



**Information on the Russian Federation  
for 95th session  
of the Committee on the Rights of the Child**

**provided by OVD-Info**

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## INTRODUCTION

OVD-Info is an independent human rights media project aimed at monitoring cases of political persecution in Russia and providing legal assistance to victims of such persecution.<sup>1</sup> Today, OVD-Info operates a 24-hour federal hotline and a Telegram bot to collect information on all types of political persecution and coordinate legal assistance to its victims, provides legal education to activists, researches different types of political persecution in Russia, conducts advocacy campaigns and strategic litigation.

This report updates our previous report submitted in November 2022<sup>2</sup> and focuses on civil rights and freedoms of children. Since our last report, Russia made no progress in protecting childrens' right to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly. On the contrary, the authorities strengthened propaganda in educational institutions and censorship of alternative sources of information. Information about LGBTQ+ is under further attack as the Supreme Court of Russia recognized "LGBT movement" as an extremist organization. Authorities continue to prosecute children for their anti-war activism and other dissenting views. They also persecute parents, bringing criminal or administrative charges against them, as well as fining them for improper performance of child-upbringing responsibilities due to their children's oppositional views and actions. In addition, Russian authorities and educational institutions are engaging in a campaign against the participation of children in assemblies.

At the end of this report, we provide recommendations to the Russian government on how to ensure freedom of expression and freedom of assembly of children, as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (hereinafter - Convention).

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ovdinfo.org/>

<sup>2</sup> The Report on Civil Rights and Freedoms of Children, OVD-info, 7 March 2023, section c para. 6, URL: [https://en.ovdinfo.org/report-civil-rights-and-freedoms-children?\\_gl=1\\*1igeuej\\*\\_ga\\*NTUwNzM3NDQuMTY5OTM1NDU1OQ.\\*\\_ga\\_J7DH9NKJ0R\\*MTcwMDY0MTQ4OC41LjAuMTcwMDY0MTQ4OC42MC4wLjA.#1](https://en.ovdinfo.org/report-civil-rights-and-freedoms-children?_gl=1*1igeuej*_ga*NTUwNzM3NDQuMTY5OTM1NDU1OQ.*_ga_J7DH9NKJ0R*MTcwMDY0MTQ4OC41LjAuMTcwMDY0MTQ4OC42MC4wLjA.#1)

## **I. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION**

### **A. Censorship and blocks in Russia**

1. Since our last report, Russian authorities further restricted access to information, including information on children's rights. For example, the Prosecutor General's Office blocked the VK public group "For Children's Rights to Education". The participants of the group discussed violations of children's rights, corruption in kindergartens, schools and universities. After the start of the invasion, they also began to publish news about the situation in Ukraine. At the time of blocking, the number of participants exceeded 500 people.<sup>3</sup>
2. Moreover, authorities continue to block websites and other sources of information containing anti-war expressions or providing alternative information about war with Ukraine. According to Roskomsvoboda, an Internet freedom watchdog, over 15 000 websites were blocked due to "military censorship".<sup>4</sup>
3. Therefore, the Russian authorities made no progress in protecting the right to freedom of expression of children enshrined in Article 13 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

### **B. State propaganda among children**

4. Russian educational institutions continue to conduct propaganda lessons - so called "Conversations about Important Things".<sup>5</sup> Those educational institutions which fail to conduct them are often subject to persecution. For example, the Novosibirsk private college "Novokolledzh", which did not conduct "Conversations about Important Things", was fined 50 000 rubles after an inspection by the prosecutor's office.<sup>6</sup> Despite the fact that the college was fined on grounds unrelated to the "Conversations about Important Things", there is reason to believe that it was the failure to teach the lessons that was the real reason for the persecution.
5. At the beginning of August 2023, the Russian authorities presented new textbooks on general history and Russian history for 10th and 11th grades of school. In the textbook for 11th grade, sections about the period 1970–2000 were completely rewritten, and a section was added from 2014 to the present. A separate section is devoted to the

