AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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OPEN LETTER FROM AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL SECTIONS IN AFRICA AHEAD OF THE RUSSIA-AFRICA SUMMIT 2026

To the Heads of State and Government, Ministers and Delegates participating in the Russia-Africa Summit 2026,

As Directors of Amnesty International's sections across Africa, we write to you ahead of the Russia-Africa Summit to express our deep concern over Russia's coerced and deceptive recruitment of nationals of African states into its military forces to fight against Ukraine.

In a briefing published 10 September 2026, *"Russia: Trafficking of Foreign Nationals to Fight in Ukraine"*[1], Amnesty International has documented practices which target people from African countries and, through deception, coercion and exploitation of economic hardship, draw them into devastating military combat, far from home, and often in circumstances which leave them little or no choice but to participate in combat, with no escape.

Amnesty International has published testimonies from nationals of African and other countries in the Global South who were lured into Russia by the promise of well-paid civilian employment and the prospect of Russian citizenship, only to find themselves deployed as soldiers at the front line in Ukraine; together with migrants and refugees residing in Russia who were coerced or pressured into joining the Russian military.

Many described experiencing initial deception and subsequent confusion upon arrival to Russia, being rushed or forced to sign documents they could not understand, restricted movement, having their passports taken away, receiving little or no military training prior to transfer to the front line, and being threatened if they showed any intention to leave. In many cases, these practices amount to human trafficking, which is a crime under international law.

For you as African leaders, silence on this issue would be a profound disservice to the people of your countries. We urge you to address this issue directly with the Russian authorities at the Russia-Africa Summit 2026, and call for Russia to take immediate steps to put an end to these practices amounting to crimes under international law and take appropriate remedial action. We also urge you to call upon Russia to ensure respect for the human rights and safety of the people of the countries you represent.

We call on all participating African states to demand that Russia:

- Puts on hold and cease any ongoing and future recruitment of people from Africa and other foreign nationals into its military forces and auxiliary front line services, until and unless minimum standards and effective enforcement are in place regarding prevention and combating of human trafficking, in Russian law and in practice;
- Takes immediate steps to dismantle any state practices or arrangements that facilitate trafficking in persons and other forms of exploitation for the purpose of recruiting foreign nationals into Russia's military forces and auxiliary front line services;
- Investigates and prosecutes all acts of trafficking in persons involving state officials, including within the Migration Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Defence, and others performing public functions (e.g., notaries), or persons acting with the acquiescence of the Russian authorities;
- Immediately ceases the practice of abusing the vulnerability of migrants and refugees in Russia to subject them to, or threaten them with, arbitrary or prolonged detention, deportation, or arbitrary penalties to recruit them into military forces;

[1] Amnesty International, *Russia: Trafficking of Foreign Nationals to Fight in Ukraine,* EUR 46/1361/2026, 10 September 2026, https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur46/1361/2026/en/

- Immediately decommissions any national of any African country, other foreign nationals currently deployed who choose to leave the service, without threat, penalty or any other reprisals, and ensure their immediate and safe departure from the front line.

At a moment when many African governments, including through African Union resolutions, speak of the enduring legacy of colonialism, sovereignty and African agency in international affairs, they must reject any practice that treats nationals of African countries as a commodity for other countries' political and military objectives.

We urge African leaders and all participating governments at the Russia-Africa Summit 2026 to use this opportunity to uphold international human rights law and to stand firmly on the side of accountability, justice and human dignity.

Yours sincerely,

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