

Parallel Information:
Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of indigenous minority peoples
of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation

CESCR 78th Session (08 September to 03 October 2025)

Reference: Sixth periodic report of the Russian Federation on the
implementation of the provisions of the International Covenant on
Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (E/C.12/RUS/7, 16 November
2022)

Submitted on behalf of the following organisations:



International Committee of Indigenous Peoples of Russia (ICIPR)

Address: Birkenweg 61, CH-3013 Bern

Website: <https://icipr.international> , E-Mail: icipr.info@gmail.com



Anti Discrimination Centre Memorial

Website: <https://www.adcmemorial.org>, E-Mail: info@adcmemorial.org



Institute for Ecology and Action Anthropology (INFOE)

Address: Melchiorstr. 3, 50670 Cologne, Germany

Website: <http://www.infoe.de>, E-Mail: infoe@infoe.de

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Key insights

- Gathering information for this report has been greatly hampered by the **climate of fear and intimidation in Russia**, that has aggravated substantially since the start of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Potential informants are threatened with lengthy jail sentences and many other forms of retaliation, especially after the State-party has declared 55 organisations “extremist” in Summer 2024.
- In the 7th periodic report, the State Party has again **not provided disaggregated data on the indigenous minority peoples of the North**. Further, state authorities have ceased publication of key data.
- Also unchanged from previous reporting periods, the federal government has again **failed to create any federal-level Territories of Traditional Nature Use (TTNU) or to confirm any of the more than 500 TTNU created by local or regional administrations**. Meanwhile, several amendments have further weakened the protective function of the TTNU, and courts and regional governments in various regions have taken steps to reduce the size of TTNU and remove areas which are key to indigenous peoples’ subsistence activities and culture from them, to the benefit of extractive industries and other third parties.
- In the wake of its aggressive war against Ukraine the State party has **severely constrained most remaining protections for indigenous territories and fast-tracked their extractive exploitation**. Instruments such as Civic Environmental Expert Reviews have become largely inaccessible
- A “register” or “list” of indigenous persons has been introduced by the State party which effectively limits resource rights (hunting, fishing) as well as most other rights of indigenous minority peoples to persons included in this register. Only a minority of members of indigenous peoples are included in this list. Inclusion is subject to a highly bureaucratic and error prone process.
- Russia’s aggressive and unprovoked war against Ukraine takes a **disproportionate demographic toll on indigenous minority peoples**, partly because of involuntary draft, partly because indigenous young men join the army because of rampant poverty.
- Negotiation processes described by the state party as “FPIC processes” have not in any way conformed to standard expectations towards such processes. In a climate of fear and intimidation, genuine FPIC is virtually impossible and will remain so until Russia returns to a democratic path of development.

Introduction

1. This submission focuses on the situation of the 41 indigenous minority¹ peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East, who number approximately 260,000 individuals. They inhabit around two-thirds of Russia's territory, from the Kola peninsula in the European North to the Chukchi peninsula on the Bering Strait. They are politically, economically and socially highly marginalised. Some two-thirds live in remote rural communities and remain dependent for their food supply and income on their traditional subsistence activities, such as fishing, hunting, gathering and nomadic reindeer herding.
2. The focus on indigenous *minority* peoples was chosen because these peoples are, due to their cultural distinctiveness and their subsistence-oriented ways of life the most affected by the destruction of their natural environment, on which they depend on for their collective survival. This devastation is mostly caused by extractive and other industries and the denial of their right to freely dispose of their natural wealth, guaranteed by Article 1 of the CESCR. This limitation does *not* constitute a recognition of the State party's policy of limiting recognition as indigenous to only 'small-numbered' peoples. In accordance with international practice and law, many ethnic groups both within Russia's internationally recognised borders as well as under illegal Russian occupation are collective rights-holders under international law and to varying degrees match the United Nations' working definition of 'Indigenous Peoples'. This includes Ukraine's largest indigenous people, the Crimean Tatars, who have publicly identified themselves as indigenous since Ukraine gained its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991.
3. While this report focuses on violations of economic, social and cultural rights of indigenous minority peoples, the root cause of these violations is increasingly found in violations of civil and political rights, including the criminalisation of indigenous peoples' organisations and the scrapping of their remaining participation rights preventing indigenous peoples and their allies from upholding and defending their rights. If anything, the current sharp deterioration of all human rights in the Russian Federation demonstrates their indivisibility in an exemplary manner. Violations in one area of rights virtually never remain isolated. Because of this causal link, some observations on the following pages necessarily venture into the territory of civil and political rights.
4. Already in the previous reporting cycle, recommendations addressed to the Russian government have not only not been implemented but instead led to even greater reprisals against indigenous human rights defenders whose cases were touched upon during the interactive dialogue and in the concluding observations. This forced some of them to go into exile in order to preserve the security and liberty of themselves and their families. Today, in the wake of the State party's aggressive war against Ukraine, the risk of reprisals has increased further significantly. We expect every person who is suspected of having contributed to the present report to become a target for the State party's intelligence service and law enforcement agencies. *Therefore this report is limited to information from publicly available sources, which have not cooperated with us in any way.* Regrettably, this means that many specific violations of economic, social and cultural will go unreported, precisely because of the State party's propensity and readiness to suppress essential rights and freedoms.

