom to raise funds. As a result, it is often difficult to make a distinction between rebel units and simple criminal gangs. Kidnapping is frequently used by criminal groups in the northern Caucasus,

some of which may have links to elements of the separatist forces. The main motivation appears to be ransom, although some cases have political or religious overtones. Many of the hostages are being held in Chechnya or Dagestan, and some, including religious figures, have been killed. There have also been reports of government involvement in politically motivated disappearances in Chechnya, and federal forces have reportedly ransomed Chechen detainees to their families. By the end of 2000, Kalamanov's office stated that it had received complaints of 853 disappearances.[14a]

C. Political Opinion

5.8. The Constitution provides citizens with the right to change their government, and citizens exercise this right in practice. A democratic presidential election took place in 1996 for the first time in the history of Russia as an independent state. Boris Yeltsin was re-elected in what was considered a generally free and fair election. After President Yeltsin's resignation on 31 December 1999, Vladimir Putin assumed the post of acting President. In March 2000, in an election that was also generally considered to be free and fair despite reports of pre-election manipulation of the media, Putin was elected President. There were credible reports of election fraud in some locations, but no evidence that such abuses were systematic or that they affected the outcome of the presidential election, and most international observers concluded that the results of the election were valid. Competitive elections for various regional and local offices were also held during 2000, including elections for the chief executives in 44 of the country's 89 regions. Observers generally viewed the elections as free and fair. Notwithstanding reports of pre-election manipulation of the media, parliamentary elections that resulted in a more centrist-leaning Duma in December 1999 were also judged by international observers to be largely free and fair, with 69% voter turnout.[14a]

5.9. In March 1999, former President Yeltsin signed the Law On Basic Guarantees of Electoral Rights and the Right of Citizens to Participate in a Referendum (Voting Rights Act) and the federal Law on Public Associations. These laws clarify which political public associations may participate in elections; add restrictions on preferential media coverage, donations, and financial or material support from foreign entities for campaign-related activities; introduce measures to reduce the number of non-competitive political parties and candidates on the ballot; increase the level of information available to voters about candidates' financial and criminal history; and introduce provisions allowing multi-candidate constituencies.[14a]

5.10. The Constitution provides for freedom of speech and of the press, and numerous national and regional media reflect a multitude of opinions. However, government pressure on the media persists and in some respects has increased significantly, resulting in numerous infringements of these rights. The government has exerted pressure on journalists, particularly those who reported on corruption or criticised officials, by: initiating investigations by the federal tax police, FSB, and MVD of media companies; selectively denying journalists access to information and filming opportunities; demanding the right to approve certain stories prior to publication; prohibiting the tape recording of public trials and hearings; withholding financial support from government media operations that exercised independent editorial judgment; attempting to influence the appointment of senior editors at regional and local newspapers and broadcast media organisations; removing reporters from their jobs; and bringing libel suits against journalists. An estimated several hundred lawsuits and other legal actions were brought by the government against journalists and journalistic

organisations during 1999, the majority of them in response to unfavourable coverage of government policy or operations, and the high government success rate in such cases reinforced the tendency among journalists towards self-censorship. Not infrequently, journalists, in particular those who pursued investigative stories on corruption and organised crime, have been attacked physically and even murdered.[14a]

5.11. Faced with continuing financial difficulties and increased pressure from the government, many media organisations have seen their autonomy erode during 2000. The financial dependence of most major media organisations on the government, or one or more of several major financial-industrial groups, continues to undermine editorial independence and journalistic integrity in both the print and broadcast media. In key respects, private media organisations across the country also remain dependent on the government, which has sought to exert economic pressure on those viewed as a threat to its authority.[14a]

5.12. The Constitution provides citizens with the right to assemble freely, and the government respects this right in practice. Organisations must obtain permits in order to hold public meetings, and the application process must begin between five and ten days before the scheduled event. Citizens have freely and actively protested government decisions and actions. Permits to demonstrate have been readily granted to both opponents and supporters of the government. The Constitution also provides for freedom of association and the government generally respects this right in practice. Public organisations must register their bylaws and the names of their leaders with the Ministry of Justice, and political parties must also present 5,000 signatures and pay a fee to register. The Constitution and the Law on Elections ban the participation in elections of those organisations that profess anti-constitutional themes or activities. Political parties are generally organisationally weak, and rise and fall quickly, although two exceptions are the Communist Party and the pro-Putin Unity Party.[14a] In August 1999, the Ministry of Justice announced that 139 associations had met the 19 December 1998 deadline imposed for those wishing to participate in the parliamentary elections of 19 December 1999.[31](**For details of main political organisations, see Annex B.**)

D. Religion

5.13. The Constitution provides for freedom of religion,[6] and the government generally respects this right in practice. However, although the Constitution also provides for the equality of all religions before the law and the separation of church and state, in practice the government does not always respect the provision for equality of religions, and local authorities have imposed restrictions on some groups. In 1997, the Duma enacted a new, restrictive, and potentially discriminatory law on religion, which replaced the progressive 1990 law that had helped facilitate a revival of religious activity. The new law ostensibly targeted so-called totalitarian sects or dangerous religious cults, but the intention of some of the law's sponsors appears to have been to discriminate against members of foreign and less well-established religions by making it difficult for them to manifest their beliefs through organised religious institutions.[14a]

5.14. The 1997 law on religion required national and local religious organisations to register or reregister with the government. Critics of the religion law fear that, while the law does not require the closure of unregistered religious organisations, this may be the practical effect of losing legal status. There have been numerous reports that religious organisations

from certain minority or "non-traditional" denominations were either denied registration or experienced long delays in reregistration. The delays in reregistration are in part due to the slow pace at which the federal Ministry of Justice at first disseminated the regulations and guidelines to local authorities and to understaffing both at the Ministry of Justice and at local levels. However, delays and rejections also are due in part to discrimination by some local officials. Discriminatory practices at the local level are attributable in part to the decentralisation of power that took place during the Yeltsin administration, as well as to government inaction and widely held discriminatory attitudes. A significant problem is the lack of congruence between regional and federal laws. In 1999, 30 of Russia's 89 regions had laws and decrees on religion that violated the Constitution by restricting the activities of religious groups. The federal government has attempted to deal with this by introducing a federal register of laws to ensure that laws conform to the Constitution.[14a]

5.15. By the end of 2000, approximately 70% of religious organisations had managed to register or reregister their local organisations successfully, in accordance with the law's requirements. However, while the vast majority of organisations attempting to reregister as central organisations have succeeded, there were a few notable exceptions: the Salvation Army, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, and a faction of the Muslim communities under the Mufti Tayzhuddin. Nonetheless, the Russian Orthodox Church reregistered between 65-75% of its organisations, Protestant communities 78%, Muslim 60%, Jewish 80%, Buddhist 65%, and Catholic 70-80%. By the end of 2000, no religious organisation had ceased operations as a result of the law.[14a]

5.16. There are reports that some local governments have prevented religious groups from using venues such as cinemas, suitable for large gatherings. As a result, in some instances denominations that do not have their own property have effectively been denied the opportunity to practise their faith in large groups.[14a] The denial of access to buildings has been cited as the most widespread violation of religious freedom.[6] Property disputes remain some of the most frequent complaints cited by religious groups. Many synagogues, churches and mosques have been returned to communities to be used for religious services, although there continue to be reports of religious property that has not been returned. Reports also continue of harassment and punishment for religious belief or activity, including societal violence. In addition, religious figures have been kidnapped and killed in the northern Caucasus area.[14a] Human rights activists contend that only 15% of actual violations of religious freedom are reported, and that most citizens, particularly those living in the regions, are sceptical about religious freedom and reluctant to make public complaints due to fear of retaliation.[14b]

Christianity

5.17. The **Russian Orthodox Church** is the dominant religious denomination in the Russian Federation, with an estimated 75 million adherents.[1] However, the Russian Orthodox Church was not without its own problems during the Soviet era,[3] and, like other Churches in Russia, is seeking to rebuild religious life after years of persecution, totalitarian atheism and indoctrination. Over 200,000 Russian Orthodox priests, monks and nuns were killed in the Communist purges of the 1920s and 1930s. Most of the priests were shot or hanged, while others were crucified on their church doors.[23] Between 1988 and 1997, more than 11,000 churches were returned to religious use, and by early 1997, there were 124 dioceses, some 18,000 Orthodox communities and 390 monasteries. There were also five theological academies and 21 seminaries. The Church's jurisdiction is challenged by the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, which was established during the Soviet period and rejects the hierarchy of the Moscow Patriarchate.[1]

5.18. The Russian Orthodox Church was actively involved in the development of the 1997 law on religion and has special arrangements with government agencies to conduct religious education. In its preamble, the 1997 law on religion recognises the "special contribution of Orthodoxy to the history of Russia and to the establishment and development of Russia's spirituality and culture." While the law accords respect to Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, and certain other religions, as an inseparable part of the country's historical heritage, Russian Orthodoxy is regarded in conservative nationalist circles as the de facto official religion of the country. Many Russians firmly believe that at least nominal adherence to the Russian Orthodox Church is at the heart of what it means to be Russian. Meanwhile, even well-established foreign religious organisations have been characterised by the Orthodox leadership as "dangerous and destructive sects."[14a]

5.19. Although the Russian Orthodox Church is the dominant church in Russia, there are several independent Orthodox Churches. The **Old Believers** broke away from the Russian Orthodox Church in the late seventeenth century, in protest against the changes to the liturgy. Some Old Believers have an ordained priesthood, while others function without clergy. Despite concessions made to the Old Believers by Tsar Peter III, they suffered persecution from both the Tsarist and Communist authorities. They are thought to number several million. The **Church of True Orthodox Believers (or Catacomb Church)**, which rejected the Russian Orthodox Church's accommodation with the Soviet authorities, was driven underground in 1927. After religious restrictions were eased in the early 1990s, it surfaced and was formally registered as a Church in February 1996. Another influential Orthodox community is the **Free Orthodox Church**, whose headquarters are in Suzdal and whose spiritual leader is Archbishop Valentin. Like those of the Church of True Orthodox Believers, the members of the Free Orthodox Church are few in number, but active.[7b]

5.20. There are an estimated 330,000 **Roman Catholics** in European Russia and a further 1,000,000 in Siberia.[1] During the Soviet era, most of the millions of Roman Catholics were to be found in the Baltic states and Ukraine.[7b] Between 1917 and the late 1930s, the Catholic Church in Russia lost around 1,000 priests and most of its 614 churches. Today, in European Russia, there are 80 priests serving 86 parishes, and there are 18 churches and 21 small chapels currently available to the Catholic community for worship. In Asian Russia, there are 67 priests serving 80 registered parishes.[23] The Vatican has recently established new dioceses in the country, including Moscow and Novosibirsk, where there had never before been Roman Catholic bishops.[7b] However, the work of the Catholic Church in Siberia and the Russian Far East has been hindered by the new three-month visa restriction which, given the Catholic Church's dependence on non-Russian clergy due to the lack of opportunity for a seminary education within Russia, threatens its future in these regions. They have also faced sharp rent increases on land where they once owned churches that were confiscated and in certain cases demolished by the Soviet regime,[6] and have experienced undue attention from the authorities in Moscow, being forced to submit to unwarranted fire inspections, document verifications by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and harassment at Sunday Mass.[14a] The Russian Orthodox Church claims to be in favour of equal rights, good fraternal relations and co-operation with all traditional denominations in Russia. On the initiative of the Roman Catholic charity, Aid to the Church in Need, Russia's first religious radio station was inaugurated in June 1995. The Christian Radio Channel, which draws its programmes from both Roman Catholic and Russian Orthodox sources "in an ecumenical spirit", broadcasts for sixteen hours daily to the Moscow region.[7b]