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<sup>3</sup>“The Prosecutor General's Office blocked the page of the Perm project “For the rights of children to education””, OVD-info, 8 June 2023, URL: <https://ovd.info/express-news/2023/06/08/genprokuratura-zablokirovala-stranicu-permskogo-proekta-za-prava-detei-na>

<sup>4</sup> “15,000 sites - a new “record” for military censorship”, Roskomsvoboda, 8 November 2023, URL: <https://roskomsvoboda.org/post/15000-voencenzura/>

<sup>5</sup> “You can't talk about the greatness of the country while sitting in offices that are about to collapse”, Meduza, 14 September 2022, URL: <https://meduza.io/feature/2022/09/12/nelzya-govorit-o-velichii-strany-sidya-v-kabinetah-kotorye-vot-vot-razvalyatsya>

<sup>6</sup> “Novosibirsk “Novokolledzh” was fined 50 thousand rubles for refusing to hold “Conversations about important things””, CurrentTimes, 13 July 2023. URL: <https://www.currenttime.tv/a/novokolledzh-shtraf/32502459.html>

“special operation” of Russia in Ukraine, where the words of the President Vladimir Putin are quoted, who claimed that Russia launched a military action in order to prevent an attack from Ukraine. From 1 September 2023, these new history textbooks are used in Russian schools. According to the Minister of Education, new history textbooks will appear for grades 5–9th next year.<sup>7</sup>

6. Russian authorities have also begun to promote their ideas beyond the classrooms. For example, in Tula region, “Lessons of Courage” (a form of patriotic education of children containing war ideas) were held for a student at the Epifan School who, due to health conditions, was studying at home.<sup>8</sup> Previously, propaganda lessons were held only in schools.
7. Furthermore, a special training has been included in the school curriculum - “Fundamentals of security and defense of the Motherland”, which will cover the tactics of combined arms combat and the use of unmanned aerial vehicles, as well as the regulations of military service. On 1 September 2024, this new subject will replace life safety and provide information about the role of Russia in the modern world, its armed forces and military threats.<sup>9</sup>
8. In addition, the authorities included questions about the war in Ukraine and annexed territories to the demo version of the Unified State Exam in History for 2024.<sup>10</sup>
9. The Federal Service for Supervision in Education and Science started to collect data on students for military registration. The corresponding Government resolution was published on 3 October 2023.<sup>11</sup> Information about schoolchildren, university and college students will be transferred to the appropriate state information resource - “Unified register of military registration”. Parents of schoolchildren also complain that schools have introduced military recruitment advertisements. Such advertising is now placed on school displays, websites, meetings and exhibitions.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> “A new history textbook for 11th graders has been presented in Russia. With a section on “special operation””, Meduza, 7 August 2023, URL:

<https://meduza.io/feature/2023/08/07/v-rossii-predstavili-novyy-uchebnik-istorii-dlya-11-h-klassov-s-razdelom-o-spetsoperatsii>

<sup>8</sup> “In the Tula region, a home-schooled student was given a “Lesson in Courage.” Military equipment was brought to his home”, Meduza, 17 November 2023, URL: <https://meduza.io/amp/news/2023/11/17/v-tulskoy-oblasti-shkolniku-na-nadomnom-obuchenii-proveli-urok-mu-zhestva-k-nemu-domoy-prinesli-voennuyu-ekipirovku>

<sup>9</sup> “From copter to combined arms combat. Lessons for Russian schoolchildren”, RadioSvoboda, 20 November 2023, URL:

<https://www.svoboda.org/a/ot-koptera-do-obschevoyskovogo-boya-uroki-dlya-shkolnikov-rossii/32691135.html>

<sup>10</sup> “Questions about the war in Ukraine appeared in the demo version of the Unified State Examination in History for 2024”, Meduza, 26 August 2023, URL: <https://meduza.io/news/2023/08/26/v-demoversii-ege-po-istorii-na-2024-god-poyavilis-voprosy-o-voynе-v-ukraine>

<sup>11</sup> Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation dated 3 October 2023 No. 1629.