¹ A literal translation of the Russian word '*malochislennyyi*' would be "small-numbered". As this is not a common term in English, the word "minority" is used here.

Suppression of Civil Society and Knock-on Effects on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

5. Since the start of its unprovoked full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the suppression of civil society and the outlawing and criminalisation of any form of disagreement with the governing regime has brought any defence of economic, social and cultural rights of indigenous minority peoples to a complete standstill. One of the most severe steps in this direction was the outlawing of 55 organisations by means of ruling an entirely fictional organisation called “Anti-Russian Separatist Movement” to be extremist (Verdict of the constitutional court of 7 June 2024) followed by the publication of a list of 55 organisations by the ministry of Justice, which it henceforth considers “substructures” of this fictitious organisation.²

6. As noted by UN Special Rapporteur Mariana Katzarova, this suppression silences Indigenous voices and protest, particularly those focused on environmental harms. This action represents a systematic attack on Indigenous civil society. The list is topped by two groups representing indigenous minority peoples, *Aborigin Forum* (AF) and the *International Committee of Indigenous Peoples of Russia* (ICIPR)³. The latter was founded by indigenous activists who had formative roles in shaping Russia’s indigenous movement for decades but who were forced into exile by Russia’s increasingly authoritarian government. Neither group has ever promoted separatist agendas whatsoever, which makes their inclusion in this list completely unwarranted. Instead, they had been supportive of local indigenous communities involved in struggles to defend right to land, resources, territories, the right to food and other essential rights.

7. While these actions primarily violate civil and political rights (e.g. freedom of association), they directly impact on the exercise of self-determination and also severely hinder Indigenous Peoples' ability to advocate for and protect their economic, social, and cultural rights, particularly access to land, health, cultural expression, and education. Only fully state controlled indigenous organisations continue to operate in Russia, which cannot be expected to take effective action in support of indigenous communities threatened by expropriation, eviction, loss of their means of subsistence and other threats to their collective survival. The closure and criminalisation of Indigenous NGOs and advocacy networks thereby contributes directly to violations of **Articles 1, 2(1), 11, 12, and 15.**

The Committee should express grave concern at the systematic repression of Indigenous civil society organisations in the State party, including the criminalisation of groups defending economic, social and cultural rights. It should reaffirm that the State party remains bound under Article 2(1) of the ICESCR to take steps—individually and through international assistance and cooperation—towards the progressive realisation of these rights, including by enabling free and independent civil society participation. The dismantling of Indigenous civil society gravely undermines the protection of rights to self-determination, adequate food, health, education, and cultural participation (Articles 11, 12, and 15 ICESCR), and is incompatible with Articles 18, 19, and 20 of the UN Declaration on

² The appeal to UN with regards to including 55 indigenous organizations from Russia to the list of extremists and terrorists organizations, Indigenous Russia, 30 July 2024, <https://icipr.international/archives/1053>,

³ <https://icipr.international>

the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which affirm the rights of Indigenous Peoples to participate in decision-making, maintain their institutions, and express their political views freely. The Committee should urge the State party to immediately repeal legal and administrative measures that criminalise peaceful Indigenous advocacy and to reinstate the conditions necessary for Indigenous Peoples to effectively defend their collective rights.

Deterioration of procedural rights

8. In the wake of the State-party's aggressive war against Ukraine, some of the last remaining mechanisms for indigenous peoples to influence decisions concerning their ancestral territories have been virtually or entirely suspended, exposing indigenous peoples to a risk of even faster and more ruthless destruction of what has remained of their basis of existence. The government's efforts to silence dissenting voices have reached the remaining mechanisms of public environmental oversight. This undermines Indigenous Peoples' procedural rights under **Article 1(1)**, which guarantees their right to freely determine their economic and social development, as well as under **Article 15(1)(a)**, which protects the right to participate in cultural life. In the past, one of the few remaining mechanisms that Indigenous communities could still use to affect projects on their land was the Civic Environmental Expert Review (*obshchestvennaya ekologicheskaya ekspertiza*). The law allowed for such reviews, in which non-profit public organisations could participate, to be carried out alongside state environmental impact assessments.

9. The new version of the Law on Environmental Expert Reviews, adopted 25 December 2023 which entered into force in September 2024⁴ restricts the possibility of carrying out Civic Environmental Expert Reviews to organisations who have experts amongst their ranks who have undergone mandatory state certification and are included on Rosprirodnadzor's (Russian environmental watchdog) register. This provision allows state agencies to prevent participation of experts who have proven themselves to be "too independent", thus weakening yet another channel for Indigenous communities to defend their rights. This means that the Civic Environmental Expert Review has lost its core function. What used to be a public participatory process is now a closed-door process to which only select accredited 'civic experts' are admitted. Hurdles for such accreditation are reportedly so excessive as to make such accreditation for all practical purposes unattainable. This undermines the State's obligations under **Article 2(1)** to take steps toward the full realisation of Covenant rights using participatory processes, violates the principle of inclusive decision-making under **UNDRIP Article 18** and denies the possibility of informed consent.

