

Russia - Human Rights Scorecard ¹

Russia, the world's largest nation, borders European and Asian countries as well as the Pacific and Arctic oceans. Backed by a booming economy, Russia in the 2000s adopted a more assertive foreign policy stance, and began to promote its perceived interests in former Soviet states more openly, even at the cost of antagonising the West. There is growing friction between Russia and many western powers regarding, among other things, the Ukraine crisis and more recently the Syrian conflict. ²

Official language: Russian

Ethnic groups: 81% Russian; 3.7% Tatar; 1.4% Ukrainian; 1.1% Bashkir; 1% Chuvash; 0.8% Chechen; 11% others / unspecified

Government: Federal semi-presidential constitutional republic

- President: Vladimir Putin

- Prime Minister: Dmitry Medvedev

Death penalty: Abolitionist in practice

Population: 144,2 million (Crimea not included)

Life expectancy: 70.5 years

Under-5 mortality: 8 per 1000

Adult literacy: 99.7 percent



Section 1: Respect for the Integrity of the Person

Respect for the integrity of the individual is the most fundamental of human rights groupings. It guarantees protection of the person to ensure the right to life, and freedom from torture. It also prevents arbitrary detention, and disappearances, and ensures the right to a free and fair trial when accused.

Freedom from arbitrary or unlawful deprivation of life



Largely disrespected ³

There are several reports that the government or its agents commit arbitrary or unlawful killings. In the North Caucasus, both national authorities and local militants frequently carry out extrajudicial killings.

Freedom from disappearance



Largely disrespected ⁴

Enforced disappearances for both political and financial reasons continue in the North Caucasus. Security forces are also allegedly responsible for the kidnapping and disappearance of asylum seekers from Central Asia, particularly Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

Freedom from torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment



Largely disrespected ⁵

Although the constitution prohibits such practices, numerous credible reports indicate that law enforcement personnel engage in torture, abuse, and violence to coerce confessions from suspects and that authorities generally do not hold officials accountable for such actions.

Freedom from arbitrary arrest or detention



Largely disrespected ⁶

While the law prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention, authorities regularly engage in arbitrary arrest and detention with impunity.

Freedom from denial of fair public trial



Largely disrespected ⁷

The law provides for an independent judiciary, but judges remain subject to influence from the executive branch, the military, and other security forces, particularly in politically sensitive cases. Bribery or political pressure sometimes subvert the process of obtaining judicial warrants.

Freedom from arbitrary interference with privacy, family, home or correspondence



Largely disrespected ⁸

The law forbids officials from entering private residences except in cases when authorized by a judicial decision. However, government officials and others allegedly engage in electronic surveillance without appropriate authorization and enter residences and other premises without warrants.

Section 2: Respect for Civil Liberties

Civil liberties are a basic category of internationally recognized human rights. They include the freedoms of expression, assembly, association, education, and religion. These are inalienable rights which should not be breached by government, and should ensure the rights of all, including women and minority groups.

Freedom of speech and press (*Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Index*)⁹



Score: 43,42, Rank: 148 / 179 – Highly controlled, limited or intimidated¹⁰

While the constitution provides for freedom of speech and press, the government has instituted many new laws restricting those rights. Authorities use procedural violations and restrictive or vague legislation to detain, harass, or prosecute persons who criticize the government.

Freedom from academic censorship



Largely respected¹¹

Authorities often open criminal investigations against academics who criticize government policy. Cultural events considered offensive, or expressing views in opposition to the government are often censored, and organizers are sometimes criminally prosecuted.

Freedom of peaceful assembly and association



Largely disrespected¹²

Authorities require that protest organizers obtain government permission for demonstrations. The government has instituted new measures and used existing restrictive laws to stigmatize, harass, fine, and raise barriers to membership in organizations critical of the government.

Freedom of religion



Largely disrespected¹³

The constitution provides for freedom of religion, but by law, officials may prohibit the activity of a religious association for violating public order or engaging in “extremist activity.” There are reports of incidents related to religion involving deaths and beatings.

Protection of refugees and stateless persons



Largely disrespected¹⁴

The law provides for freedom of internal movement, emigration, and repatriation. With the exception of Ukrainian refugees, the government provided minimal assistance to refugees, asylum seekers and stateless persons. The government seldom cooperates with the UNHCR.