“On Amendments to the Regulations on the Federal Service for Supervision of Education and Science”, 3 October 2023, URL:

<http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/document/0001202310030026?index=2>

<sup>12</sup> “A campaign for contract service in the army has begun in Russian schools”, Important Stories, 14 April 2023, URL: <https://stories.media/news/2023/04/14/v-rossiiskikh-shkolakh-nachalas-agitatsiya-za-kontraktnuyu-sluzhbu-v-armii/>

10. Moreover, the mass renaming of schools has begun in Russia. At least 60 schools have been renamed in honor of participants in the war with Ukraine. Almost half of them are in the Republic of Dagestan.<sup>13</sup>
11. Therefore Russia clearly violates Paragraph 1 (b) of the Article 29 of the Convention, which demands states to ensure that the educational institutions are directed towards development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

### **C. Persecution of children and their parents for activism and dissenting views**

12. Russian authorities continue to persecute children for anti-war activism. As of 17 November 2023, at least 8 288 cases<sup>14</sup> went to court under Article 20.3.3 of the Code of Administrative Offenses (hereinafter - CAO) which bans “discrediting the use of the Russian armed forces ”.<sup>15</sup> Violations of CAO by minors are decided by special Commissions on Juvenile Affairs. Their proceedings are closed and decisions are not available for the public. Thus, we are not able to analyze the scale of prosecution of minors under Article 20.3.3 of the CAO. However, we are aware of several prosecutions reported in the mass media.
13. A 17-year-old college student in Naberezhnye Chelny was fined for “discrediting the use of Russian armed forces” video on the Telegram channel.<sup>16</sup> Local residents wrote a denunciation for the video, after which the young man was detained by investigators. The Commission on Juvenile Affairs found him guilty under Article 20.3.3 of the CAO.
14. On 24 February 2023, on the anniversary of the invasion of Ukraine, a 17-year-old Nizhny Novgorod resident went to a picket with an anti-war poster on Bolshaya Pokrovskaya Street. He was detained by police about 20 minutes after his arrival. The Commission on Juvenile Affairs imposed the maximum fine on him of 50 000 rubles under Part 1 of Article 20.3.3 of the CAO.<sup>17</sup>
15. In addition, Lyceum No. 82 of Nizhny Novgorod introduced rules prohibiting students from “participating in public actions” aimed at “discrediting” the army, government, officials and leadership of the lyceum. Earlier, the director, Nina Govorova, reported to the police about two students after she saw the video of them criticizing the

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<sup>13</sup> “More than 60 schools in Russia were renamed in honor of participants in the war in Ukraine”, Radio Svoboda, 10 October 2023, URL: <https://www.svoboda.org/a/boleee-60-shkol-v-rossii-pereimenovali-v-chestj-uchastnikov-voyny-v-ukraine/32631740.html>

<sup>14</sup> “Persecution of the anti-war movement report: November 2023”, OVD-info, 24 November 2023, URL: <https://data.ovd.info/svodka-antivoennykh-repressiy-noyabr-2023#2>

<sup>15</sup> In the spring of 2023, OVD-Info, together with other Russian human rights defenders, sent 22 complaints to the Constitutional Court of Russia against Article 20.3.3 of the CAO unsuccessfully challenging its compliance with the Russian Constitution. See further <https://en.ovdinfo.org/discreditation-articles-explainer> and URL: <https://strat.ovd.info/diskreditaciya-konstitucionnogo-suda>

<sup>16</sup> News, OVD-info, URL: <https://www.24live.co/live/Usuno?n=3297898638358163081>

<sup>17</sup> ““I just printed out 'No War'. No Madness' poster and decided to go out.” The story of a 17-year-old athlete who was fined for picketing in Nizhny Novgorod”, Mediazona, 27 February 2023, URL: <https://zona.media/article/2023/02/27/bushuev?ysclid=lppl6xsftn395586304>

Russian army in their kitchen.<sup>18</sup> After Govorova's denunciation, protocols were drawn up against these students under Article 20.3.3 of the CAO.