10. This situation is further exacerbated by the fact that lawmakers want to leave it up to the regions to decide whether public hearings are required at all for any particular urban development project. This right was originally given to the regions in 2022 as a temporary measure. In December 2024, the State Duma Committee on Ownership, Land and Property Relations approved at the second reading amendments that make these norms indefinite. According to the text of the amendments to the Urban Planning Code (UPC), the regions of the Russian Federation will be able to decide if public hearings are required for the preparation of draft general plans, as well as for amendments

⁴Federal'nyi zakon "O vnesenii izmenenii v federal'nyi zakon "ob ekologicheskoi ekspertize" (Federal Law "On Amendments to the Federal Law 'On Environmental Expertise') of 25.12.2023 N 681-FZ (latest version)". 25 December 2023. https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_465619/

thereto. It is proposed that this same power be extended to territorial planning and land rezoning projects adopted by municipalities. In addition, entities may have the power to not hold public hearings when preparing draft land-use and development rules (LUP) and projects that provide for amendments thereto. Indigenous Peoples' right to participate in public hearings during environmental and ethnological expertise will thus be left to the discretion of regional and municipal officials.⁵ This is incompatible with the requirements of **UNDRIP Articles 19 and 32(2)**, which require States to consult and cooperate in good faith to obtain Indigenous Peoples' free, prior and informed consent before adopting measures that affect their lands or resources.

11. While legislative work is underway to curtail even further the mechanisms by which Indigenous Peoples could influence decision-making on issues affecting their lives, the scale and frequency of environmental pollution in Russia has been growing in recent years, in particular in Indigenous territories.⁶ The contrast between increasing environmental degradation and diminishing participatory spaces results in the violation of a range of rights protected in the CDESCR as for example reflected in **General Comment No. 14**, which affirms that access to environmental information and participation are essential components of the right to health (**Article 12 ICESCR**), particularly for vulnerable communities.

Question: How many representatives of indigenous minority peoples have been accredited as “public experts” to participate in civic ecological expert reviews as of July 2025?

The Committee should recommend that the State party restore and guarantee Indigenous Peoples' procedural rights which underpin their enjoyment of ESCRs by reinstating accessible, inclusive, and transparent mechanisms for environmental and territorial consultation. This includes removing unreasonable barriers to participation in Civic Environmental Expert Reviews and ensuring that Indigenous communities can freely choose their representatives, in line with Article 2(1), Article 12, and Article 15(1)(a) of the ICESCR, as well as Articles 18, 19, and 32(2) of UNDRIP. The State party should further ensure that public hearings and consultations are not subject to the discretion of local authorities but are mandatory for all decisions that may affect Indigenous lands, resources, or livelihoods.

Register of indigenous persons

12. In 2020, the State-party enacted legislation that introduces a “list” or “register” of Indigenous Persons. According to the legislation, the new system was to come into force by 7 February 2022.⁷

5 Maleva, Yulia: *Regiony smogut primat gradostroitelnye proekty bez obshchestvennykh slushanii* (“Regions will be able to adopt urban development projects without public hearings.”) *Vedomosti*, 12 December 2024.

<https://www.vedomosti.ru/society/articles/2024/12/12/1080872-regioni-smogut-primat-gradostroitelnie-proekti-bez-obschestvennih-slushanii>

6 Sitsevsky, Igor: *Kolichestvo sluchaev ekstremalnykh zagriaznenii rek v Rossii vyroslo v poltora raza* (“The number of cases of extreme river pollution in Russia has increased one and a half times.”) *Vedomosti*, 2 February 2024.

<https://www.vedomosti.ru/ecology/esg/articles/2024/02/02/1018179-kolichestvo-sluchaev-ekstremalnih-zagryaznenii-rek-rossii-viroslo>, Archived page:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20241206103636/https://www.vedomosti.ru/ecology/esg/articles/2024/02/02/1018179-kolichestvo-sluchaev-ekstremalnih-zagryaznenii-rek-rossii-viroslo>

7 Postanovlenie Pravitelstva RF ot 23.09.2020 N 1520 "Ob utverzhdenii Pravil vedeniia spiska litc, otnosiashchikhsia k korennyim malochislennym narodam Rossiiskoi Federatsii, predstavleniia soderzhashchikhsia v nem svedenii, a takzhe osushchestvliamogo v sviazi s ego vedeniem mezhvedomstvennogo vzaimodeistviia",

Ever since, access to many essential rights of indigenous peoples, in particular to land, territories and resources are being increasingly limited to persons included in said list. Inclusion does not happen automatically but requires a person to submit an application, prove their indigenous identity and have the application processed and approved by the authorities. At every step of the way, this process is overly bureaucratic, extremely slow and error ridden.

13. The list comes on top of the “unified register of indigenous small-numbered peoples of the Russian Federation”, that has been in existence since the year 2000⁸ as well as the list of places of traditional habitation and traditional economic activities of indigenous minority peoples and a unified register of traditional economic activities of indigenous minority peoples of the Russian Federation.⁹ The logic of these lists or registers is exclusionary. For instance, an indigenous person is not granted access to fishing rights if they live in a place not listed in the unified register of places of traditional settlement and economic activity for their respective ethnic group. That is, an Evenk person living in a territory that is officially listed as territory of traditional economic activity of the Koriak people will still be denied fishing rights, even though they are a member of an indigenous minority people and engage in a traditional type of economic activity.