5.21. During the Communist era, the **All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians/Baptists** was officially registered and recognised. A parallel group, the **Council of the Evangelical Christian/Baptist Churches**, founded in 1965, functioned underground. Other Protestants traditionally resident in Russia were **Lutherans**, **Mennonites** and **Seventh Day Adventists**. In June 1995, members of the German Lutheran Community in Perm, mainly descendants of Germans invited to work in the Demidov factories during the reign of Peter the Great, were allowed to re-open their church after a gap of nearly sixty years. Similarly, the **Anglican** Church of St Andrew in Moscow, which like other places of worship was confiscated in the early years of the Soviet Union, was returned for religious worship in 1996. There are also the **Molokans**, a Christian sect that originated in Russia in the late eighteenth century and whose teaching is based on a spiritual interpretation of selected biblical texts. Their numbers have declined dramatically, but some active groups remain, especially in the Transcaucasus.[7b]

Judaism

5.22. At the beginning of the twentieth century, approximately half of the world's Jews lived in Russia. Although many Jews emigrated from the USSR in the 1970s and 1980s, there is still a significant Jewish population in Russia (between 600,000 and 700,000, comprising around 0.5% of the population[14a]), most of whom live in the larger cities.[1] Over 90% of Russian Jews are Ashkenaz, but there are communities of Sephardic Jews in Dagestan and other parts of the Caucasus.[7b] In addition, there are a small number of Jews in the Jewish Autonomous Oblast in the Far East of the Russian Federation.[1]

5.23. Jews continue to encounter societal discrimination, and the government has been criticised for insufficient action to counter it. There have been several reports of recent major crimes or acts of intimidation linked to anti-Semitic groups or motives, for example, bomb attacks on two Moscow synagogues in 1999 and an attack on a Jewish school in 2000. In addition, Jewish graves have been desecrated and anti-Semitic leaflets, graffiti, and articles continue to appear in some regions.[14a] While anti-Semitic publications are against the law in Russia, critics have claimed that legislation designed to protect minority rights has not been strictly enforced, and that the police have failed to respond adequately to reports of anti-Semitic actions.[9c] While the government has also been accused of harbouring anti-Semitic figures, it claims to have moved forward on its promised initiatives against extremism and anti-Semitism and, in November 1998, the Duma adopted a resolution against public statements damaging to interethnic relations in the country.[14a]

5.24. Although Jews continue to encounter prejudice and societal discrimination, they have not generally been inhibited by the government in the free practice of their religion.[14a] The 1990s saw a Jewish revival in Russia, as Jewish communities worked to re-establish religious, social and cultural life, and to provide for the education and welfare of their people. The focal point of the Jewish renaissance has been Moscow, where almost all international Jewish organisations, numbering over 100, are represented, and where numerous religious, academic and social events and programmes have been organised, including Jewish schools, kindergartens and institutes of higher education. The Jewish cultural, religious and social revival has been accompanied by a political renaissance: there were more Jews in high government positions in 1997 than there had been since 1917.[9c] While the Jewish community has met with some success on communal property restitution, it faces the same obstacles as other religious communities and has concerns about the return of Torah Scrolls, many of which are in state museum collections. However, in a

move welcomed by the Jewish community, in May 2000 the Ministry of Culture turned over sixty Torah scrolls to the Congress of Religious Jewish Communities.[14a]

5.25. In January 1996, there was warm official support for the Russian Jewish Congress, a non-political public organisation designed to consolidate the Jewish community in Russia, when the Mayor of Moscow stated that Jews must be given a standard of living that would encourage them to stay in Russia, regretted that Moscow was losing some of its best intellects through Jewish emigration, and expressed a desire for co-operation between his administration and the Congress.[7b] During 2000, President Putin also issued public expressions of sympathy for Jews and made a public appearance at the opening, on the first night of Hanukkah, of a Jewish Cultural Centre in Moscow.[14a] In July 2000, Russia's new Chief Rabbi, Berel Lazar, stated that the Jewish community experiences no more anti-Semitism there than in any other East European nation and much less than in some countries. He stated further that, "We do not feel any negative attitude on the part of the state to the Jewish people and our religion," that Russia possesses the conditions for the development of all religions, and that the Russian leadership, the people, and other religions alike, have a good attitude towards the Jewish people.[28]

Islam

5.26. Muslims continue to encounter prejudice and societal discrimination, but have not generally been inhibited by the government in the free practice of their religion. However, Muslim religious leaders have complained that they are not permitted to minister to Muslim members of the armed forces.[14a] Like other religious communities, Muslims were persecuted during the Soviet period,[3] when half of all Muslim places of worship were destroyed.[7b] However, Islam is currently the second largest faith in Russia and, like the Russian Orthodox Church, is accepted as one of the country's traditional religions.[7b] In 1997, there were estimated to be between 15 and 22 million Muslims in Russia,[1] and there are some 2,500 Islamic organisations registered with the Ministry of Justice. Although 90% of Russian Muslims are Sunni, there is a Shi'a minority in the northern Caucasus, especially in Dagestan.[7b] There, the federal and local authorities stepped up pressure on what they call the republic's *Wahhabi* Muslim community, following the incursion into Dagestan, in August 1999, by Chechen-backed Islamist guerrillas. In September 1999, Wahhabist and other groups perceived as extremist were outlawed by Dagestan's parliament, which led to the suppression of several local conservative Islamic communities.[14b] Meanwhile, groups associated with the Wahhabi Muslim community have been refused registration because they were perceived to be too radical.[13c] The main concentrations of Muslims in the Russian Federation are among Volga Tatars, Chuvash and Bashkirs, and the peoples of northern Caucasus, including the Chechen, Ingush, Ossetians, Kabardinians, and the peoples of Dagestan.[2]

5.27. In 1995, two new Islamic organisations emerged: Nur ("Light"), which has cells in 47 out of the 89 regions of the Russian Federation, is a cultural and educational foundation, which concentrates on human rights, equality for all religions and strictly Islamic issues such as access to religious education and creating conditions for the observance of Muslim customs and rituals. The Union of Muslims of Russia (SMR), which has over 50 branches, is a political organisation committed to the defence of the political, spiritual, economic and social interests of Muslims. Nur and the SMR had been preceded by the Islamic Renaissance Party (IPV), which existed between 1990 and 1994, and which aimed at a rebirth of Islam and the political awakening of all Muslims in the Soviet Union. The party had between 30,000 and 100,000 members, mostly in Russia, including 5,000 in the north Caucasus. In 1996, Nur and the SMR, by then Russia's two largest Muslim organisations, formed an association, open to all Islamic movements, under the

chairmanship of Mukhaddas Birbarsov. It was intended to elaborate a single Muslim position on the future presidential elections in Russia, and was registered as the All-Russian Public Political Movement of Muslims of Russia (Muslims of Russia Movement). Meanwhile, the Central Spiritual Council of Muslims (TsDUM) is active in building mosques and madrasahs (Islamic religious academies) for its 1,411 communities. Islamic mores are a factor influencing legislation in a number of Russian republics. In 1997, the President of Ingushetia banned sales of alcohol in the republic during Ramadan (January-February).[7b]

Cults and Sects

5.28. According to some reports, up to five million Russians belong to cults, although such estimates probably include Christian fundamentalists and minor religious sects. The strength of cults in Russia can be attributed to a longstanding fascination with faith healing and the paranormal, to the spiritual and moral vacuum inflicted on the country during the Soviet era, and to the peoples' suspicion that the Russian Orthodox Church had links with the security service. Local cults include the Church of the New Holy Russia, the Church of the Last Precept, and the White Brotherhood.[7b]

5.29. The **Church of the New Holy Russia** (or Church of the Transfiguring Mother of God, formerly known as the Mother of God Centre) founded by Ioann Bereslavskiy in secret during the Soviet years, believes that at Judgement Day the Virgin Mary will separate the pure from the impure world. The **Church of the Last Precept**, based in Minusinsk, Siberia, was founded by Vissarion (formerly a policeman called Sergey Tropp) who claims to be Jesus Christ, married to Mary Magdalene. His followers, mainly of middle class urban origin and reported to number 70,000, live in poverty, in wooden houses in the Siberian forest. The **White Brotherhood**, founded by Yuriy Krivonogov and Marina Tsvigun in Kiev in 1990, is reported to have 10,000 followers, and believes that God became incarnate in the form of Mariya Devi Khristos, who took over Tsvigun's body in April 1990. Having mistakenly predicted the end of the world in November 1993, both Krivonogov and Tsvigun were arrested during a riot in Kiev's St Sophia Cathedral. They were charged with inciting mass unrest, infringing personal and civic rights under the guise of performing religious rituals, and the premeditated infliction of serious bodily injuries. Both were sentenced to a term of imprisonment, although Tsvigun was released under an amnesty in August 1997.[7b]

5.30. Foreign cults and religious groups include the **Jehovah's Witnesses**, thought to have 60,000 followers; the US-based **Church of Christ**; the **Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons)**; the **Hare Krishnas**, who have a radio station in Moscow; the **Unification Church**, which has operated since 1990 when its founder, Rev Sun Myung Moon, met President Gorbachev; the Japanese **Aum Shinrikyo** sect, which although now banned is believed to have 50,000 followers; L Ron Hubbard's **Church of Scientology**, whose recruiting structure, featuring dianetic centres, has been active since 1992, and which has financed the refurbishment of a reading room at Moscow State University; and the New Age Movement.[7b] Some of these and numerous other religious groups have sometimes experienced various problems in Russia.[14b]

Other Religions

5.31. Other religions, including **Buddhism** and **Shamanism,** are practised in specific localities where they are rooted in local traditions.[14a] Buddhism, established as an official religion in Russia in 1741, is most widespread in the Republic of Buryatiya, where the Central Spiritual Department of Buddhists of Russia has its seat, the Republics of Kalmykiya and Tyva and in some districts of the Irkutsk and Chita Oblasts. There are also newly established communities in

Moscow and St Petersburg. Before 1917, there were more than 40 datsans (monasteries) in Buryatiya, but by 1990 only two of these remained in use. There were believed to be a million Buddhists in Russia in 1997.[1] Within Buryatiya, Buddhism is enjoying a revival, both among the Buryats and among ethnic Russian residents.[7b]

E. Ethnic Minorities

5.32. The disintegration of the Soviet order, coupled with the radical political, economic and social reforms instituted in Russia since the late 1980s, have exacerbated inter-ethnic tensions and highlighted the complex ethno-political inheritance from the Russo-Soviet imperial order. By the end of the nineteenth century, the expansion of the Russian Empire had brought several hundred different ethnic communities under Russian control.[4] Since the break-up of the Soviet Union, ethnic discrimination in the Russian Federation has persisted, and there is also believed to have been a rise in xenophobia, particularly in the south. This can be explained partly as a reaction to Soviet policy on nationalities,[8b] which facilitated the domination of ethnic Slavs and resulted in grievances and resentment among the other peoples.[3] Communist ideology stifled the question of ethnicity and nationalism, and while ethnic minorities in the former Soviet Union were allowed a limited level of linguistic and cultural autonomy, they had no real political power. Tensions that resulted from the treatment of nationality issues during the Soviet era erupted as violence during the *perestroika* period of political liberalisation ushered in by the appointment of Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985.[8b]

5.33. Since the break-up of the Soviet Union, negotiating the process of building a new multi-ethnic, multi-cultural Russia has generated a wide variety of problems and, on occasion, violence.[4] Acts of violence, whether politically motivated or not, have served as a catalyst for xenophobic outbreaks, and the failure of high-ranking state officials to condemn xenophobia has exacerbated the problem. A negative image of ethnic Caucasians has been born in the minds of many Slavs, who often equate all Caucasians with bandits, drugs and arms dealers, or terrorists, and the media, which often demonises ethnic Caucasians, has been a part of this process. The media was able to exploit the outbreak of several wars in the former Soviet Union, between 1987 and 1994. Fighting erupted in Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan), South Ossetia (Georgia), Abkhazia (Georgia), Ingushetia (Russia), the Prigorodny region (North Ossetia), and Chechnya (Russia). Meanwhile, the neighbouring Krasnodar and Stavropol regions became magnets for refugees, and also, subsequently, two of the most ethnically discriminating provinces of the Russian Federation, where xenophobia is particularly apparent.[8b]