16. Moreover, OVD-info has information on several children subjected to criminal prosecution for their anti-war activism.
17. A 14-year-old minor with his adult friend posted a video in the Telegram channel, where they throw Molotov cocktails at the wall of an abandoned building. According to the investigation, they “sympathised with the Ukrainian Azov”. The investigation also stated that an adult participant administered “groups and chats” in Telegram and VKontakte, “promoting the ideology of the battalion”, while his 14-year-old friend “was engaged in practical activities and also supported Azov”. 14-year-old was accused of undergoing training to prepare for a terrorist attack under Article 205.3 of the Criminal Code<sup>19</sup> (completing training for the purpose of carrying out terrorist activities).<sup>20</sup>
18. Russian authorities initiated a case of vandalism under Part 1 of Article 214 of the Criminal Code against a 15-year-old from Ukraine due to anti-war inscriptions on the walls. According to investigators, she painted “symbols of one of the extremist movements” on the building of a heating center, the wall of an abandoned building and a gazebo. There is information from pro-Russian activists that the girl scattered yellow balloons with blue pro-Ukrainian inscriptions around the city, and also posted anti-war leaflets. The girl was released on personal recognizance, while the investigation is currently ongoing.<sup>21</sup>
19. A 16-year-old student from Sosva village, Sverdlovsk oblast, is being prosecuted under Part 2 of Article 205.2 of the Criminal Code (public calls for terrorist activities, public justification of terrorism or propaganda of terrorism).<sup>22</sup> According to investigators, in January 2023, he created a Telegram channel in which he “praised the saboteurs and called other schoolchildren for arsons of military recruiting offices”. According to Telegram channel SHOT, the young man was arrested after law enforcement officers subscribed to his channel. Later he was released on personal recognizance.<sup>23</sup>
20. Russian authorities opened a criminal case against a 17-year-old resident of Omsk under Part 2 of Article 205.2 of the Criminal Code<sup>24</sup> for publicly justifying terrorism. The ground for initiating the case was a comment on the VKontakte social media about a drone attack on the Kremlin: “Glory to Ukraine. Work, brothers! Putin has probably already prepared fifteen suitcases for feces”.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> ”At a lyceum in Nizhny Novgorod, students were officially banned from “discrediting” the army, government and leadership - after the director denounced two schoolchildren”, Meduza, 20 November 2023, <https://meduza.io/news/2023/11/20/v-litsee-v-nizhnem-novgorode-uchenikam-ofitsialno-zapretili-diskreditirovat-armiyu-pravitelstvo-i-rukovodstvo?ysclid=lpaxnebfdo280340328>

<sup>19</sup> For an under 16 minor maximum sentence under this article is 6 years of imprisonment.

<sup>20</sup> According to OVD-info data, see base of politically motivated prosecution in Russia, URL: <https://ovd.info/politpressing>.

<sup>21</sup> According to OVD-info data, see base of politically motivated prosecution <https://ovd.info/politpressing>.

<sup>22</sup> Maximum sentence for a 16 year old minor is up to 7 years of imprisonment.

<sup>23</sup> According to OVD-info data, see base of politically motivated prosecution <https://ovd.info/politpressing>.

<sup>24</sup> Maximum sentence for a 16 year old minor is up to 7 years of imprisonment.

<sup>25</sup> According to OVD-info data, see base of politically motivated prosecution <https://ovd.info/politpressing>.