14. With the new list of indigenous persons, another exclusionary criterion is added, giving the authorities yet another reason for withholding essential rights from indigenous persons, families and communities. Such withholding means that many indigenous persons, families and communities are getting legally classified as poachers, even though they are on their own ancestral land, engaging in the same subsistence activities as their ancestors have pursued for centuries. Furthermore, given that many of them live in virtually non-cash environments they have no other ways of feeding themselves, that is, to exercise their right to adequate food (**Article 11**) and are denied their means to subsist as a peoples (**Article 1**)

15. Available information suggests that the application procedure has a strong deterring effect. For instance, according to our information, which due to the failure of the State-party to publish data, we could not verify, only 1,200 of the 16,000 members of indigenous peoples of Kamchatka territory had submitted their applications by early 2025. Since approximately March, official data, especially, the number of applications received by the state authorities as well as the number of persons ultimately included in the list is no longer being publicly released. Officials cite ‘technical reasons’ without giving any further details. Therefore it can no longer be verified whether there is any progress in receiving and processing applications for inclusion in said list.

16. In June, at an extended meeting of the State Duma Committee on Nationalities, the Deputy Head of the Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs (FAEA), Anna Kotova, informed parliamentarians that over 70,000 representatives of Russia's small-numbered Indigenous Peoples had applied to be included, with almost 25,000 citizens actually being included on the list.¹⁰ This means that. two years after the adoption of the Federal Law “On Registration of Persons Belonging to Small-

https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_363124/f137c37d1b99e9cdc923c63d3039b9f12ae39049/

8 *Edinyi perechen' korennykh malochislennykh narodov Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, dated 24 March 2000, <https://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/znagi/zakon/zakon047.html>

9 *Rasporiazhenie Pravitelstva RF ot 08.05.2009 N 631-r (red. ot 06.05.2024) <Ob utverzhdenii perechnia mest traditsionnogo prozhivaniia i traditsionnoi khoziaistvennoi deiatelnosti korennykh malochislennykh narodov Rossiiskoi Federatsii i perechnia vidov traditsionnoi khoziaistvennoi deiatelnosti korennykh malochislennykh narodov Rossiiskoi Federatsii>*, dated 08.05.2009 https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_87690/beb7e7f131a7ff3656b71b7b30c30454fc1fdde7/

numbered Indigenous Peoples” and four months after the List of Indigenous Peoples entered into force on 7 February 2022, of the more than 300,000 members of Indigenous minority Peoples living in the Russian Federation, less than 25% had submitted their application to be included on the list and just 8,3 per cent were actually included on it. In a public notice, FAEA claimed a slightly higher number, 100,000.¹¹ No number was provided for rejected applications.

17. This means, the overwhelming majority of indigenous people, including at least two thirds of those who submitted applications, is still not included in the register. In many regions, essential rights, in particular rights to land, resources and territories are therefore being withheld from the majority of indigenous residents, hindering them from exercising in particular their right to adequate food/to feed themselves by means of traditional substance activities. The latter has been an issue ever since the breakup of the Soviet Union, however the list or register brings the threat to a whole new level.

18. One example is a draft fishing law will bind fishing rights to inclusion in the new register. Indigenous individuals who are not included, at the time of writing, 92 per cent of members of indigenous minority peoples, are therefore stripped of the possibility to legally feed themselves in accordance with their customary practice and needs. This law which ironically is represented as an attempt to simplify fishing for indigenous peoples has successfully passed the first reading in the State дума in February 2024.¹² Fish is the number one staple food for most indigenous minority peoples, lack of fish in their diet can cause severe health issues, especially in children. Therefore, this constitutes a violation of the rights to adequate food (**Article 11**) and to the highest attainable standard of health (**Article 12**).

19. Besides the fact that exclusion from the list leads to widespread violations of individual rights, the system of registration also constitutes a serious violation of the **collective rights of Indigenous Peoples**, especially their right to **self-determination** under **Article 1** and **UNDRIP Article 3**. Article 1 of the ICESCR affirms that “all peoples have the right of self-determination,” including the right to “freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development” and to “freely dispose of their natural wealth and resources” and that “in no case may a people be deprived of its own means of subsistence.” This collective right cannot be meaningfully exercised if the state arrogates to itself the power to define membership in Indigenous communities.

20. By requiring individuals to apply for recognition and subjecting their identity to an opaque, bureaucratic approval process controlled entirely by state authorities, the Russian Federation denies Indigenous Peoples the right to **determine their own membership**, in violation of **Article 33(1) of UNDRIP**, which states that “Indigenous peoples have the right to determine their own identity or membership in accordance with their customs and traditions.” The register thereby fragments Indigenous communities into atomized individuals who must navigate the administrative apparatus

10 *Bolee 70 tys. rossiian podali zaiavlenie v federal'nyi spisok korennykh narodov*. TASS, 9 June 2022, <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/14872671>

11 *Severnyi gorod: V spisok korennykh malochislennykh narodov Rossii vkluchena 100-tysyachnaia zaiavka* (The 100,000th application has been included in the list of indigenous peoples of Russia), 28 June 2024 <https://news.sngorilsk.ru/2025/06/28/v-spisok-korennykh-malochislennykh-narodov-rossii-vklyuchena-100-tysyachnaya-zayavka/>

12 Anna Krasko: *Nerestovyi zapret: komu, gde i kak nelzia lovit rybu v 2024 godu*, Novye Izvestiia, 11 April 2024, <https://newizv.ru/news/2024-04-11/nerestovyi-zapret-komu-gde-i-kak-nelzya-lovit-rybu-v-2024-godu-429142>

of the state alone and on unequal footing, rather than being treated as collective rights-holders entitled to recognition and protection under international law.