Overall protection of civil liberties (*FreedomHouse Civil Liberties Index*)^{15 16}



6 / 7 – Not free¹⁷

In recent years, the Kremlin has been cracking down on civil society, and ramping up pressure on domestic NGOs. The regime also intensified its grip on the media, saturating the information landscape with nationalist propaganda while suppressing the most popular alternative voices.

Section 3: Respect for Political Rights

Political rights ensure all members of society are able to influence the political process. The assessment of political rights includes an examination of the electoral process and the selection of representatives, the political empowerment of the general public, the tolerance of dissent, the accountability of government, etc..

Overall protection of political rights (*FreedomHouse Political Rights Index*)¹⁸



6 / 7 – Not free¹⁹

While the law provides citizens with the ability to change their government peacefully in periodic elections, citizens are unable to do so because the government limits the ability of other parties to organize, register candidates, access the media, and conduct political campaigns.

Section 4: Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

The civil, political, economic and social rights exercised within a country are often modulated by the degree of transparency and freedom from corruption. Various international metrics assess transparency and corruption, including the OECD anti-bribery convention, the Bribe Payers Index, and the Open Budget Index.

Transparency and freedom from corruption (*Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index*)²⁰



Score: 29%, Rank: 119 / 175 – Highly corrupt²¹

The law provides criminal penalties for corruption, but officials engage in corrupt practices with impunity. Corruption is widespread throughout the executive, legislative, and judicial branches at all levels of government. 90% of entrepreneurs reported having encountered corruption.

Section 5: Governmental Response to Criticism

This section deals specifically with the response heads of state have to civil society or international human rights reports.

Governmental attitudes vis-à-vis independent investigations of alleged human rights violations



Largely disrespected²²

Official harassment of independent NGOs is intensifying, particularly of groups that focus on election monitoring, uncovering corruption, and addressing human rights abuses. NGO activities and international humanitarian assistance in the North Caucasus are severely restricted.

Section 6: Discrimination and Societal Abuses

Legal and social discriminatory practices related to sex, race, creed or sexual orientation, are violations of human rights. Countries with strong civil liberty traditions should have a fair legal system that ensures the rule of law, allows free economic activity, and ensures equality of opportunity for all.

Rights of women (World Economic Forum Gender Gap Index)²³



Score: 69,3%, Rank: 75 / 142 – Very unequal rights²⁴

Domestic violence remains a major problem, and there is no significant provision addressing it in the criminal code. Honour killings of women in Chechnya, Dagestan, and elsewhere in the North Caucasus region continue. The law does not prohibit sexual harassment in the workplace.

Rights of Children (KidsRights Index Overall Score)²⁵



Score: 73%, Rank: 95 / 165 – Vulnerable²⁶

KidsRights Index gives a reasonably good score to Russia but fails to take into account important violations of children's rights. Child abuse – including child pornography – is a significant problem, and approx. 2,500 children die annually from domestic violence.

Rights of persons with disabilities



Largely disrespected²⁷

While the law prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities, the government generally doesn't enforce it. Persons with mental disabilities are subject to discrimination in education and employment. Conditions of guardianship often deprive them of most personal rights.

Rights of national/racial/ethnic minorities (e.g. discrimination, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism etc.)



Largely disrespected²⁸

The law prohibits discrimination based on ethnicity, but government officials increasingly subject minorities to discrimination. There is a significant rise in xenophobic societal violence and discrimination against minorities. Romani children experience discrimination in schools.

Freedom from abuse and discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity



Largely disrespected^{29 30}

The law criminalizes the "propaganda" of non-traditional sexual relations to minors, including to "approve of people who are in non-traditional sexual relationships." This increasing official promotion of intolerance and homophobia is resulting in expanding discrimination.

Section 7: Workers' Rights

Workers' rights are a group of legal rights relating to labour relations between workers and their employers. At their core are things like the ability to negotiate pay, benefits, terms of employment, and safe working conditions. These rights often devolve from the right to unionize and access to collective bargaining.

Rights to freedom of association and to collective bargaining



Partially respected³¹

The law provides that workers can form and join independent unions, bargain collectively, and conduct legal strikes, and prohibits reprisals against striking workers. However, the law places several restrictions on the right to bargain collectively

Freedom from forced or compulsory labour



Largely disrespected³²

The law prohibits most forms of compulsory labour but allows it as a penal sentence, in some cases contracting to private enterprises. The government does not effectively enforce such laws. Forced labour of migrant workers was involved in construction projects for the Sochi Olympics.