5.34. In July 1998, the presidential Human Rights Commission issued an official statement noting that "the increase in the threat of fascism" was "taking on visible and ominous features," and that incitement of national, racial, and religious enmity was "taking on an increasingly organised nature." It noted the increasing number of extremist groups that advocated racial supremacy and "national xenophobia," and commented that such groups were moving with increasing frequency from combat training (under the guise of sports training) to "acts of direct terror, hoodlum attacks on persons of 'unwelcome' nationality, the desecration of cemeteries, and explosions of monuments."[14a] This was followed by Russia's ratification in August 1998 of the European Convention on the Protection of National Minorities, which binds ratifying nations to combat discrimination against ethnic minorities within their borders and guarantee their freedom of association, expression and peaceful assembly. The Convention also obliges states to allow their national minorities to use their languages in public and provide opportunities for minorities

to pursue courses in school in their own languages.[39] The Ministry of Regional and Ethnic Policy has nonetheless admitted that its attempts to eliminate the flaws in ethnic policy of previous years and existing contradictions have been largely inadequate and that there is still much work to be done.[25]

5.35. Since the early 1990s, the struggle for power between the federal authorities and the ethno-territorial units has gradually transformed the Russian Federation from a unitary empire into something that resembles a federation. Of the Russian Federation's 89 regions, 21 are ethnically defined republics, which enjoy considerable degrees of autonomy codified through treaties with Moscow. Those minorities with their own officially recognised territory usually have significant advantages over other minority populations in the Russian Federation, although in some autonomous areas with high concentrations of Slavic settlers, the minority groups face problems similar to those of minorities lacking a formal homeland. Minorities that have been granted territorial recognition can be broadly divided into two categories: religious and linguistic minorities. This distinction does not reflect any official division between groups, based on religion or language, but rather the primary element around which group self-identity is formed in each case. Religiously defined groups form the largest set of minorities and include Buddhists, comprising Buryats, Kalmyks, and Tuvans; Muslims, comprising Middle Volga Tatars and Bashkirs, and the peoples of the north Caucasus, including Chechens, Ingush, Karachai and Cherkess, Kabards and Balkars, Adygei and Dagestanis; Christians, comprising Chuvash and Ossetians; and Shamanists, comprising Altai, Khakass, Yakuts, and native peoples of the north, Siberia and the Far East, including Nenets and Dolgan, Evenk, Chukchi and Koriaks. Linguistically defined groups form the second main category of minorities and include the Finno-Ugrian peoples, Karelians, Mari, Udmurts, Mordovans, Komi, Komi-Permiaks, Khants and Mansi. Meanwhile, leading minorities which lack an officially recognised homeland within the Russian Federation include, Jews, Ukrainians, Belarusians and Kazakhs, Russian or Volga Germans, Meskhetians or Meskhetian Turks, Roma, Cossacks and native peoples of the north, Siberia and the Far East.[4]

Africans, Asians, Roma, Caucasians and Central Asians

5.36. During 1998, there were a number of well-publicised incidents, including several racially motivated attacks on members of minorities, particularly Africans and Asians. Attacks generally appeared to be random, inspired by racial hatred, and carried out by individuals or small groups, some of whom were known to law enforcement authorities for their racial intolerance or criminal records. Meanwhile, Roma (gypsies) and people from the Caucasus and Central Asia continue to face widespread societal discrimination, which is often reflected in official attitudes and actions. Discrimination against people from the Caucasus and Central Asia has increased concurrently with new measures at both the federal and local levels to combat crime. Law enforcement authorities have targeted persons with dark complexions for harassment, arrest, and deportation from urban centres, particularly after the Moscow bombings of September 1999, when the authorities detained some 2,000 people and deported more than 500. Police and other security forces in various parts of the country have continued their practice of harassing citizens from the Caucasus and darker-skinned persons in general through arbitrary searches, detention, beatings and extortion, on the pretext of fighting crime and enforcing residential registration requirements. In Moscow, such persons are subjected to far more frequent document checks than others, and are frequently detained or fined in excess of permissible penalties, often without formal documents recording the infraction being drawn up and presented by police. Many victims, particularly refugees or displaced people who lack residence documents, choose not to report such attacks or report indifference on the part of police. In addition, during 2000,

members of ethnic minorities were the victims of beatings, extortion and harassment by "skinheads" and members of other racist and extremist groups, who are seldom arrested. In 1998, the authorities investigated 25 criminal cases on charges of incitement to national, racial or religious hatred. In July 1999, ten cases were opened and the courts have ruled on nine of them.[14a]

Indigenous People

5.37. In September 1998, the functions of the State Committee for the Development of the North, which had been charged with representing and advocating the interests of indigenous people, were transferred to the new Ministry for Regional Affairs and Nationalities. In March 1999, the Duma approved a bill on indigenous ethnic communities, providing them with support, permitting the creation of self-government bodies, and permitting them to seek compensation if economic development threatens their lands. Local communities have organised in some areas to study and make recommendations regarding the preservation of the culture of indigenous people. People such as the Buryats in Siberia; the Tartar and Bashkiri in the Urals; the people of the north, including the Enver, Talfarli, and Chukchi; and others have worked actively to preserve and defend their cultures, as well as the economic resources of their regions. In this context, some groups in the Far Eastern part of the country have criticised the government for not developing an overall concept for the development of indigenous people. Most believe that they are treated equally with ethnic Russians, although some groups believe that they are unrepresented in regional governments. The principal problems for indigenous people centre on distribution of necessary supplies and services, particularly in the winter months for those who live in the far north.[14a]

Cossacks

5.38. The nationalism of Soviet minorities, openly and often violently expressed during *perestroika*, gave rise to a counter-nationalism among Russians. One manifestation has been the rebirth of the Cossack movement, which has provoked a rise in anti-Caucasian tensions. Originally runaway serfs who dispersed to the border regions of the expanding Russian empire, the state authorities later organised them into border guard detachments, and armed Cossack settlements were developed to help guard Russia's new frontier. As a result of their 1917 alliance with the White Armies against the Bolsheviks, the latter subsequently disbanded Cossack units, took away their land and killed or exiled many. During *perestroika*, many descendants of Cossacks started to rediscover their heritage and organise, sometimes into armed Cossack detachments which demanded the restoration of the rights and privileges they enjoyed before the revolution. The 1991 Law on Repressed Peoples, which envisioned giving territorial and other compensation to ethnic groups repressed under Communism, also covered the Cossacks, who describe themselves as "a unique ethnic community and a cultural nation," and whose agenda includes opposition to the immigration of non-Slavs, which often translates into general hostility towards them. In the Krasnodar region, Cossack paramilitary formations are authorised to conduct passport checks in markets, private homes, and other locations.[8b]

F. Women

5.39. Domestic violence remains a major problem, as victims rarely have recourse to protection from the authorities. Police are frequently reluctant or even unwilling to involve themselves in what they see as purely domestic disputes. Many women are deterred from reporting such crimes because of this and because the housing system makes it difficult either to

find housing outside the family dwelling or to expel an abusive spouse, even after a final divorce action. The government has estimated that over 9,000 women reported rape or attempted rape in 1998, while 14,000 women are believed to be killed by husbands or family members each year. Despite serious problems and difficulties in addressing these problems, many effective projects are underway. Approximately 40 crisis centres for women are in operation throughout the country, and their number continues to grow. In order to co-ordinate their efforts better, these crisis centres have formed an association which held its first national conference September 1999 in Moscow and which since then has been working with the Ministry of Internal Affairs to organise classes to educate police on domestic violence. Furthermore, non-governmental work in this area is recognised and supported by several government entities.[14a]

5.40. There is credible evidence that women encounter considerable discrimination in employment. There is concern that women form a disproportionately high percentage of the unemployed, that they are discriminated against in hiring, and paid less than their male colleagues for the same work. The government has been accused of participating in discriminatory actions against women by seldom enforcing employment laws concerning women. Particularly because of a lack of adequate employment opportunities, a significant number of women are victims of international trafficking for sexual exploitation. NGOs allege that Russian organised crime is increasingly involved in the trafficking of women and children, but reliable statistics are not available.[14a]

G. Children

5.41. The Constitution assigns the government some responsibility for safeguarding the rights of children, and the state endeavours to provide, within its limited means, for the welfare of children. A family code regulating children's rights came into effect in 1996, but its implementation has been slow. However, many Moscow charitable organisations have established productive relations with the city government to address the needs of disabled children, as well as other vulnerable groups. The position of many children has deteriorated since the collapse of Communism because of falling living standards, an increase in the number of broken homes and domestic violence. According to press reports, 40% of all children live below the poverty line. About 50,000 children run away from home each year and children on the street, estimated at between 1 and 4 million, often become dependent on illegal narcotics or caught up in trafficking. To combat the growing number of children being abducted, police organisations are establishing programmes to protect children.[14a]

5.42. As the former Soviet Union opened to the international community, attention focused on the status of orphans and the disabled, who were removed from mainstream society and isolated in state institutions. Human rights activists claim that children in state institutions are poorly provided for, often because funds are lacking, and in some cases are physically abused by staff. Being disabled is still a serious social stigma, an attitude that profoundly influences how institutionalised children are treated. Many physically or mentally disabled children are considered ineducable, even those with only minor birth defects, and are given only minimal care by low-paid unskilled workers with no training in the care of the disabled. Meanwhile, the prospects of children, including orphans, who are disabled physically or mentally are extremely bleak, and the most likely future is a lifetime in state institutions. Even for those orphans classified as "normal," life after institutionalisation poses serious problems, as they

may lack the necessary social, educational and vocational skills to function in society.[14a]

H. Homosexuals

5.43. In April 1993, Article 121 of the Criminal Code was amended, thus decriminalising sexual relationships between males in Russia. Male homosexuality had been a criminal offence in the Soviet Union since 1933, soon after which all the republics followed suit. This provision survived in Russia until 29 April 1993, when former President Yeltsin signed a law on amendments to the Criminal Code, including a change to the language of Article 121. This had previously contained two parts and now only contains one, referring to criminal responsibility for sexual acts between males involving the use of violence, threats or taking advantage of the helpless or dependent state of a victim, also with regard to minors, which carries a penalty of up to 7 years' imprisonment.[36]

5.44. Article 115 of the Criminal Code provides for a jail sentence for endangering or infecting a partner with venereal diseases or the HIV virus. This article carries a maximum jail sentence of 8 years, which could result in someone who has the HIV virus dying in prison. In 1992, a Russian man was prosecuted for unwittingly infecting a male partner. He was indicted under Article 115, but was not imprisoned due to an amnesty and also because he was an invalid.[36]

5.45. Three months after the decriminalisation of homosexuality, Russian homosexuals announced the creation of an advocacy group, Triangle, through which they sought equality for gay men and lesbians. The group also acted as an information centre for homosexuality and AIDS, and was involved in political activities. According to activists, treatment of homosexuals has improved since the law against male homosexuality was repealed. There are reportedly now hundreds of homosexual groups across the country, along with openly gay bars and cafes. People are said to be increasingly willing to be tested for AIDS because they no longer have to worry about being arrested. While homosexuals still fear discrimination in the workplace and social censure,[24] they are also reported to have been able to obtain the protection of the authorities in cases of harassment.[13c]