21. Furthermore, this administrative system undermines **Article 9 of UNDRIP**, which guarantees that Indigenous individuals and communities have the right to belong to an Indigenous nation in accordance with that nation's customs. It effectively nullifies the collective nature of Indigenous identity and governance by externalising decisions that should rest with Indigenous peoples themselves. As a result, entire communities are deprived of meaningful access to traditional lands, resources, and subsistence practices — all of which are inextricably linked to their cultural survival and well-being and their right to food, among other ESCR rights. In doing so, the register functions as a tool of **systemic exclusion and dispossession**, incompatible with the state's obligations under the ICESCR and international human rights standards.

Suggested question: What are the current numbers of applications received for inclusion into the list of persons belonging to the indigenous minority peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East? What is the current number of persons included into the list?

The Committee should urge the State party to abolish the centralised state-controlled register of Indigenous persons and instead adopt community-based mechanisms that recognise Indigenous Peoples' collective right to determine their own membership, in accordance with Article 33(1) of UNDRIP. The current system undermines the right to self-determination (Article 1 ICESCR; Article 3 UNDRIP) and results in systemic denial of rights to land, subsistence, food (Article 11 ICESCR), and health (Article 12) and their cultural rights (Article 15). Any identification mechanism affecting access to Indigenous rights must be designed and implemented with the full participation and consent of Indigenous communities, and must not create additional barriers to the exercise of their economic, social, and cultural rights.

Review of compliance with the 2017 Concluding Observations (E/C12/RUS/CO/6)

Reprisals against indigenous human rights defenders

22. In paragraph 15 (e) of the concluding observations, the Committee recommended that the state party “*provide groups negatively affected by the extractive activities, including the Shor people, with fair and adequate remedies and reparation.*” Furthermore, the Committee recalled the CERD's related recommendations of August 2017 to the State party contained in CERD/C/RUS/CO/23-24, paras. 23 and 26. Unfortunately, instead of complying with any of these recommendations, the State party increased its harassment against local indigenous human rights defenders, who eventually had to choose exile for the sake of safety and security of themselves and their children. Their case was mentioned repeatedly in the annual report on reprisals of the Secretary General, which only led to more attempts of intimidation by representatives of the Russian government against said defenders during sessions of the UN Expert Mechanism on the

Rights of Indigenous Peoples.¹³ The State party has further utilised travel bans for preventing long-time allies of indigenous peoples from entering the country.¹⁴

23. Another prominent case of reprisals against indigenous rights defenders is the case of the late Khanty reindeer herder Sergei Kechimov spent years resisting oil development near Lake Imlor, a sacred site for his people. He was criminally prosecuted multiple times, including under Article 318 of the Russian Criminal Code, and was subjected to intimidation and displacement by Surgutneftegaz oil company. Despite his efforts to defend his ancestral territory and way of life, he died in 2024 under pressure and legal harassment.¹⁵

24. Lake Imlor holds profound cultural and spiritual significance for the Khanty people, serving both as a sacred site of ancestral worship and as a vital source of fish, contributing directly to their traditional subsistence economy. The degradation of this lake due to oil extraction, and the criminalization of those who sought to protect it, constitute not only violations of cultural rights but also of the right to adequate food (**Article 11**), as the lake was integral to local food security.¹⁶ Kechimov's persecution and death thus have far-reaching impacts, weakening the Khanty community's ability to sustain their traditional livelihoods, enjoy their cultural heritage (**Article 15**), and maintain access to essential natural resources (**Article 12, right to health and environment**). These actions also implicate **UNDRIP Article 8, 26 and 29**, which prohibit forced assimilation and call for the protection of Indigenous lands and resources.

The Committee should urge the State party to immediately cease all acts of intimidation and reprisals against Indigenous human rights defenders and to ensure their protection in accordance with Article 2(1) ICESCR. Such actions undermine the rights to food (Art. 11), health (Art. 12), and cultural life (Art. 15), and violate UNDRIP Articles 8, 9, and 29. The State party should provide effective redress and restitution to those affected, including those forced into exile.

Lack of disaggregated data

25. Despite the Committee's long-standing concern about the socio-economic marginalisation of Indigenous Peoples, the Russian Federation's seventh periodic report and its replies to the list of issues contain **no reference whatsoever to disaggregated data** concerning Indigenous Peoples. This absence is a serious obstacle to assessing whether the Covenant rights are being effectively realised for Indigenous communities, particularly in relation to **Articles 11 (adequate standard of living), 12 (right to health), and 13 (right to education)** of the Covenant.