21. A 17-year-old from Ulan-ude is prosecuted under Part 3 of Article 354.1 of the Criminal Code (rehabilitation of Nazism).<sup>26</sup> According to the investigation, in the early morning of 24 March 2023, he climbed on the monument to the Red Guards and partisans who died in the battles for the liberation of Verkhneudinsk town, danced on it, showed “obscene gestures” and shouted “Glory to Ukraine!”.<sup>27</sup>
22. Moreover, parents are often subjected to persecution due to the activism of their children. For example, after a 12-year-old girl drew an anti-war picture at school with messages such as “Glory to Ukraine” and “No to war”, her father was investigated.<sup>28</sup> His social network account was monitored and he was first prosecuted for administrative “discrediting the use of Russian armed forces” under Article 20.3.3 of the CAO and later accused of criminal discreditation under Article 208.3 of the Criminal Code. His daughter was initially put in an orphanage but later she was placed with her mother who did not have contact with her for many years and repeatedly refused to take her. The father was sentenced to imprisonment for 2 years, where he is repeatedly placed in solitary confinement. The first time he was placed in a punishment cell for six days for being late to get up, the second time - for 13 days - for not saying hello to a FSIN (Federal penitentiary service) employee. The third - for holding his hands behind his back. The fourth - for leaning on his arm while sitting at the table. While he was in the punishment cell, his personal belongings disappeared.
23. Additionally, there are certain updates on the case we mentioned in the previous report.<sup>29</sup> A fifth grader and her mother detained on 5 October 2022 in Moscow for an avatar with the Ukrainian flag in the girl’s social network profile, as well as for conducting a survey among classmates about their thoughts regarding the war and failure to attend “Conversations about Important Things” (mentioned above) tried to challenge the persecution in court. Those lawsuits were unsuccessful. On 25 October 2022, Moscow Commission on Juvenile Affairs found the mother to be in violation of Part 1 Article 5.35 of COA.<sup>30</sup> The Commission decided that the actions of her daughter amounted to failure on her mother’s part to properly raise and educate her daughter. On 22 December 2022, the court rejected the appeal of the Commission’s decision. On 5 December 2023, a decision on the administrative case against the girl’s mother was left in force. In parallel proceedings aimed to declare actions of the police and social services unlawful (forceful detention of mother and child and police’s aggressive actions) the court refused the lawsuit on 29 May 2023.
24. Furthermore, there are cases of persecution of children and their parents for dissent that are not directly related to the invasion of Ukraine.

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<sup>26</sup> For a first-time minor offender under this article imprisonment cannot be applied, only mulder punishment.

<sup>27</sup> According to OVD-info data, see base of politically motivated prosecution <https://ovd.info/politpressing>.

<sup>28</sup> “The case of Alexey and Masha Moskalev: a chronicle”, OVD-Info, 3 April 2023, URL: <https://ovd.info/articles/2023/04/03/delo-alekseya-i-mashi-moskalevyh-hronika>

<sup>29</sup> The Report on Civil Rights and Freedoms of Children, OVD-info, 7 March 2023, section c para. 6, URL: [https://en.ovdinfo.org/report-civil-rights-and-freedoms-children?\\_gl=1\\*1igeuej\\*\\_ga\\*NTUwNzM3NDQuMTY5OTM1NDU1OQ.\\*\\_ga\\_J7DH9NKJ0R\\*MTcwMDY0MTQ4OC41LjAuMTcwMDY0MTQ4OC42MC4wLjA.#1](https://en.ovdinfo.org/report-civil-rights-and-freedoms-children?_gl=1*1igeuej*_ga*NTUwNzM3NDQuMTY5OTM1NDU1OQ.*_ga_J7DH9NKJ0R*MTcwMDY0MTQ4OC41LjAuMTcwMDY0MTQ4OC42MC4wLjA.#1)

<sup>30</sup> Non-fulfillment or improper fulfillment by parents of responsibilities for the maintenance, upbringing, education, protection of the rights and interests of minors.