VI. OTHER ISSUES

A. Military Service

6.1. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, with its armed forces of more than 4 million, the Russian army has been reduced[9d] to about 1.2 million persons.[15] Persons subjected to the draft can be divided into two groups: draftees and reservists. All draftees, after six months of serving in the army, can be sent to areas of armed conflict. Reservists consist of reservist officers (those who have completed the military academy) and reservist soldiers (those who have completed their military service). A presidential decree, adopted on 10 April 2000, provides for the possibility of mobilising 15,000 reservist officers, who are currently on the reserve list; another, adopted on 27 January 2000, provides for the possibility of mobilising reservist soldiers for two months of military training, before sending them to areas of armed conflict. The age limit for reservists to be mobilised to serve in areas of armed conflict is 50 years.[13c] Meanwhile, military service is compulsory for male citizens of between 18 and 27 years of age and lasts for two years, one year in the case of university and college graduates. Certain categories of women, for example the medically qualified, are also liable for military service, although in practice there have been no cases of women being called up. Postponement may be allowed for students, and exemption for medical or domestic reasons. Those with criminal records, members of the police or security forces, individuals working abroad, university or college graduates working for the state or graduate programmes, and teachers or doctors working in small villages may also be granted exemption. The armed forces have difficulty in getting the requisite number of recruits. Only about 20% of liable conscripts are actually enlisted, while the remaining 80% are granted either postponement or exemption, or else have not responded to call-up.[15]

6.2. While the Constitution provides for the right to alternative civilian service, the government has not yet passed enabling legislation or amended the Criminal Code to make alternative service possible, and young men continue to risk imprisonment for refusing military service on conscientious grounds.[9d] Although some regional authorities have attempted to introduce alternative service programmes, the national legislation necessary to implement the constitutional right to alternative service has yet to be passed by the Duma.[14a] The federal law on alternative civilian service, the draft of which was adopted by the Duma at first reading in December 1994, was rejected at second reading in October 1998 and has still not been approved. The absence of a legal procedure for granting alternative service for conscientious objectors contravenes an obligation assumed by the Russian Federation on joining the Council of Europe in 1996. While the exact number of conscientious objectors in Russia is unknown, there were over a thousand formal declarations of conscientious objection at the end of 1997,[12a] and it is estimated that 1,500 requests for alternative service are made annually.[9a] Even though there is no legal system in place regarding alternative service, there have been instances where cases have been brought to court invoking the Constitution. However, while some have been accepted, the majority have lost their cases, and been convicted and sentenced to up to seven years' imprisonment. There is a constitutional provision for exemption from military service on religious grounds,[5c] although a member of a religious group not legally recognised may not benefit from that provision.[5a] There are believed to be thousands of conscripts who are unaware of their constitutional right to conscientious objection.[15]

6.3. Draft evasion is common and sometimes involves the purchase of unwarranted medical deferments by potential conscripts otherwise ineligible for one of the categories of legal deferment.[14a] Sources suggest that there are around 20 grounds for legal deferment, which result in high numbers of potential recruits delaying conscription.[9d] Many families, fearful of brutality in the ranks, pay huge illegal bribes to avoid conscription of their sons, sometimes paying for forged medical certificates alleging fatal or incapacitating diseases, while other potential conscripts resort to self-injury. Such desperation is encouraged by the army's notorious reputation for bullying, including torture and rape, particularly of new conscripts.[22] Meanwhile, the Military Procuracy continues its campaign against draft evasion. The Union of Soldiers' Mothers Committee reported that after the spring 2000 draft, police often dragged unsuspecting recruits without documents, regardless of their mental or physical health, into draft board offices.[14a] Draft evasion is punishable by one to three years' imprisonment, five years in aggravated circumstances.[15]

6.4. Military desertion is punishable by three to seven years' imprisonment, five to seven years or execution in wartime. Like draft evasion, military desertion is widespread and can be attributed to bad conditions and human rights abuses in the armed forces, as well as to a fear of being sent to conflict zones such as Chechnya. Refusing to bear arms in combat or quitting from the battlefield without permission is punishable by fifteen years' imprisonment or execution.[15] The Criminal Code also criminalises acts such as "incitement for desertion from military service and providing refuge to a deserter," punishable by up to five years' imprisonment.[5c] Estimates indicate that there are as many as 1,500 deserters in Moscow alone, while the Soldiers' Mothers Committee says there are 12,000 nationwide.[13c] During the conflict in Chechnya between 1994 and 1996, many conscripts deserted their units, sometimes on conscientious grounds, and went into hiding either to avoid further participation in the fighting or to avoid being sent to Chechnya. At that time, there were reports of mass extrajudicial executions of groups of deserters by the Russian military authorities.[5c]

6.5. On 12 March 1997, the Duma declared an amnesty for all those who committed "socially dangerous acts connected with the Chechen conflict", which was said to apply to Russian soldiers who deserted or those who evaded conscription during the conflict, before 24 June 1998, and who gave themselves up no later than six months after that date.[13c] However, the amnesty excluded persons charged with treason, espionage and terrorism, which raised concern over the position of servicemen who evaded or deserted military service during the conflict.[5c] More recently, on 13 December 1999, the Duma adopted a further amnesty for those who committed criminal offences on the territories of Chechnya, Ingushetia, North Ossetia-Alania and the Stavropol Region, during the period of 1 August 1999 until 16 December 1999, and for those who stopped armed resistance and voluntarily delivered arms. The amnesty is not applicable to foreigners, stateless persons, those who have been recognised as extremely dangerous recidivists and those who are accused of dangerous crimes such as murder, severe injury, kidnapping, rape, robbery, terrorism, or theft of weapons. However, in spite of the declaration of the amnesty, the Soldiers' Mothers Committee claims that many Russian soldiers released in Chechnya are still being held in Russia under criminal investigation for desertion, and that some are being detained in their military units on charges of desertion.[13c]

6.6. Various abuses against military servicemen continued during 2000. Such abuses include the practice of "dedovshchina," which involves the violent, sometimes fatal, bullying of new junior military recruits, and often the extortion of money or material goods in the face of the

threat of increased bullying or actual beatings. This type of treatment has resulted in permanent injuries and deaths among servicemen, and soldiers are reluctant to report bullying to officers due to fear of reprisals, since officers sometimes tolerate or even encourage such behaviour as a means of controlling their units. There are reports that officers sometimes use beatings to discipline soldiers whom they judge to be inattentive to their duties, in addition to numerous reports of other physical violence and humiliation of junior conscripts. Other reported abuses of armed forces personnel include the practice by officers and sergeants of "selling" soldiers to others for slave labour or to other officers who have a military need for personnel but are not able to work through the system, most often linked to units in the northern Caucasus military district. In 1998, 50% of conscripts expressed concern that their lives, health or sanity would be threatened by abuses during their military service.[14a]

6.7. Reports indicate that approximately 45% of military personnel committing or attempting suicide are driven to it either by physical abuse or the often inhuman conditions of military service, while non-payment of wages is also a factor. Degrading and substandard living conditions persist throughout the military, principally due to insufficient funding. The deteriorating quality of the armed forces, cited as the main reason for the breakdown in discipline, is aggravated by negligence during the conscription process. A rise in the number of conscripts unfit for military service is believed to be contributing to crime within the armed forces.[14a]

6.8. One positive factor is that the Main Military Procurator's Office continues to co-operate with the non-governmental Union of Soldiers' Mothers Committee to investigate allegations of abuse,[9b] and has established telephone and postal "hotlines" to receive reports directly from soldiers. However, the Union of Soldiers' Mothers Committee believes that the majority of abuses are not reported due to fear of reprisals, indifference of commanders, and deliberate efforts to cover up such activity. Nonetheless, in 1997, the Union of Soldiers' Mothers Committee reported that in 60% of cases brought to the attention of the authorities, there was an official finding that abuse had taken place, and that some disciplinary action was taken as a result. Officials estimate that from January to June 2000, over 4,800 investigations into allegations of human rights abuses were initiated. However, the government has made little progress in combating abuses committed by soldiers, and military justice systems consistent with democratic practices remain largely underdeveloped. Existing laws on military courts, military service, and the rights of service members often contradict the Constitution, federal laws, and presidential decrees, elevating the arbitrary judgements of unit commanders over the rule of law. Meanwhile, the military leadership has made only superficial efforts to implement substantive reforms in training, education, and administration programmes within units to combat abuse, at least partly due to lack of funding and the leadership's preoccupation with urgent re-organisational issues and the conflict in Chechnya.[14a] However, President Putin, while admitting the prevalence of serious shortcomings in the armed forces, has made it clear since becoming president that far-reaching military reform is one of his priorities.[26]

B. Organised Crime

6.9. Organised crime has become a significant factor in the political and economic life of Russia. While Russian organised crime has a long tradition dating as far back as the nineteenth century, the collapse of the Soviet state and subsequent loss of a capacity to impose order on the population provided unprecedented opportunities for the flourishing of criminal organisations.

The adoption of a new criminal code went some way towards easing the problem, but its implementation remained uneven, particularly as lack of resources made it difficult for the police to combat organised crime. The number of criminal organisations operating in the country grew from 3,000 in 1992 to 9,000 in 1998, and their activities include extortion, economic crime and financial fraud, infiltration of the property market, of the banking system, and of industry and commerce, the illicit production and sale of vodka, automobile theft, contract killings, drugs trafficking, counterfeiting and intellectual property theft, corruption, and trafficking in nuclear materials. Of these activities, the most pervasive and significant is the extortion of business, with criminals demanding 10% of turnover, often accompanied by threats of violence and no prospect of any protection service in return.[1]

6.10. Cases where such criminals are acting with the co-operation or at least with the acquiescence of the police are believed to be widespread throughout the Russian Federation, although this is more likely to occur in smaller cities, towns and rural areas, beyond the environs of Moscow and St Petersburg, and particularly in the east of the country, where feudal-type systems dominate. The likelihood of such occurrences is also affected by the presence of foreign business, as there tends to be more adherence to the rule of law if foreign companies are located in an area. Meanwhile, the victims are more likely to be able to obtain the protection of the authorities in the larger cities. However, in cases where low-level police officers are co-operating with criminal groups, even in the larger cities it is possible that protection might not be adequate, given that the higher authorities may fear the exposure of further dubious connections at the senior rank. In such cases, the victim may be compelled to seek refuge in another area of the country (see Chapter VI.E: Internal Travel). It is possible that a victim who returns to Russia from abroad may be pursued by the same criminals, but the likelihood of this occurring will depend on the level of the criminal group, the profile of the victim, and the nature and extent of the harassment.[37]

6.11. There is evidence that the Russian authorities are committed to combating the problem of organised crime. Laws have become stronger, omissions of legislation are being rectified and the criminal justice system is gradually beginning to function with greater integrity and effectiveness. During 1997, over 16,000 participants in criminal formations were brought to justice in Russia, while 5,600 cases of bribery were identified and over 480 corrupt officials were indicted.[1] More recently, 26,100 crimes were exposed by the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs Department on Organised Crime, between January and October 2000. In the same period, some 24,600 crimes were solved, while 5,381 pieces of firearms, more than 650,000 pieces of ammunition, over 230 tonnes of explosives, 11,000 bombs, 2 million dollars worth of counterfeit money, and 1,767 kilograms of narcotic drugs were confiscated by the department.[30] Meanwhile, criminal proceedings were instituted against more than 18,000 officials in 2000, for various economic crimes.[29] Over 376,000 economic crimes were solved in 2000, that is 23.9% more than in 1999, while a total of 244,000 crimes associated with drug trafficking were also solved, 12.6% more than in 1999.[32] Furthermore, the overall number of crimes registered in Russia in 2000 did not exceed three million for the first time in the past few years, with a decline of 2.2% in the crime rate, along with a considerable improvement in crime detection.[34] For example, more than 100 suspected members of an organised crime gang who were found in possession of pistols, narcotics and stolen property in the Russian Far East city of Komsomolsk were arrested in November 2000.[19]