26. The Committee has made clear, including in **General Comment No. 20 (para. 41)**, that collecting **disaggregated data is essential** for identifying structural discrimination and ensuring that marginalised groups such as Indigenous Peoples are not left behind. Furthermore, **Article 2(1) of ICESCR** obliges States to use all appropriate means, including legislative and administrative

¹³ See A/HRC/54/61, paras 100, 123, 124,

¹⁴ One such case describe here: Michelle Lagrand: *German activist fights Russia's 50-year ban in high-stakes UN rights case*, Geneva Solutions, 24 Sept 2024, <https://genevasolutions.news/human-rights/german-activist-fights-russia-s-50-year-ban-in-high-stakes-un-rights-case>, accessed 1 August 2025

¹⁵ Indigenous Russia: V KhMAO ot raka umer poslednii zashchitnik sviashchennogo dlia khantov ozera, 30 April 2024 <https://indigenous-russia.com/archives/37925>

¹⁶ Alec Luhn: *The reindeer herder struggling to take on oil excavators in Siberia*, The Guardian, 17 Mar 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/17/reindeer-herder-oil-excavators-siberia>

measures, to progressively realise Covenant rights for all — a task that is impossible without adequate data collection.

27. In addition, **Article 21(2) of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)** requires States to take effective measures to improve Indigenous Peoples' economic and social conditions. This clearly implies the need for systematic data to detect disparities and monitor improvements. **Article 31 of UNDRIP** also affirms the right of Indigenous Peoples to maintain and develop their own data and knowledge systems — a right that presupposes state facilitation, not obstruction.

28. The lack of disaggregated data is especially alarming in light of **growing anecdotal evidence that Indigenous men are disproportionately affected by military mobilisation and casualties in the war against Ukraine**. Without ethnic or regional breakdowns of conscription, casualty, or mortality data, it is impossible to assess the extent to which these communities are bearing an unequal burden in the conflict. In this context, the absence of data serves to **obscure potentially disproportionate harms** and prevent appropriate safeguards, further compounding the marginalization of Indigenous Peoples.

The Committee should urge the State Party to collect and provide disaggregated data on the indigenous minority peoples, as was stipulated in the action plan implementing the Outline for the sustainable development of the indigenous minority peoples of the North for 2009-2011¹⁷

Land Rights / Territories of Traditional Nature Use

29. In 2001, the Russian Federation adopted the Federal law 'On territories of traditional nature use of indigenous minority peoples of the Russian Federation'.¹⁸ This is the only mechanism in Russian legislation that to some extent recognises indigenous peoples' rights to their ancestral lands. However, it does not acknowledge their traditional *ownership* it merely grants use rights. In its original version, it also limited business activities on these territories, but these protections have through many subsequent modifications been slowly eroded away. Furthermore, the law has been designed as a framework law, relying for its implementation on by-laws and regulations that have never been adopted. Therefore it has largely stayed aspirational.

30. According to this law, "territories of traditional nature use" (TTNU) can be established in places of traditional residence and economic activities of indigenous peoples by decision of the federal, regional or local authorities on the basis of proposals from persons belonging to indigenous peoples and their communities. Since its adoption a quarter of a century ago, the federal authorities have

17 The action plan for the outline (in the current periodic report translated as "roadmap") stipulates that a system of indicators measuring life quality of indigenous small-numbered peoples should be developed and incorporated into the state statistics system; however, while the Ministry of Regional Development commissioned a study for the development of such indicators, no further action was taken, leaving this item of the action plan uncompleted. In its report published in late 2011, the Federal Accounts Chamber (schetnaya palata) identifies this failure as one of the root causes of the limited effect of the socio-economic measures taken by the Ministry of Regional Development to support indigenous peoples. Federal Accounts Chamber of the Russian Federation: *Otchet o rezultatakh kontrolnogo meropriyatiya*

"Proverka ispolzovaniia budzhetnykh sredstv, napravlennykh na podderzhku ekonomicheskogo i sotsialnogo razvitiya korennykh malochislennykh narodov Severa, Sibiri i Dalnego Vostoka Rossiiskoi Federatsii za 2009-2010 gody", pp 82-83 http://www.ach.gov.ru/userfiles/bulletins/2012-07-05-buleten_doc_files-fl-2246.pdf

18 *Federalnyi zakon "O territoriiakh traditsionnogo prirodopolzovaniia korennykh malochislennykh narodov Severa, Sibiri i Dalnego Vostoka Rossiiskoi Federatsii" ot 07.05.2001 N 49-FZ*
https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_31497/

failed to establish or confirm *any* TTNU.¹⁹ Local and regional authorities have, established about 600 TTNU, none of which have been confirmed by the federal government as required by the Land Code of the Russian Federation.²⁰ More than 400 of them are former *rodovye ugodiia* (“*clan lands*”/“*tribal lands*”), in Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug, which had been in existence since 1994 and were later renamed TTNU, soon after the adoption of the Federal law. On most of them, according to our sources, oil or gas extraction is happening, so that their only effect, if any, is that their residents can expect some monetary compensation for the devastation of the natural environment they depend on for their existence.

31. Unfortunately, federal authorities ignore regional and local TTNU status while issuing licenses to extractive industries. This is evidenced by numerous cases that have occurred since the adoption of the Federal Law, including in Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug, the Republics of Sakha (Yakutia) and Khakassia, and many other regions. The sad irony of such precedents is that the legal status of TTNU is not revoked, and yet industrial development within TTNU destroys the environmental conditions necessary for traditional subsistence strategies and the cultural and physical survival of the concerned indigenous peoples. The amount and kind of compensation required by law is in no way adequate to compensate for the damage caused. This is at least partly due to the the lack of any meaningful consultation mechanisms. A federal law on ethnological expert reviews, in favour of which indigenous peoples have been advocating for many years has never been adopted²¹ and a new regulation restricts participation in public environmental expert reviews to select representatives certified by the Ministry of Natural Resources (see section “Deterioration of procedural rights”). Therefore, affected indigenous communities and families are virtually excluded from any consultations on both the projects themselves and possible measures to mitigate and compensate for the environmental damage. In practice, all decisions are the result of closed door negotiations between extractive businesses and regional administrations, which may involve individual representatives of the so-called Councils of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East, whose composition is fully determined by the administrations themselves.