Freedom from forced labour for children, and a minimum age of employment



Largely disrespected³³

The law permits children to work at age 14 under certain conditions. Such work must not threaten the child's health or welfare. Authorities do not effectively implement laws prohibiting child labour. Some children, both Russian and foreign, are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation.

Right to acceptable conditions of work



Largely disrespected³⁴

The minimum wage is two-thirds of the subsistence minimum. The government does not effectively enforce labour laws. Many migrants regularly face discrimination and hazardous or exploitative working conditions. 60 workers died in construction related to the Sochi Winter Olympics.

Right to employment



5.8% - Reasonable unemployment³⁵

Russia's Labor Ministry has predicted that Russia's unemployment rate will reach 6 percent. Civil servants and employees of small and medium-sized business are most affected but oil and gas companies, heavy industry and banks are not planning large-scale staff cuts.³⁶

¹ A hybrid human rights and freedoms model, leveraging both legal principles and intuitive classifications, has been used for this human rights assessment. The CJPME Foundation has sought to integrate as many independent sources and metrics into its summary analysis as possible. In many cases, for qualitative material pertaining to the respect for a particular right in a country, the CJPME Foundation has drawn on material from Human Rights Watch and the US State Department country reports. Human Rights Watch (HRW) publishes a World Report which assesses the respect for human rights in each country. HRW uses a methodology of local reporting and interviewing, combined with research and analysis to assess the level of respect of human rights. The U.S State Department keeps an updated publication on the state of human rights internationally. Their system of research and accountability draws from the research of official US State Department officials, as well as local civil-society and international human rights organizations.

² Commonly-known information on the country is drawn from various Internet sources, including Google country pages, and Amnesty International. For death penalty see: "Death sentences and executions in 2013." Amnesty International. March 24, 2014. Accessed March 2, 2016.

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/act50/001/2014/en/>.

³ "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014 Russia." U.S Department of State. January 1, 2014. Accessed March 2, 2016.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/#wrapper>.

⁴ Ibid. U.S Department of State. For purposes of the present analysis, a "disappearance" is different than simple arbitrary detention because a "disappearance" is considered permanent.

⁵ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

⁶ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

⁷ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

⁸ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

⁹ The Press Freedom Index published by Reporters Without Borders ranks the level of freedom of information in 180 countries. This is determined through the polling of local NGOs and freedom of expression civil society organizations across the globe. This index is also determined by local correspondents and follow-up work done on reports of infringement to press freedom where ever it takes place. Their methodology looks at six different indicators: 1) Media pluralism, 2) Media independence, 3) Media atmosphere and self-censorship, 4) the Law around media, 5) Media transparency, and 6) Media infrastructure. The score from these six indicators is combined with a rating for the violence against journalists in the country to create an overall score. The CJPME Foundation classifies the Press Freedom Index as follows: 0 – 14.99 (16 countries), Largely free, diverse and independent; 15 – 24.99 (37 countries), Mostly free, diverse and independent; 25 – 29.99 (31 countries), Partially free, diverse and independent; 30 – 39.99 (39 countries), Partially controlled, limited or intimidated; 40 & higher (57 countries), Highly controlled, limited or intimidated.

¹⁰ "World Press Freedom Index." Reporters Without Borders: For Freedom of Information. January 1, 2014. Accessed March 2, 2016.

<http://rsf.org/index2014/en-index2014.php>.

¹¹ "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014 Russia." U.S Department of State. January 1, 2014. Accessed March 2, 2016.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/#wrapper>.

¹² Ibid. U.S Department of State.

¹³ "Russia." International Religious Freedom Report for 2014. January 1, 2014. Accessed March 02, 2016.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>.

¹⁴ "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014 Russia." U.S Department of State. January 1, 2014. Accessed March 2, 2016.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/#wrapper>.

¹⁵ Freedom House is an internationally recognized NGO based in the U.S which documents and rates the quality of democratic practice in a given country. Freedom House splits its grading system between the two areas of civil and political rights in a country. On each scale, the Freedom House rating is 1-2.5 (free), 3-5.5 (partly free) and 6-7 (not free).