6.12. All this indicates that criminals could not act with impunity and that the authorities have taken effective action against them. While the enormity of the problem and the capacity of

organised crime to obstruct the movement towards reform should not be underestimated, the steps taken towards improvement are significant. Moreover, the election of President Putin increased morale among law enforcement personnel, who believed that he would not only provide strong, decisive leadership in the fight against organised crime, but would also ensure that a co-ordinated policy was vigorously implemented.[1] Putin has made it clear that he regards organised crime as a serious problem that needs to be addressed urgently,[35] and has stated that it is the government's duty to "ensure property rights and shield the entrepreneur from arbitrary, unlawful interference," and that "people have the right to demand protection for their business against a bandit group." With the broad support that Putin has from most business owners, the public, and politicians, to fight corruption, his chances of solving these problems are believed to be high.[38] His priorities for 2001 include the task of ensuring the protection of ownership rights, and that of combating crime and drug trafficking.[32]

C. Citizenship

6.13. Matters relating to citizenship in the Russian Federation are governed by the Russian Federation Citizenship Act, which came into force in 1992. A citizen of the Russian Federation may be allowed, upon application, simultaneously to have the citizenship of another state, provided that there is a corresponding bilateral treaty with that state.[12b] All citizens of the former USSR who were permanently resident in Russia on the day the Citizenship Act took effect (6 February 1992) are considered Russian citizens, apart from those who, within a year of that date, declared that they did not wish to become Russian citizens (Article 13.1). Individuals born on or after 30 December 1922 (the date on which the USSR was founded), who have ceased to be citizens of the former USSR are granted Russian citizenship if they were born in Russia, or if, at the time of birth, one of the applicant's parents was a citizen of the former USSR permanently resident in Russia (Article 13.2).[17]

6.14. A child whose parents at the time of birth are Russian citizens is a Russian citizen, irrespective of the place of birth (Article 14). If one of the parents of a child at the time of birth is Russian and the other stateless, the child is a Russian citizen, irrespective of the place of birth (Article 15.1). A child, one of whose parents is a Russian citizen and the other a citizen of another country, would be considered a Russian citizen provided the parents come to a written agreement that the child should be regarded as a Russian, irrespective of the place of birth. Where no such agreement exists, the child would become a Russian citizen if born in Russia, or if otherwise it would be stateless (Article 15.2). A child residing in Russia, but of unknown parentage, is considered a Russian citizen (Article 16). A child of parents with citizenship of other states is considered a Russian citizen if those states do not extend citizenship to the child. A child born in Russia of stateless parents is considered a Russian citizen (Article 17).[17]

6.15. Under the 1992 law, an application for Russian citizenship could be made by anyone with a spouse or immediate relative who is a Russian citizen; by persons who at birth became citizens of another state but at least one of whose parents was a Russian citizen at the time of the birth; by children born after their parents relinquished citizenship of the former USSR; by former citizens of the USSR who reside on the territory of other states that were within the former USSR, provided they declare their intention to acquire Russian citizenship by 31 December 2000; stateless persons permanently residing in Russia on 6 February 1992, or other republics of the former USSR as of 1 September 1991, who within one year of the 1992 Act declared their intention to acquire Russian Federation citizenship; and foreign citizens and stateless persons,

irrespective of their place of residence, if they or an immediate relative are Russian by birth, and who within one year of the 1992 Act declared their intention to acquire Russian citizenship (Article 18).[17]

6.16. On 31 December 2000, the possibility for former USSR citizens (who resided on the territory of the USSR and arrived for permanent residence in the Russian Federation after 6 February 1992) of obtaining Russian citizenship through the simplified procedure, provided for under Article 18(d) ceased to be available. The Presidential Commission on Citizenship stated that those holding a USSR passport, who had not acquired the citizenship of any country before this deadline, would, as of 1 January 2001, be considered as stateless persons. As a consequence, they would have to apply for Russian citizenship according to the provision of the law applicable to stateless persons. From 1 January 2001, all citizens of any former USSR country have to apply according to the rules for foreign citizens, as the simplified procedure for acquiring Russian citizenship no longer applies. However, for former USSR citizens, the period of permanent residence on the territory of the Russian Federation required before applying for citizenship can be halved.[13c]

6.17. Under the 1992 law, any adult who is not a Russian citizen, irrespective of their origin, can apply for Russian citizenship. The usual condition for qualification is permanent residence in Russia (three years without interruption or a total of five years for foreigners, and half that for refugees). Those criteria facilitating qualification for Russian citizenship include past citizenship of the former USSR; adoption of a child with Russian citizenship; achievements in scientific, technological and cultural fields, or possession of a profession or qualification of interest to Russia; services to Russia; and refugee status in Russia. Applications for citizenship are denied persons who advocate violent political change in Russia, who are members of organisations or parties whose activities are incompatible with the constitutional principles of Russia, or who have been convicted of acts prosecuted under Russian laws (Article 19).[17]

6.18. Under the 1992 law, applications for citizenship need to be submitted at the place of permanent residence. As a consequence, access to Russian citizenship has been restricted for most recognised refugees, including former USSR citizens. Asylum seekers and refugees residing in hotels, hostels or temporary accommodation centres may only obtain (if at all) a temporary registration, which until very recently did not entitle them to apply for citizenship. The Presidential Commission on Citizenship introduced positive changes to this rule on 30 June 1998, when it instructed the Ministry of Internal Affairs to accept applications for Russian citizenship submitted by former USSR citizens at the place of temporary registration in Russia, in case they had cancelled their permanent registration in one of the successor states. Moreover, the Presidential Commission declared that refugees recognised under the Russian refugee law could submit applications for citizenship at their place of temporary registration. This change has not however been fully implemented throughout the Russian Federation.[13c]

D. Health

6.19. The Russian Federation provides a basic health service for all its citizens. All health care was formerly financed directly by the state, but in 1993 a health insurance scheme, the Medical Insurance Fund, was introduced, with payment by employers rather than by the state. In 1998, there were 4.7 physicians and 11.8 hospital beds per 1,000 people. Difficulties experienced by

the health care system have been reflected in a serious deterioration in the health of the population. The reasons cited for this include unsatisfactory environmental conditions, a decline in immunity, a shortage of vitamins and medicines, and insufficient inoculations. Meanwhile, average life expectancy for males decreased from 64 years in 1990[2] to 58 years in 1999, and the ongoing decline of Russia's population figures, which have fallen by two million in the past decade, has caused alarm. Factors contributing to this decline include high rates of suicide, alcoholism, abortion and infant mortality. Russia has one of the highest abortion rates in the world, with 66 for every 100 pregnancies.[21]

E. Internal Travel

6.20. People who have a well-founded fear of persecution from the local authorities in one of the regions of the Russian Federation, without the involvement or the complicity of the federal authorities, may, in principle, find effective protection elsewhere in Russia. However, such an alternative may be limited due to the cost of moving, the undeveloped housing market, and above all by the enforcement of strict registration regulations or practices in parts of the country.[13c] Despite constitutional protections for freedom of movement, the government places some limits on this right, and some regional authorities, most notably the city of Moscow, restrict movement through residence registration mechanisms. These restrictions, though successfully challenged in court, remain largely in force and are tolerated by the federal government. The presence of these restrictions, which increased following the terrorist bombings in September 1999 and were reinvigorated following an explosion in Moscow in August 2000, demonstrate the continuing obstacles to the enforcement of judicial rulings.[14a]

6.21. Although new rules, introduced in 1996, were touted as a notification device rather than a control system, their application has produced many of the same results as the Soviet era *propiska* (pass) regulations. Although citizens are free to travel within Russia, the government imposes registration requirements on domestic travel. All adults are issued with internal passports, which they must carry while travelling and use to register with local authorities for visits of more than three days (in Moscow, 24 hours), although travellers not staying in hotels usually ignore this requirement. Citizens must register to live and work in a specific area within seven days of moving there; temporary registration is available for periods ranging from 45 days to six months. Corruption in the registration process in local police precincts is an additional problem. Police demand bribes in processing registration applications and during spot checks for registration documentation.[14a] Meanwhile, lack of registration leads in practice to the deprivation of most civil, social and economic rights. People may not be admitted to public services, such as free medical services, education, pensions, child and unemployment allowances, unless they hold registration at their place of residence, and employers are required to hire only individuals holding registration in their place of residence.[13c]

6.22. Russian citizens changing residence in Russia, as well as people with a legal claim to citizenship who decide to move to Russia from other former Soviet republics, often face enormous difficulties or are simply not permitted to register in some cities.[14a] There is no uniform procedure on the registration of residence in Russia; each region and republic has its own regulations,[13c] the application of which is often arbitrary or racially motivated.[10] The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and refugee rights non-governmental organisations have cited Stavropol, Krasnodar, Moscow, and St Petersburg as being the least

open to migrants. Involuntarily displaced persons and asylum seekers are reported to suffer the greatest difficulties in cities with restrictive registration regulations. Their migrant registration documents are not generally recognised by the officials who control registration, and they are often subject to harassment, unauthorised detention and the extortion of bribes. While federal law provides for education for all children in the Russian Federation, regional authorities frequently deny access to schools to the children of unregistered persons, asylum seekers and migrants. Similarly, while the Moscow procurator's office has upheld the right of migrants to receive publicly available medical care, unregistered persons, migrants and asylum seekers are frequently denied these services.[14a] Some (but not all) of the Russian regions which implement registration regulations in a less strict manner are located in the far north of Eurasia, where the hard climatic conditions, the remoteness from the central regions of Russia and the severe economic situation may make it difficult for people to establish themselves there.[13c] Meanwhile, the government and residents of Moscow and other large cities defend registration as necessary in order to control crime, to keep crowded urban areas from attracting even more inhabitants, and to gain revenue.[14a] However, another major factor has been a desire to shield themselves from the wave of refugees and internally displaced persons fleeing the numerous ethnic conflicts on the territories of the former Soviet Union.[8b]

6.23. The city of Moscow is frequently cited for violating the rights of non-residents and ethnic minorities, as well as the rights of those legitimately seeking asylum. Moscow Mayor Yurii Luzhkov has been quoted in the past as calling for the expulsion from Moscow of Chechens and other people from the Caucasus, while Moscow police conduct frequent document checks, particularly of those who are dark-skinned and therefore appear to be from the Caucasus or elsewhere. There are credible reports that police have fined persons without registration documents in excess of legal requirements and have not provided proper documentation of the fine. Following the bombings in August and September 1999, which Moscow officials attributed to terrorists from the northern Caucasus, Luzhkov issued an ordinance on 13 September requiring all temporary residents in Moscow since 1 January 1999 to reregister within three days with the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Reportedly, 74,000 temporary residents sought reregistration, of whom approximately 15,500 people were refused. In order to reregister, residents had to demonstrate a legitimate place of work, payment of city taxes and a legal place of residence. The Moscow authorities also restricted the arrival of new residents to the city and increased road checks and checks in train stations and marketplaces for these new arrivals. Human rights groups claim that some 2,000 people were detained and some 500 expelled from Moscow as a result of the operation. Moscow police have continued to conduct road checks and checks at train stations, but the number of people detained was reportedly much less in 2000 than in 1999.[14a]

F. External Travel

6.24. The Constitution provides all citizens with the right to emigrate. The government imposes nominal emigration taxes, fees and duties. On average, it takes three months to process a passport application, although it can take much longer if documentation is needed from elsewhere in the former Soviet Union.[14a] At the end of 2000, only one third of Russian citizens had obtained the new passport of the Russian Federation. The others were still holding the old USSR passport, with a sticker inserted inside (by the local bodies of the Ministry of Internal Affairs), declaring the holder to be a Russian citizen. Russian citizens holding the old USSR passport will be able to use it until 31 December 2005, when it is expected that all

Russian citizens will have received the new passport of the Russian Federation.[13c]

6.25. Some liberal principles regarding emigration procedures were formally codified in the August 1996 law on exit from and entry into the Russian Federation. This law abolished the old Soviet requirement that, in order to emigrate, citizens must receive a stamp permitting "permanent residence abroad" ("PMZh"), essentially a propiska for those living outside Russia. The law required the Ministry of Internal Affairs, through its Office of Visas and Registration (OVIR), to establish regulations for eliminating this practice within six months of the passage of the law. However, implementation of the law is still incomplete, and border guards continue to require a PMZh-like stamp of all emigrants, and the passport control agency (OVIR) continues to issue it. Emigrants who have permanently resettled abroad have been able to visit or repatriate without hindrance. However, visiting emigrants who departed without first obtaining a "PMZh" stamp have been stopped at the border and prevented from departing Russia (although they may enter without difficulty), as they could present neither a non-immigrant visa to another country nor evidence of permission to reside legally abroad.[14a]