32. Because they lack “federal significance” (“*federalnoe zachenie*”), all currently existing TTNU in Russia have no guaranteed legal status and no effective protection from being dissolved or downsized, as often happens. Another problem is that federal land, which includes all land belonging to the “forest fund”, cannot be included in regional or local TTNU. These federal lands are, however, often precisely those lands which are the basis of indigenous communities’ livelihood.

33. In 2016, a TTNU was established to protect the ancestral lands of the Shor people in Khakassia. However, beginning in 2017, the federal government issued gold mining licenses within this area without consulting the affected communities. Mining operations led to severe deforestation, destruction of cedar forests, and pollution of key water sources used for fishing and drinking.

19 The approval of a model TTNU on the Bikin River in Primorye, announced in 2008 in Russia’s 19th Periodic Report to CERD, was never completed, compare CERD/C/RUS/19, Para 52: “In partnership with the Association of Small Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Russian Far East, the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences has prepared draft regulations on the “Bikin” model federal area of traditional resource use for small indigenous peoples in Primorsky Territory, which will be submitted to the Government for approval.”

20 The land code states: “The boundaries of all TTNU are to be determined by the Government of the Russian Federation” See *Zemel’ny kodeks Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, (Land code of the Russian Federation), 25 October 2001, Paragraph 97, Item 6: “5. http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_33773/

21 In 2010, the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) has enacted a regional law on ethnological expert reviews <https://base.garant.ru/26716249/>, yet an analogous federal law for the whole country was never adopted.

Despite sustained protests, federal authorities proceeded with licensing and failed to acknowledge the regional TTNU designation. In October 2022, a compensation plan was rubber-stamped by the fully administration-controlled Council of Indigenous Minority Peoples. Furthermore, the Government of Khakassia on 20 June 2022 introduced an amendment to the legislation that had established the TTNU in 2016, according to which, the main condition for admitting companies to the TTNU is that there is a compensation agreement signed by the company, the regional administration and the Council of Small-Numbered Indigenous Peoples (a body whose composition is controlled by the administration). The amendment was adopted by the administration of Khakassia without any consultation with the Indigenous Peoples affected.²² These actions are in violation of **Article 1(2)**, denying of the right of the Shor people to freely dispose of their natural wealth and resources, **Article 11**: Undermining of the right to an adequate standard of living, including access to clean water, traditional foods, and housing, **Article 15**: Erosion of the right to take part in cultural life, as traditional subsistence practices became unviable and contravenes **UNDRIP Articles 25–29**: Denial of land-related spiritual and material rights and the right to redress.

The Committee should call on the State party to urgently adopt and implement a robust legal and institutional framework that ensures effective federal-level recognition, protection, and enforcement of Territories of Traditional Nature Use (TTNU), including those already established at the regional or local level. This framework must guarantee the effective protection of Indigenous Peoples’ ancestral lands from industrial encroachment and ensure meaningful participation of Indigenous communities in all decisions affecting their territories, in accordance with the principles of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC). As two-thirds of Indigenous persons live in rural areas and rely heavily on traditional subsistence activities, failure to protect TTNU undermines their right to adequate food (Art. 11 ICESCR), their right to self-determination and control over natural resources (Art. 1(2) ICESCR), and their right to take part in cultural life (Art. 15 ICESCR), as well as Articles 25–29 and 32 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Destruction and Displacement of Indigenous Communities: The Case of Kazas

34. In the Kemerovo region, Indigenous Shor and Teleut communities have been subjected to forced displacement and environmental destruction due to large-scale coal, gold, and manganese mining. One emblematic case is the destruction of the Shor village of Kazas. The coal company “Yuzhnaya,” part of the “Sibuglemt” holding had been pressuring residents to sell their properties. Between 2013 and 2014, the houses of those who refused fell victim to arson attacks. Activists and residents resisting displacement were harassed. The village has never been rehabilitated, nor have residents received compensation for their lost land and homes.

35. This situation represents a continuing violation of the right to an adequate standard of living (**Article 11 ICESCR**), the right to participate in cultural life (**Article 15**), and the right to enjoy a healthy environment (**Article 12, as interpreted by CESCR General Comment No. 14**). It also

²² V Khakasii sostoialos zasedanie Soveta predstavitelei korennykh malochislennykh narodov. 27 October 2022, <https://r-19.ru/news/obshchestvo/137539/>

contravenes **UNDRIP Articles 10 and 28**, which affirm the rights of Indigenous Peoples not to be forcibly removed from their lands and to redress for lands and resources taken without consent.

36. The CESCR, in its previous concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of the Russian Federation (E/C.12/RUS/CO/6, para. 14), expressed concern over the forced eviction of the residents of Kazas and called on the State party to ensure effective consultation with the affected communities and provide adequate redress. Likewise, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), in its 2017 concluding observations (CERD/C/RUS/CO/23-24, paras. 20–21), urged the State party to investigate the events in Kazas, ensure redress to the affected Shor people, and adopt legislation ensuring the right to free, prior and informed consent (FPIC).