¹⁶ Freedom House's Civil Liberties index measures things such as a) freedom of expression and belief, b) associational and organizational rights, c) the rule of law, and d) personal autonomy and individual rights. Freedom House rates countries as 1-2.5 (free), 3-5.5 (partly free) and 6-7 (not free). Accessed March 2, 2016

<https://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2014/methodology#.VldwWzHF98F>

¹⁷ "Russia." Freedom in the World 2016: Russia. January 1, 2016. Accessed March 2, 2016. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2016/russia>.

¹⁸ See footnote about the Freedom House organization above. The Freedom House Political Rights assessment looks at a) the electoral process, b) political pluralism and participation, and c) the functioning of government. Accessed March 2, 2016 <https://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2014/methodology#VldwWzHF98F>

¹⁹ "Russia." Freedom in the World 2016: Russia. January 1, 2016. Accessed March 2, 2016. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2016/russia>.

²⁰ Transparency International (TI) publishes a "Corruption Perceptions Index" annually, which is based on independent research and polling. The main categories of corruption are broken down within the index to provide particulars on issues including things such as perceptions of corruption, control of corruption, and financial secrecy. A country receives a score on 100; the higher the score, the less corrupt the society. The CJPME foundation has classified them into categories as follows: 80-100 (11 countries): Very limited corruption; 60-79 (27 countries): Limited corruption; 40-59 (41 countries): Some corruption; 20-39 (80 countries): Highly corrupt; 0-19 (15 countries): Extremely corrupt

²¹ "Russia." Corruption by Country. January 1, 2015. Accessed March 2, 2016. <http://www.transparency.org/country#RUS>.

²² "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014 Russia." U.S Department of State. January 1, 2014. Accessed March 2, 2016.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/#wrapper>.

²³ This metric is based on the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index. 0.00 denotes inequality between the sexes, and 1.00 denotes fully equality between the sexes. This index looks at four subdomains: economic participation and opportunity; educational attainment; health and survival; and political empowerment. Each country is given a percentage score; the higher the percentage, the better the protections. The CJPME Foundation classed the percentages as follows: 80-100% (5 countries): Almost equal rights; 70-79% (60 countries): Somewhat unequal rights; 0-69% (77 countries): Very unequal rights

²⁴ "Russian Federation." World Economic Forum. January 1, 2014. Accessed March 2, 2016. <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2014/economies/#economy=RUS>.

²⁵ This metric is based on the KidsRights Index Overall Score. This index has five subdomains: life expectancy and maternal mortality; health; education; protection; and child rights environment. Each country is given a percentage score; the higher the percentage, the better the protections. KidsRights classes the countries according to these percentages, and the CJPME Foundation has given each class a term as follows: 70-100% (77 countries): Protected; 60-70% (29 countries): Somewhat protected; 45-50% (33 countries): Slightly vulnerable; 30-45% (12 countries): Highly vulnerable; Lower than 30% (11 countries): Extremely vulnerable

²⁶ "The KidsRights Index: Overall Ranking." The KidsRights Index. Accessed March 2, 2016. <http://www.kidsrightsindex.org/>

²⁷ "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014 Russia." U.S Department of State. January 1, 2014. Accessed March 2, 2016.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/#wrapper>.

²⁸ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

²⁹ "ILGA World Map." International Lesbian Gay and Intersex Association. January 1, 2014. Accessed March 2, 2016. <http://ilga.org/>. See also Ibid. U.S Department of State.

³⁰ ILGA, the International, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, was founded in 1978 on the principle of highlighting state sponsored homophobia where it exists around the world. ILGA annually publishes a map with an accompanying report on sexual and gender based harassment, which focuses on both the legal and non-legal acts of state sponsored discrimination.

³¹ "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014 Russia." U.S Department of State. January 1, 2014. Accessed March 2, 2016.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/#wrapper>.

³² Ibid. U.S Department of State.

³³ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

³⁴ Ibid. U.S Department of State. See also a well-done Wikipedia comparison of wage, income and work week metrics across countries at

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_minimum_wages_by_country

³⁵ "Global Employment Trends." International Labour Organization. January 1, 2013. Accessed March 2, 2016. http://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/global-employment-trends/2014/WCMS_233936/lang-en/index.htm.

³⁶ "Russia's Unemployment Rate to Hit 6% in 2016" The Moscow Times, January 26, 2016. Accessed March 2, 2016.

<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/russias-unemployment-rate-to-hit-6-in-2016/556926.html>.