25. For example, on 27 February 2023, in Perm, two teens were arrested and taken into police custody after they hung a banner on an overpass in support of the assassinated politician Boris Nemtsov.<sup>31</sup> As a result, the Commission on Juvenile Affairs drew up protocols against both teenagers on the charge of placing campaign materials outside specially designated areas (Article 6.8.1 of the local law on administrative offenses). The administrative case against one of the boys who took a picture of the banner was later discontinued due to the lack of evidence that he had participated in its set-up.<sup>32</sup> The police also issued protocols against the parents of the boys on improper performance of child-upbringing responsibilities, however, the Commission on Juvenile Affairs has later discontinued these cases.
26. In fact, the prosecution of parents under Article 5.35 of the CAO (improper performance of child-upbringing responsibilities) for the expressions of the dissenting views by their children has become a trend since 2022.<sup>33</sup> In Tulskeya region, a 14-year-old was detained<sup>34</sup> and forced to apologize on camera after performing a dance in front of the Eternal Flame (a memorabilia of the Great Patriotic War). The mother of the teen was charged with improper performance of child-upbringing responsibilities.
27. Finally, another 17 year old college student from Perm<sup>35</sup> is being prosecuted under Part 1 of Article 280 of the Criminal Code (public calls to extremism) for displaying a poster criticizing Vladimir Putin (the poster said “In 22 years of Putin’s rule the number of Russian people in Russia has decreased by 10 million. Get rid of the Tsar – Save Russia”).
28. The prosecution of minors for anti-war expressions, as well as any statement deemed to be in contradiction with official views shows that widespread violation of freedom of speech in Russia is not limited to adults and affects minors.

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<sup>31</sup> “Teenagers and their parents from Perm have been issued administrative protocols due to a performance in memory of Boris Nemtsov”, OVD-info, 3 March 2023, URL:

<https://ovd.info/express-news/2023/03/03/na-permskih-podrostkov-i-ih-roditeley-sostavili-protokoly-iz-za-akcii-v>

<sup>32</sup> “A criminal case against a teenager who took pictures of a performance on the anniversary of Nemtsov assassination is dismissed”, OVD-info, 27 April 2023, URL:

<https://ovd.info/express-news/2023/04/27/v-permi-prekratili-delo-protiv-podrostka-kotoryy-sfotografiroval-akciyu-v>

<sup>33</sup> “Three participants of an event in support of Boris Kagarlitsky are detained”, OVD-info, 31 July 2023 URL:

<https://ovd.info/express-news/2023/07/31/v-moskve-zaderzhali-treh-uchastnikov-akcii-v-podderzhku-borisa-kagarlickogo>

<sup>34</sup> “In Tulskeya region a teenager who performed a dance on the Eternal Flame is forced to apologize for the camera”, OVD-info, 3 November 2023, URL:

<https://ovd.info/express-news/2023/11/03/v-tulskoy-oblasti-zastavili-izvinyatsya-na-kameru-podrostka-stanceva-vshego>

<sup>35</sup> “A criminal case is initiated against a teenager from Perm for displaying a poster “Get rid of the Tsar - Save Russia”, OVD-info, 18 November 2023, URL:

<https://ovd.info/express-news/2023/11/18/protiv-podrostka-iz-permi-vozbudili-ugolovnoe-delo-iz-za-plakata-doloy>