37. Instead of complying with either of these recommendations, the State party stepped up reprisals against local indigenous rights defenders, eventually forcing them into exile, this was followed by repeated acts of intimidation during sessions of UN mandates against said defenders. (see annual reports on reprisals A/HRC/42/30, para 87, A/HRC/54/64, paras 103-105, 123-124). This means that in effect, the local indigenous community has been left without anyone to defend and uphold their rights.

Disproportionate indigenous war casualties

38. The Russian Federation has been widely criticised for its policy of disproportionately targeting Indigenous men for military conscription during its war against Ukraine. Yet, Russia fails to publish or collect disaggregated data that would allow for an accurate assessment of the impact. This violates **Article 2(1)**, which guarantees non-discriminatory access to Covenant rights, and **Article 1(2)**, as the depletion of Indigenous communities through conscription undermines their right to freely pursue their economic and social development and to dispose of their natural wealth and resources.

39. Indigenous young men are frequently driven to enlist in the army due to systemic poverty, despite the extractive wealth generated in their home regions. Punitive measures such as excessive fines for so-called “illegal” subsistence activities—including fishing and hunting on ancestral lands, in the absence of a hard to obtain license —create cycles of debt and coercion. Military service often becomes the only option to avoid further prosecution or economic ruin. These dynamics reflect violations of **Article 6 (right to gain a living by work freely chosen)**, **Article 7 (just and favourable conditions of work)**, and **Article 11 (adequate standard of living)** of the ICESCR, as well as **UNDRIP Article 20(1)**, which affirms Indigenous Peoples’ right to be secure in their means of subsistence and development.

40. Independent observers have reported high casualties among Indigenous men in regions such as the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug, where the Indigenous Nenets make up around 10 per cent of the population yet allegedly account for more than half of the region’s confirmed war casualties. Such disproportionate losses, allegedly risk the demographic collapse of several Indigenous Peoples and violate **Articles 12 and 1(2) (self-determination and subsistence)**, and **UNDRIP Article 7(2)**, which prohibits acts of violence, including forced removal or targeting of individuals from Indigenous communities under any pretext.²³

²³ Dmitry Berezhkov: *Silenced Victims: Indigenous Peoples and Russia’s Mobilization Lies*. Indigenous Russia, 8 March 2025, <https://indigenous-russia.com/archives/41988>

Lack of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC)

41. Despite repeated recommendations by CERD and other bodies, Russia continues to authorise extractive and industrial projects on Indigenous lands without obtaining free, prior and informed consent (FPIC). Consultations, where held, are typically superficial, unrepresentative, and controlled by regional authorities. This violates the principles of **Article 1 (self-determination), 11 (standard of living), and 15 (cultural rights)** and directly contravenes **UNDRIP Articles 3, 19 and 32**. Indigenous communities continue to lose their land and resources without legal remedy or consultation. While Russia frequently *claims* to respect FPIC, a closer look shows that current practice is deeply flawed and purely performative. According to our information, there is to date no documented case, where indigenous peoples have been given the option to grant or withhold their consent without pressure and where such as decision would have been respected.

42. The most recent example is from settlement of Tukhard. In 2024, Norilsk Nickel initiated a process it described as Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) concerning the planned resettlement of Indigenous residents from the settlement of Tukhard. However, affected persons were presented with only **three pre-determined options**: to relocate to a planned new settlement (“New Tukhard”) 1.5 km away, to other Indigenous settlements in the region, or to the city of Dudinka. **No opportunity was given for the community to participate in designing alternatives** or to collectively influence the outcome. As a result, the community was involuntarily divided, with families relocated to separate destinations. Meanwhile, the promised “New Tukhard” has not yet been constructed, leaving the community without its previously established home base or clear prospects for re-establishing traditional ways of life.

43. This process falls far short of international FPIC standards, which require meaningful, collective participation and consent, not merely acceptance of externally imposed options. It violates procedural rights protected under the **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)**, including **Article 1(1): the right of peoples to freely determine their economic and social development, 15: the right to participate in cultural life and maintain a spiritual and material connection to traditional lands**, and **General Comment No. 21 (para. 55)**, which affirms the need for Indigenous consent before decisions affecting their cultural survival and land use are made. It also violates **UNDRIP Articles 10 and 32(2)**, which affirm that Indigenous Peoples shall not be relocated without their free, prior and informed consent, and that States must consult and cooperate in good faith to obtain such consent before approving projects affecting their lands and resources.

The Committee should remind the State party of its obligation under Article 1(1) of the ICESCR to respect the right of Indigenous Peoples to freely determine their economic, social and cultural development, and under Article 15 to participate in cultural life, including through the preservation of traditional land-based practices. The State party must ensure that all projects affecting Indigenous lands or territories are subject to a genuinely Indigenous-led FPIC process, in compliance with UNDRIP Articles 10, 19 and 32(2). Such processes must be free from coercion, allow communities to develop and propose alternatives, and include the right to withhold consent. Granting FPIC must be a mandatory precondition for any extractive or industrial activity affecting Indigenous lands, as affirmed in CESCR General Comment No. 21 (para. 55).