6.26. Another feature of the law is the codification of the legal grounds for denying foreign travel documents to citizens who had access to state secrets. Under the new law, access to such classified material can only occur with the consent of the citizen, established in the form of a written contract that states that the signatory understands that he has been given access to state secrets and that his ability to travel abroad may be restricted. The law envisions a maximum period of delay under normal circumstances of five years, and it grants the inter-agency Commission on Secrecy the right to add an additional five year term to the period of delay if the Commission finds that a person had access to particularly sensitive materials. This latter provision has raised serious concerns among human rights advocates concerned about arbitrary and excessive powers on the part of the government to restrict foreign travel.[14a]

6.27. If a citizen had access to classified material, police and FSB clearances are necessary to receive an external passport. Persons denied travel documents on secrecy grounds can appeal the decision to an inter-agency commission chaired by First Deputy Foreign Minister, which cannot rule on whether the material should or should not be classified, but can rule on the legality of travel restrictions imposed and on whether or not the traveller actually had access to materials requiring a travel restriction. Since it was established in 1994, the commission has granted travel permission to approximately 90% of appellants. Other grounds for denial of the right to travel abroad are military conscription or assignment to civilian alternative service, being under investigation for or serving a sentence for a crime, evasion of a court-ordered obligation, or providing false information on a passport application. The requirement that citizens satisfy obligations to immediate relatives, such as material support for parents, has been eliminated except for court-ordered obligations, such as alimony payments.[14a]

G. Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons

6.28. In February 1993, the Russian Federation acceded to the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, but has been criticised since for failing to meet its obligations under this instrument, by routinely denying access to asylum procedures, thereby putting asylum seekers at risk of harassment, detention, or removal to their country of origin (*refoulement).*[5b] The federal law Concerning Making Changes and Additions to the Law of the Russian Federation Concerning Refugees came into effect in July

1997.[16] The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has criticised the new law for being unfair and ineffective.[13a] It is particularly concerned about the situation of asylum seekers at Moscow's Sheremetyevo-2 Airport, from where improperly documented passengers are deported systematically.[14a] The UNHCR advises, in principle, not to apply the "safe third country" notion to asylum seekers who have stayed in or transited through Russia, due to the serious risk of *refoulement* and the difficulties in obtaining access to the refugee status determination procedure.[13a]

6.29. The government nonetheless co-operates to a limited extent with the UNHCR and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). Both organisations assist the government in developing a humane migration management system, which includes effective and fair refugee status determination procedures. The UNHCR recognises some 40,000 asylum seekers who originate from outside the territories of the former Soviet Union. By November 1999, the government had granted asylum in only 491 cases since 1993 to persons from outside the former Soviet Union (including the Baltic states), all but seventeen of them from Afghanistan. By contrast, the comparable figure for former citizens of the Soviet Union (mainly ethnic Russians) granted refugee status by the former Federal Migration Service (FMS) was 98,188, demonstrating that the government acts more expeditiously for the latter group, to whom it applies a more lenient standard.[14a] Even recognised refugees encounter problems of social integration, and their status can only be legalised after obtaining residential registration.[13b]

6.30. The UNHCR and Amnesty International have been working with the FMS and border officials to ensure that interviews of potential refugees are conducted in a timely fashion, that the UNHCR is allowed access to potential refugees in airport transit lounges, and that deportations of potential refugees are delayed until cases are adjudicated. However, under government re-organisation, the FMS has been disbanded, its functions and responsibilities transferred to other ministries, and there continues to be widespread ignorance of refugee law on the part of officials.[14a]

6.31. A group of about 1,400-2,000 Armenian refugees, evacuated from Baku in the wake of the late 1980s ethnic violence, are still housed in "temporary quarters," usually in Moscow hotels or workers' dormitories. They are unable to return to Azerbaijan, are not accepted by Armenia, and lack residency permits for Moscow. They have declined offers of Russian citizenship on the grounds that this would not improve their situation materially, although such a step would entitle them to the benefits accorded to Russian forced migrants. They have also rejected offers of relocation to other regions of Russia because they allege that the alternative housing that they are offered is frequently not suitable or available. Their situation remains precarious as the formerly state-owned hotels in which many reside are privatised, and a number of eviction orders have already been served in such cases. Despite official promises, their status and permanent housing has yet to be resolved.[14a]

6.32. There are believed to be at least 510,000 displaced persons in the Russian Federation, of whom only 140,000, mostly ethnic Russians who left the northern Caucasus during the first Chechen conflict between 1994 and 1996, are currently registered by the federal authorities as "forced migrants," which entitles them to assistance to facilitate their resettlement elsewhere in the Russian Federation.[11] It has been estimated that at least a quarter of a million residents, including almost the entire Russian, Armenian, and Jewish populations, migrated from Chechnya as a result of both the first conflict and the current one. The current conflict in Chechnya, which began in September 1999, resulted in widespread

civilian casualties and the displacement of around 280,000 people, the vast majority of whom sought refuge in the neighbouring Russian republic of Ingushetia (245,000),[14a] where 170,000 remain. Host families shelter 70% of the internally displaced there, and receive some financial and food assistance.[13b] Meanwhile, some 6,000 internally displaced Chechens were reported in Dagestan, 3,000 in North Ossetia, and 6,000 in Georgia, while thousands of others reportedly went to other regions of the Russian Federation.[14a]

6.33. Federal refugee policy aims at repatriating the internally displaced as soon as possible back to Chechnya, and there have been reports that the authorities at times pressured displaced people to return there from Ingushetia. However, subsequent assurances were given that no one would be repatriated forcibly. Reliable information on the number and status of displaced persons within Chechnya has been difficult to obtain, due to heavy fighting and limited outside access to the region, but the UNHCR estimates that at times as many as 150,000 persons were displaced within Chechnya and lacked access to humanitarian assistance. Living conditions for displaced Chechens both within and outside the republic continues to cause concern: some 8,000 people are believed to be living in railway carriages in the region, many of them without sufficient heating and appropriate sanitation facilities, which puts them at risk of contagious diseases. There is also concern that some of the displaced have been unable to register and thereby receive aid.[14a] The UNHCR has assisted the authorities by providing basic facilities for camps, other settlements and for host families. It has also rehabilitated public buildings and provided the means of subsistence for the displaced population, but claims that problems of insufficient shelter, food, health care and education remain.[13b]

ANNEX A

CHRONOLOGY OF MAIN EVENTS, 1917-2000

1917: The pressures of defeat in the First World War and growing social and economic chaos in the country at large brought two revolutions. The first, in March, overthrew the Tsar and established a provisional government, which, however, soon found itself sharing power with the new workers' councils, known as soviets. The second, the Bolshevik Revolution on 7 November, brought the Communists to power in the capital (renamed Petrograd in 1914) and, after three years of civil war, throughout most of the territory of the Russian Empire.[1]

1922: The Communists established the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) with Moscow as its capital, in which Russia (the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic or RSFSR) became just one of eventually fifteen national republics, itself containing 31 ethnically defined autonomous republics or regions.[1]

1920s: Genuine attempts were made to encourage other nationalities to develop their own identities and cultures under local leadership, but under Stalin, who succeeded Lenin upon his death in 1924, the accepted dogma was that the Soviet nations would merge, which most understood to mean the subjugation of other nations by the Russian people.[1]

1930s: Russia, together with the other republics of the USSR, experienced considerable hardship under Stalin's collectivisation campaign of the early 1930s and the accompanying widespread repression that came to characterise his brutal dictatorship.[2]

1939: Under the Nazi-Soviet Treaty of Non-Aggression, the USSR annexed the Baltic states, as well as other territories.[2]

1941: In June, Germany invaded the USSR.[1]

1945: Victory over Germany and Japan in the Second World War led to further territorial gains for Russia. In the west, it gained part of East Prussia, now Kaliningrad, from Germany, a small amount of territory from Estonia and those parts of Finland annexed during the Soviet-Finnish War between 1939 and 1940. In the east, it acquired the strategically important Kurile Islands from Japan.[2]

1953: Stalin died and was succeeded by Nikita Khrushchev who began a process of cautious liberalisation, released thousands of prisoners, and admitted for the first time that there had been large-scale repressions under Stalin.[2]

1954: The present territorial extent of the Russian Federation was achieved, when Crimea was ceded to the Ukrainian SSR.[2]

1955: The Warsaw Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance was signed by Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic (GDR - East Germany), Hungary, Poland, Romania and the USSR. The Treaty established a military alliance between these countries, known as the Warsaw Treaty Organisation or the Warsaw Pact.[1]

1956: In November, Soviet forces invaded Hungary to overthrow the reformist government of Imre Nagy.[1]

1964: Krushchev was dismissed and replaced by Leonid Brezhnev, who until the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, managed to improve relations with the West, which since the late 1940s had been generally characterised by the intense mutual hostility of the Cold War era.[2]

1968: Soviet and other Warsaw Pact forces invaded Czechoslovakia to overthrow the reformist government of Alexander Dubcek.[1]

1979: Soviet forces invaded Afghanistan, where their troops were to remain until 1989.[1]

1982: Brezhnev died and was succeeded by Yurii Andropov, who undertook an anti-corruption campaign and attempted very cautious economic reforms.[2]

1984: Andropov died and was succeeded by Konstantin Chernenko, a former close ally of Brezhnev, who achieved little before his death in 1985.[2]

1985: Chernenko's successor as General Secretary was Mikhail Gorbachev, who embarked upon a programme of changes, replacing many leading state and Communist party officials and appointing several reformists to the Politburo.[2]

1988: Gorbachev announced plans for comprehensive changes to the political system, with the introduction of a two-tier legislature, elected largely by competitive elections.[2]

1989: In elections to the new USSR Congress of People's Deputies in March, many conservative candidates were defeated by reformist politicians, among them Boris Yeltsin, who won an overwhelming victory in the Moscow constituency. In May, the Congress elected Gorbachev to the new post of executive President of the USSR.[2]

1990: The first stage in the process of achieving Russian sovereignty from all-Union institutions was the election of the RSFSR Congress of People's Deputies in March by largely free and competitive elections. In May, the Congress elected Yeltsin Chairman of the Supreme Soviet (the permanent working body of the Congress), the highest state post in the RSFSR and a position from which Yeltsin could effectively challenge the authority of Gorbachev and the all-Union institutions which he represented. In June, the Congress adopted a declaration of sovereignty, asserting that the RSFSR was a sovereign republic and that the laws of the RSFSR had primacy over all-Union legislation.[2]

1991: In June, Yeltsin was elected President of the RSFSR. On 19 August, a self-proclaimed State Committee for the State of Emergency (SCSE) seized power in Moscow, but within three days the attempted coup collapsed. Yeltsin was subsequently able to assert control over all-Union bodies, appointing RSFSR ministers to head central institutions. By the end of the year, the USSR had ceased to exist. On 25 December, Gorbachev resigned as its last President and the Russian Supreme Soviet formally changed the name of the RSFSR to the Russian Federation. Meanwhile, eleven former members of the USSR joined the newly established Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). In November, Chechnya declared its independence from the Russian Federation.[2]

1992: Yeltsin accelerated his economic reform programme, amid increasing threats of conflict between the executive and the legislature, rendering his position precarious.[2]