## D. Access to information about LGBTQ+

29. In our last report, we provided information about a bill that would expand the ban on “propaganda of non-traditional sexual relationships” to people of all ages. This bill was adopted on 5 December 2022 and thus, the ban came into force. According to Article 6.21 of the CAO, for individuals, a fine of up to 100 thousand rubles is provided for such “propaganda”. If such actions concern children or are carried out using the Internet, the fine is doubled.
30. Moreover, Roskomnadzor had adopted criteria for blocking information as propaganda of LGBTQ+. In particular, information that convinces of the attractiveness of “non-traditional sexual relationships,” creates “a distorted idea of the social equivalence of traditional and non-traditional sexual relationships, preferences and attitudes” or information aimed at “building a positive attitude towards gender reassignment” considered as LGBTQ+ propaganda and should be blocked. This regulation entered into force on 1 September 2023 and is valid for 6 years.<sup>36</sup>
31. In addition, on 17 November 2023, the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation filed a lawsuit demanding that the “International Public Movement of LGBT people” be declared an “extremist organization” and banned in Russia.<sup>37</sup> The Ministry of Justice stated<sup>38</sup> that “various signs and manifestations of an extremist orientation, including incitement of social and religious hatred” have been identified in the activities of the “LGBT movement”. On 30 November 2023, the Supreme Court upheld this claim and recognized “International Public Movement of LGBT people” as “extremist”. This can lead to the criminalization of the LGBTQ+ community and people who identify as such, information about LGBTQ+, as well as the work of civil society organizations and activists in this field. This decision is discriminatory and violates a wide range of rights enshrined in the Convention.

## II. FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

32. Since mass protests of January 2021, the Russian government has been trying to minimize participation of children in unauthorized rallies and demonstrations by portraying them as a breeding ground for crime, strongly associated with marginalized groups.
33. In April 2023, the government adopted a Policy of children’s information security in the Russian Federation.<sup>39</sup> As a background for the Policy goals, the modern Internet is pictured as a channel for involvement of children and teenagers in all kinds of asocial,

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<sup>36</sup> The full text of the regulation in Russian: <https://rkn.gov.ru/news/rsoc/news74738.htm>

<sup>37</sup> “The Ministry of Justice invented the ‘international LGBT social movement’ - and is going to recognize it as extremist”, Meduza, 17 November 2023, URL: <https://meduza.io/cards/minyust-izobrel-nesuschestvuyuschee-mezhdunarodnoe-obschestvennoe-dvizhenie-lgbt-i-sobiraetsya-priznat-ego-ekstremistskim>

<sup>38</sup> “On the Suit by Ministry of Justice of Russia”, Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation official website, 17 November 2023, URL: <https://minjust.gov.ru/ru/events/49843/>

<sup>39</sup> “The Government adopted a Policy of children’s information security”, the Government of Russia official website, 5 May 2023, URL: <http://government.ru/news/48416/>

harmful, and destructive activities. Specifically, as a demonstration of the destructive nature of the digital platform, the Policy states that social networks and messengers are increasingly used “to involve children in participation in unauthorized public events (including protests)”.<sup>40</sup>

34. As indicated above, educational institutions, as primary platforms of influence over children and their parents, harbor most pro-government propaganda. In 2023, numerous schools, local ministries of education and administrations put up on their official web sites memos for parents on preventing minors from participating in unauthorized public events.<sup>41</sup> A summary of in-place administrative and criminal charges for both children participating in demonstrations and their parents ends with an identical statement: “Attention! Unauthorized public events may involve disruption of public order during which your children may also be harmed. We remind parents of the need to monitor the actions of the children, especially in crowded places.”
35. Some institutions go further as to build a strong connection between participation in unauthorized public events and extremist actions. For example, the Ministry of Education and Science of Smolenskaya region published a video called “Participation in unauthorized public events (protests), mass disorder” and cited it as material provided by the Prosecutor’s Office of the region.<sup>42</sup> A brief explanation that participation in such events does not meet children’s expectations (such as increasing one’s popularity, getting new subscribers and “likes” on social media), is followed by a statement of the Prosecutor’s Office, emphasizing that “holding unauthorized public events (including protests), mass disorder is a form of extremism”. However, this statement not only contradicts the legal framework of either extremism or laws on public events, but is also deliberately aimed at creating a negative image of one of the fundamental freedoms which in itself violates the right of children to peaceful assembly.
36. In addition, the authorities prosecute parents for allegedly involving children in participating in mass events. For example, Ekaterina Yadykova from the village Kitovo was charged with an administrative offense of violating the rules for conducting pickets when she took pictures of an ongoing picket near the municipal administration.<sup>43</sup> Since her underaged children were with her at the time and were also