1993: In September, Yeltsin suspended the Congress of People's Deputies and the Supreme Soviet on the grounds that they were obstructing both economic and constitutional reform, and the Supreme Soviet responded by appointing former Vice-President Rutskoi as President in Yeltsin's place. On 27 September, Rutskoi and his supporters became besieged in the parliament building, while Yeltsin declared a state of emergency. On 4 October, tanks opened fire on the parliament building, forcing the surrender of the rebels, whose leaders were imprisoned and subsequently charged with inciting mass disorder. No single party or bloc won a decisive majority of seats in the Duma elections in December.[2]

1994: In November, the Russian Security Council agreed to intervene militarily in the separatist republic of Chechnya, where in December, Russian troops were sent to introduce "constitutional rule".[2]

1995: In elections to the Duma in December, the Communist Party emerged as the largest single party.[2]

1996: Yeltsin proceeded to win the presidential elections emerging from the second round in July, with 54% of the votes cast. Meanwhile, the conflict in Chechnya continued with varied intensity until negotiations achieved a ceasefire and Russian withdrawal in August.[2]

1997: Political infighting, economic problems, persistent speculation over the health of Yeltsin, and a series of financial scandals all threatened to undermine the credibility of the government. On 12 May, Yeltsin and Chechen President, Aslan Maskhadov, signed a peace agreement in which both sides agreed to settle the dispute by peaceful means.[2]

1998: Yeltsin dismissed the government twice, first in March and then again in August. On the first occasion, widely interpreted as an attempt to reassert his authority, he replaced Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin with Sergei Kiriyenko, who was then dismissed in August amidst financial crisis. Then Yeltsin again appointed Chernomyrdin as acting Prime Minister, but was unable to secure parliamentary approval. Eventually, in September, Foreign Minister, Yevgenii Primakov was appointed as a compromise Prime Minister.[1]

1999: In August, Vladimir Putin was appointed Prime Minister. Also in August, Chechen-backed Islamist guerrillas carried out an insurgent raid on neighbouring Dagestan. They withdrew after Russian troops were dispatched to the region, but there were renewed incursions and fighting in September. Subsequent fatal terrorist bombings throughout Russia, allegedly the work of Chechens, led the government to launch a full-scale attack on Chechnya, in an attempt to reassert federal control there.[2] A total of 26 parties and blocs contested the Duma elections on 19 December.[33] On 31 December, Yeltsin unexpectedly resigned as President and Putin became acting President.[2]

2000: In early February, Putin announced victory in Chechnya when federal troops recaptured the capital, Grozny, but the rebels warned of a long guerrilla war. Presidential elections in March confirmed Putin in the position, with over 52% of the vote.[2] While the conflict in Chechnya continued, in April the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe voted to

suspend Russia's membership unless progress were made towards ending human rights abuses there. In May, Putin was inaugurated as President and formed a government headed by the former First Deputy Prime Minister, Mikhail Kasyanov.[1]

ANNEX B

MAIN POLITICAL ORGANISATIONS

In 1999, numerous political parties and movements were formed, in anticipation of the elections to the Duma in December of that year,[2] for which the Central Electoral Commission approved a list of 26 electoral associations and blocs.[33] Each electoral association was based on one registered political party or movement, while each electoral bloc represented an alliance of two or more parties or movements. All presented federal lists of candidates. In July 1996, there were 86 legally registered nationwide political parties. There were also many regional political organisations.[2] In August 1999, the Ministry of Justice announced that 139 organisations had met the 19 December 1998 deadline imposed for those wishing to participate in the parliamentary elections of 19 December 1999.[31]

AGRARIAN PARTY *(Agrarnaya Partiya Rossii)*
Leader: Mikhail Lapshin. Founded in 1993; left-wing; supports agricultural sector;[1] strongly opposed to private ownership of agricultural land; in favour of restoration of popular government through soviets (councils), and voluntary restoration of the Soviet Union. Referred to as "rural wing" of the Communist Party; won 20 seats in 1995 parliamentary elections, when it was allied with the latter; in 1999, announced it was joining centre-left Fatherland-All Russia bloc, following failure to reach agreement with the Communist Party; membership around 300,000.[7c]

COMMON CAUSE *(Obshchee Delo)*
Leader: Irina Khakamada. Founded in 1995; democratic, liberal.[1] (also see JUST CAUSE)

COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION *(Kommunisticheskaya Partiya Rossiiskoi Federatsii - KPRF)*
Leader: Gennady Zyuganov. Successor to the Russian Communist Party, which was banned in 1991.[1] Formally registered in March 1993; largest parliamentary group, winning 157 seats in the 1995 elections; between 550,000 and 600,000 members; largest political party in Russia which presents itself as the main opposition party. Advocates constitutional reform to reduce powers of president and give majority party or coalition in Duma the right to form the government; favours voluntary re-unification of republics of the former Soviet Union; opposed to Russia's financial reliance on international bodies such as the IMF and World Bank, and critical of NATO enlargement; has proposed an alliance of Russia, China and India, among others, to act as a counterweight.[7c] Won 113 seats in the December 1999 elections, remaining the largest parliamentary group.[2]

CONGRESS OF RUSSIAN COMMUNITIES *(Kongress Russkikh Obshchin)*
Leader: Yurii Skokov. Founded in 1995; alliance of nationalist and conservative groups; contested 1999 elections as member of Congress of Russian Communities and Yurii Boldyrev Movement alliance.[1]

DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF RUSSIA
Leader: Viktor Petrov. Founded in 1990; liberal-conservative.[1]

DERZHAVA (Power)
Leader: Konstantin Zatulin. Founded in 1994; alliance of right-wing parties; affiliated groups include National Republican Party, Russian Christian-Democratic Movement, Soyuz, State Renaissance Party, Social Democratic People's Party.[1] (also see FATHERLAND)

FATHERLAND *(Otechestvo)*
Leader: Yurii Luzhkov. Founded by Luzhkov in December 1998; joined forces with All Russia regional movement to form electoral bloc for December 1999 elections; aims to fill space on the left between the Communist Party and Our Home is Russia; membership numbers not available, but collective members include Derzhava, the Union of Young Social Democrats, the Union of People's Power and Labour, and, since August 1999, Spiritual Heritage. Proposes reducing presidential powers, enhancing those of parliament, and re-defining the relationship between Moscow and the regions, bringing the rights of the regions into line with those of the republics, and promoting co-operation rather than confrontation; is disappointed with Western policy regarding Russia; favours strengthening links with other CIS states, and with India, China and Arab states.[7c] As part of the **Fatherland-All Russia** alliance in the December 1999 parliamentary elections, won 67 seats.[2]

FORWARD, RUSSIA! *(Vpered Rossiya!)*
Leader: Boris Fedorov. Founded in 1995 on basis of 12 December Liberal Democratic Union; democratic party.[1]

JUST CAUSE *(Pravoe Delo)*
Leaders: Anatoly Chubais, Sergei Kirienko, Yegor Gaidar, Boris Nemtsov, Irina Khakamada. Founded in December 1998 as a liberal-right reformist coalition movement, aimed at preventing a split in the "democratic vote"; based around Gaidar's Russia's Democratic Choice party, it includes other high-profile reformers, such as those named above and their embryonic parties; contested the December 1999 parliamentary elections under the name, **Union of Right Forces**,[7c] and won 29 seats.[2]

KEDR - CONSTRUCTIVE ECOLOGICAL PARTY *(Ekologicheskaya Partiya 'Kedr')*
Leader: Anatoly Panfilov. Founded in 1992; officially registered as a party in 1994; advocates the resolution of social issues, and in particular protection of the family and the environment; between 10,000 and 12,000 members.[7c]

LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF RUSSIA *(Liberalno-Demokraticheskaya Partiya Rossii - LDPR)*
Leader: Vladimir Zhirinovsky. Formally registered in 1992, although has been in existence (originally as the Liberal Democratic Party of the Soviet Union) since 1988; membership between 150,000 and 200,000; in favour of tougher laws on organised crime and corruption; highly nationalistic; advocates the establishment of a unitary state structure and the restoration of a Russian state within the borders of the former USSR; also in favour of restoring Russia to great-power status, and the establishment of an eastern military bloc to counterbalance NATO.[7c] Won 17 seats in the December 1999 parliamentary elections.[2]

OUR HOME IS RUSSIA *(Nash dom-Rossiya - NDR)*
Leader: Viktor Chernomyrdin. Founded in 1995 when it came third in parliamentary elections, behind the Communists and LDPR; membership around 250,000; advocates political reform,

privatisation, and a strong Russian state, but opposed to nationalism and extremism.[7c] Won 7 seats in the December 1999 parliamentary elections.[2]

PARTY OF ECONOMIC FREEDOM *(Partiya Ekonomicheskoi Svobody)*
Leaders: Konstantin Borovoi, Sergei Fedorov. Founded in 1992; advocates economic liberalism; 100,000 members.[1]

PARTY OF RUSSIAN UNITY AND ACCORD *(Partiya Rossiiskogo Edinstvai Soglasiya)*
Leader**:** Sergei Shakhrai. Founded in 1993; democratic bloc.[1]

PARTY OF WORKING PEOPLE'S SELF-GOVERNMENT *(Partiya Samoupravlenyia Trudyashchikhsya - PST)*
Leader: Levon Chakhmakhsian (acting). Founded in 1995; centrist, liberal.[1]

POWER TO THE PEOPLE *(Vlast Narodu)*
Leader: Nikolai Ryzhkov. Founded in 1995; left-wing, nationalist.[1]

REPUBLICAN PARTY *(Respublikansakaya Partiya)*
Leader: Vladimir Lysenko. Founded in 1990 by former members of the Democratic Platform in the CPSU; advocates a mixed economy, defence of the sovereignty of Russia; 7,000 members.[1]

RUSSIAN ALL-PEOPLE'S UNION
Leader: Sergei Baburin. Founded as a party in 1994; right-wing, nationalist.[1]

RUSSIAN CHRISTIAN-DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT
Leader: Viktor Aksyuchits. Founded in 1990; alliance of groups advocating application of Christian principles to society; conservative-nationalist; 6,000 members.[1]

RUSSIAN COMMUNIST WORKERS' PARTY *(Rossiiskaya Kommunisticheskaya Rabochaya Partiya)*
Leader: Viktor Tyulkin. Advocates restoration of a planned socialist economy; contested 1995 elections as Communists-Working Russia-For the Soviet Union.[1]

RUSSIAN NATIONAL UNITY *(Russkoe Natsionalnoe Edinstvo - RNE)*
Former leader: Aleksandr Barkashov.[14a] Founded in 1990; banned in 1993; re-emerged in 1994 when ban was lifted.[7c] Ultra-nationalist and anti-Semitic paramilitary organisation; claims 100,000 members and 64 branches, but press reports estimate membership of 12,000 and official registration is in only 22 regions; may have support of 3% of population.[14a] Due to non-registration, cannot contest parliamentary elections on its own party list, but in 1999 formed "National Bloc" with two smaller registered groups, Saviour and Renaissance.[7c] In September 2000, appeared to have ousted Barkashov as leader and splintered, losing some of its support in the regions.[14a]

RUSSIAN PEOPLE'S REPUBLICAN PARTY *(Rossiiskaya Narodnaya Respublikanskaya Partiy)*
Leader: Aleksandr Lebed. Founded in 1997; supports tax reforms, strong leadership with considerable executive powers, but opposed to forcing Russia's regions to obey federal laws; membership between 10,000 and 15,000.[7c]

RUSSIA'S DEMOCRATIC CHOICE *(Demokratichesky Vybor Rossii - DVR)*
Leader: Yegor Gaidar. Founded in 1993 as a democratic electoral bloc, Russia's Choice; re-constituted as a political party in 1994; contested 1995 elections as Russia's Democratic Choice-United Democrats.[1] (also see JUST CAUSE)

SOCIALIST PARTY OF RUSSIA *(Sotsialisticheskaya Partiya Rossii)*
Leader: Ivan Rybkin. Founded in 1996 on basis of Ivan Rybkin bloc; left-centre party.[1]

STALINIST BLOC FOR THE USSR (SB)
Leader: Viktor Anpilov. Founded in January 1999, specifically to fight the December 1999 parliamentary elections. Combines several far-left organisations: Working Russia, led by Anpilov, the Union of Russian Youth and the Officers' Union. Also has the support of Stalin's grandson, Colonal Evgeny Dzhugashvili; registered for 1999 elections as The Stalin Bloc: Working Russia, Officers for the USSR; aims to restore the USSR and communism, and abolish the office of president by non-violent means.[7c]

TRANSFORMATION OF THE FATHERLAND *(Preobrazheniye Otechestva)*
Leader: Eduard Rossel. Advocates greater economic and political independence for Russia's regions.[1]

UNITY *(Yedinstvo)*
Leader: Sergei Shoigu. Set up in September 1999, Unity, known as "Bear" in Russia,[18] is aligned with the presidential administration and endorsed by Vladimir Putin; came second in the December 1999 parliamentary elections, winning 72 seats.[2]

WOMEN OF RUSSIA POLITICAL MOVEMENT (WOR)
Leader: Ekaterina Lakhova. Founded in 1993, as successor to the Soviet-era Union of Soviet Women; constituent parts are the Russian Women's Union, the Female Entrepreneurs' Association and the Union of Women Serving in the Navy; predominantly concerned with social issues; centrist; encourages equal opportunities for women; supports a strong family and the rights of children, including education.[7c]

YABLOKO *(Federalnoe Obshchestvenno-Politicheskoe Dvizhenie "Yabloko")*
Leader: Grigory Yavlinsky. Founded in 1993; remained a loose coalition until March 1999, when officially registered as a party;[7c] democratic-centrist;[1] Russia's strongest liberal movement; particularly concerned with economic matters; also advocates strong international role for Russia.[7c] Won 21 seats in the December 1999 parliamentary elections.[2]

ANNEX C

PROMINENT PEOPLE

VIKTOR ANPILOV

Anpilov set up the Working Russia movement in 1996 after he was expelled from the far-left Russian Communist Workers' Party. He has ensured that the radical left, while on the margins of Russian politics as far as official representation is concerned, has maintained a high public profile. He has led numerous public demonstrations, which have occasionally resulted in his arrest. He was prominent in his support of parliament when Yeltsin suspended it in October 1993, and spent several months in detention. Anpilov was detained again in June 1998, for attempting to organise a rally in support of striking miners. He is currently leader of the Stalinist Bloc for the USSR.[7c]

ALEKSANDR BARKASHOV

Barkashov is an electrician by training, and became involved in extreme nationalist politics when he joined Pamyat in the mid-1980s. He left that organisation in the belief that more direct action was needed. He supported the 1991 attempted coup, surviving an assassination attempt in the process, and spent a couple of months in prison subsequently. He became leader of the extremist Russian National Unity party,[7c] but in September 2000, appeared to have been ousted when the group splintered.[14a]

VIKTOR CHERNOMYRDIN

Chernomyrdin spent most of his pre-politics career in the gas industry. He was USSR minister for the gas industry between 1985 and 1990, in which capacity he launched the privatisation of the industry and the creation of the gas giant, Gazprom. He was first elected to the USSR parliament in 1987, became Deputy Prime Minister in May 1992, and Prime Minister as a compromise candidate in December 1992, after the reformist, Gaidar, had been rejected by parliament. Following Chernomyrdin's 1998 dismissal as Prime Minister, there were calls for his resignation as leader of Our Home is Russia, of which, however, he has remained leader.[7c]

ANATOLY CHUBAIS

Chubais is an economist by training, and was the driving force behind Russia's 1992-1994 privatisation programme. He also masterminded Yeltsin's 1996 re-election campaign and was brought back into government by Yeltsin as First Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister in charge of economic reform in March 1997. Chubais pushed forward an ambitious programme of structural reform that provoked the wrath of the Duma and other powerful groups. His influence gradually waned and he lost the finance portfolio in November 1997, and then saw some of his responsibilities redistributed in January 1998. He was removed from the government in March 1998 and became chairman of the country's electricity monopoly, Russian Unified Energy Systems. He is currently one of the leaders of the Just Cause political movement.[7c]

YEGOR GAIDAR

Gaidar is an academic economist best known for introducing the "shock therapy" economic reform programme of 1992, during his tenure as acting Prime Minister which lasted barely a year. In response to the opposition his programme aroused, Gaidar set up Russia's Choice, which did well in the 1993 parliamentary election, becoming the second largest party in the Duma.

However, it won only nine seats in the 1995 election, when Gaidar himself failed to win a seat. He is currently one of the leaders of the Just Cause political movement.[7c]

MIKHAIL GORBACHEV

Gorbachev, who became General Secretary of the Communist Party and leader of the Soviet Union in 1985, embarked upon a programme of sweeping changes. A policy of *glasnost* (openness) provided for a greater degree of freedom for the mass media and freer discussion of previously censored aspects of Soviet and Russian history, as well as more critical views of contemporary politics. Gorbachev's programme of gradual political and economic reform came to be known as *perestroika* (restructuring). In 1988, Gorbachev announced plans for comprehensive changes to the political system, with the introduction of a two-tier legislature, elected largely by competitive elections. Following these, the Congress elected Gorbachev to the new post of executive President of the USSR in May 1989. By the end of 1991, following Russia's assertion of sovereignty, the USSR had ceased to exist. On 25 December 1991, Gorbachev resigned as its last President and the Russian Supreme Soviet formally changed the name of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) to the Russian Federation.[2]

IRINA KHAKAMADA

Khakamada is a well-respected political reformer, who was first elected to the Duma in 1993. She has led the Common Cause movement since 1995. She does not currently hold a Duma seat, as she gave it up to serve in the government as head of the State Commission for Supporting and Developing Small Businesses from 1997 until the commission was abolished in autumn 1998. She is a champion of small business and a vocal campaigner for tax, economic and governmental reform. She is also currently one of the leaders of the Just Cause political movement.[7c]

SERGEI KIRIYENKO

Kiriyenko is a ship-builder by training. He graduated from the Academy of the National Economy in 1993, and became chairman of the board of "Garantia," a Nizhny Novgorod bank, in 1994 when his association with Nemtsov began. In 1997, he became president of the local NORSI oil refinery, and Nemtsov made Kiriyenko his deputy at the ministry of fuel and energy later that year. Prime Minister for four months in 1998, Kiriyenko attempted to continue the programme of economic reform, but in August 1998 was dismissed by Yeltsin for failing to solve the financial crisis. He is currently one of the leaders of the Just Cause political movement.[7c]

EKATERINA LAKHOVA

Lakhova is a paediatrician by profession. Before entering politics, she was deputy head of Sverdlovsk health authority, and was elected to the Russian Supreme Soviet in 1990. She served as Yeltsin's adviser on issues concerning the family, motherhood and children until she was elected to the Duma in 1993. She was re-elected in 1995 and is currently leader of the Women of Russia Political Movement.[7c]

MIKHAIL LAPSHIN

Formerly a state farm director, Lapshin was first elected to the RSFSR parliament in 1990. He was re-elected to its successor, the Duma, in 1993, the year he was also elected chairman of the Agrarian Party, which he currently leads.[7c]

ALEKSANDR LEBED

Retired Major-General Lebed gained national fame as commander of the 14th Army Regiment in Moldova's breakaway Transdniestr region in the early 1990s. He was first elected to the Duma in December 1995, but gave up his seat in summer 1996, when Yeltsin made him Secretary of the Russian Security Council. In that capacity, Lebed in autumn 1996 negotiated an agreement with Chechnya that put an end to Russia's two-year war against the breakaway province. He was removed from his post after only three months, however, following clashes with the government and president. He was elected governor of Krasnoyarsk Krai in 1998, and is also leader of the Russian People's Republican Party.[7c]

YURII LUZHKOV

Luzhkov spent most of his career in the oil and gas industry. He was appointed deputy mayor of Moscow in 1991, and was promoted to mayor in 1992, when the first incumbent resigned. In 1996, almost 90% of voters supported him in a direct ballot. His efforts to modernise Moscow have made him extremely popular in the city. In December 1998, he founded the Fatherland movement, of which he has been leader since.[7c] Luzhkov has been criticised for imposing harsh registration regulations in Moscow, which breach constitutional provisions regarding freedom of movement.[14a]

BORIS NEMTSOV

One of the leaders of the Just Cause political movement. Nemtsov trained as a radiophysicist and graduated from Gorky (now Nizhny Novgorod) University in 1981. He subsequently held various positions at the USSR Academy of Sciences. In 1991, he joined in the defence of the Russian parliament during the August attempted coup. He was rewarded with his appointment first as Yeltsin's special representative, and then as governor of Nizhny Novgorod between 1991 and 1997. Having supported Yeltsin in the 1996 presidential election, Nemtsov was appointed First Deputy Prime Minister and minister for fuel and energy in March 1997. He lost office when Kiriyenko, his close associate, was sacked from his post as Prime Minister following the August 1998 financial crisis.[7c]

VLADIMIR PUTIN

Former head of the Federal Security Service and Secretary of the Security Council, whose firm stance on Russia's military campaign in Chechnya helped to raise his initially low profile as Prime Minister, the post to which he was appointed in August 1999. On President Yeltsin's resignation on 31 December 1999, Putin was appointed acting President, and was confirmed in the position in the presidential election of 26 March 2000, which he won with over 52% of the vote.[1]

SERGEI SHOIGU

Emergencies Minister who became leader of the Kremlin-backed Unity bloc, created in September 1999 to contest the December 1999 elections. Nine times world wrestling champion, he has built up a good reputation, but his control over members of his party is thought to be weak.[18]

GRIGORY YAVLINSKY

Born in Ukraine, Yavlinsky studied at the Institute of the National Economy in Moscow. He came to prominence in 1990 as a co-author of the radical "500 Days" economic reform programme that Gorbachev and Yeltsin briefly supported. He was Deputy Prime Minister in the last USSR government, and has since refused offers of government office. Yavlinsky stood for

the presidency in 1996, receiving 7% of the vote in the first round. He is currently leader of the Yabloko party.[7c]

BORIS YELTSIN

Yeltsin, who won an overwhelming victory in the Moscow constituency during the March 1989 elections to the new USSR Congress of People's Deputies, was subsequently elected Chairman of the Supreme Soviet (the permanent working body of the Congress), the highest state post in the RSFSR, in May 1990. In June 1990, the Congress adopted a declaration of sovereignty, asserting that the RSFSR was a sovereign republic and that the laws of the RSFSR had primacy over all-Union legislation. In June 1991, Yeltsin was elected President of the RSFSR, which gave him the executive power necessary to effect his policies as well as a sufficient popular mandate to challenge the jurisdiction of Gorbachev and the all-Union authorities. Yeltsin's position was strengthened by his part in bringing about the collapse of the August 1991 attempted coup, and while the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and Russian Communist Party (RCP) were suspended, he asserted control over all-Union bodies, appointing RSFSR ministers to head central institutions. By the end of 1991, the USSR had ceased to exist. On 25 December 1991, Gorbachev resigned as its last President and the Russian Supreme Soviet formally changed the name of the RSFSR to the Russian Federation,[2] of which Yeltsin was President until his resignation on 31 December 1999.[1]

VLADIMIR ZHIRINOVSKY

Zhirinovsky has proved himself to be a durable figure in Russian politics. He is leader of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, over which he wields total control, having been elected chairman with unrestricted power for ten years in 1994. He failed in his 1999 attempt to win a provincial governorship.[7c]

GENNADY ZYUGANOV

Zyuganov is a lifelong Communist. Having been a member of the Communist Party's youth wing, he joined the Party's apparatus first in his native region (Orel) and then in Moscow, where he built a career in the propaganda department of the CPSU Central Committee, ending up as its deputy head. Once the Communist Party of the RSFSR emerged, he quickly became one of its leaders, and was elected chairman of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation in 1993, a position he has since retained.[7c]

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