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<sup>40</sup> Policy of children’s information security, Section I, p. 2, the Government of Russia official website, 5 May 2023, URL: <http://government.ru/news/48416/>

<sup>41</sup> “Safety Day: Prevention of children’s participation in unauthorized rallies”, MBEI Secondary school No. 12 of the city of Cheboksary official website, 31 May 2023, URL: <http://sosh12.citycheb.ru/>; “Prevention of crime”, Ministry of Education and Science of Smolenskaya region official website, visited 1 December 2023, URL: <https://edu.admin-smolensk.ru/deiatelnost/profilaktika-i-bezopasnost/profilaktika-prestupnosti/>; “Liability for the participation of minors in unauthorized rallies and unauthorized political events”, Kungur municipal district official website, visited 1 December 2023, URL:

[https://kungurregion.ru/okrug/dlya-zhiteley/pamyatki-dlya-zhiteley?PAGEN\\_2=2](https://kungurregion.ru/okrug/dlya-zhiteley/pamyatki-dlya-zhiteley?PAGEN_2=2)

<sup>42</sup> “Video: Participation in unauthorized public events (protests), mass disorder”, Ministry of Education and Science of Smolenskaya region official website, visited 1 December 2023, URL:

<https://edu.admin-smolensk.ru/files/863/prezentaciya-po-voprosu-uchastiya-v-massovyh-meropriyatiyah.mp4>

<sup>43</sup> “Two reports drawn up against a resident of the Ivanovo region because of a photo of a picket against a landfill”, OVD-Info, 28 October 2023, URL:

<https://ovd.info/express-news/2023/10/28/na-zhitelnicu-ivanovskoy-oblasti-sostavili-dva-protokola-iz-za-fotografii>

present in the said pictures, the police issued protocols for involvement of minors in participation in an unauthorized event (Article 20.2 Part 1.1 of the CAO) and improper performance of child-upbringing responsibilities (Article 5.35 of the CAO).

37. Consequently, the state engages various actors, including pro-governmental media, federal and municipal authorities, schools and universities, to disseminate its agenda, create a negative image of participation in unauthorized yet peaceful and internationally protected assemblies, to intimidate children and their parents into fearing such public events. As a result children do not receive adequate information on their rights, and cannot make informed decisions regarding their involvement in peaceful public events. Thus, Russian authorities violate Article 15 of the Convention.

### **III. RECOMMENDATIONS**

38. We kindly ask the Committee to recommend the Russian Federation:

- Stop state pro-war propaganda among minors at schools and other institutions and ensure children's access to wide alternative sources of information.
- Implement the guidelines to preserve historical integrity and provide best educational practices free from contemporary political propaganda.
- Abolish the practice of indiscriminate blocking of internet sources containing information on the Russian invasion of Ukraine and LGBTQ+ agenda.
- Overtune the Supreme Court's decision on recognition of the “LGBT movement” as extremism.
- Limit military recruitment advertising among minors and ensure protection of childhood.
- Stop persecutions and intimidation of children and their parents for expressing their anti-war views.
- Lift all the penalties imposed on parents for their children's exercise of freedom of expression and other rights.
- Abolish administrative and criminal liability of minors for expressing their anti-war and opposition views such as discrediting the use of the Russian armed forces.
- Stop criminalizing and vilifying participation in unauthorized assemblies, public events and marches, including through schools and inducing pressure on parents.
- Establish guidelines or training for police on dealing with minors during assemblies.
- Establish proper channels and policies to educate children on their universally protected rights and freedoms and to address children's rights violations.

- Set proper legislation and standards for functioning of the Commission on Juvenile Rights and Affairs, which could be helpful for protection against any type of discrimination and persecution of children.
- Provide public data on how many minors per year are prosecuted under the CAO, including for their anti-war activity.