



Russia Reform Monitor No. 2286

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Related Categories: Islamic Extremism; Corruption; Europe; Russia; Ukraine

THE SICK MAN OF EUROPE, REVISITED

The Russian Federation continues to struggle with dramatically sub-par health standards. "Not a single federal subject in Russia [Eds: oblasts, krais, etc.] has met the basic health care standards established six years ago, with some failing to meet even half," notes Paul Goble in his *Window on Eurasia* blog. Goble cites a new report from the country's Accounting Chamber, which found that between 2016 and 2017, infant mortality rose in 12 of Russia's 83 regions - and in some, like Adygeya and Nizhny Novgorod, did so by double digits. "Moreover, in many places, the Audit Chamber found that there are not even standards for treating common illnesses or ensuring that those who come down with them are provided with necessary medicines," Goble notes. This, coupled with "serious underfunding of health care," has strained the Russian social safety net and "is having a severely negative impact on the health, well-being and mortality of Russians in many parts of the country." (*Window on Eurasia*, January 3, 2019)

WADA PROBE RESUMES

The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) is making a second attempt to continue its investigation into Russia's state-sponsored doping program. The investigation was temporarily derailed in late December when Moscow claimed that WADA's IT equipment – capable of extracting data from wiped hard drives – was not certified under Russian law, forcing the WADA team to call off its originally scheduled trip. As a result, the Russian Anti-Doping Agency (RUSADA) missed a December 31st deadline to hand over its data to the investigators, which could mean a reinstatement of the ban preventing Russia from hosting international sporting events. However, WADA's critics, including the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency, do not put much faith in the likelihood of further punitive measures, accusing the organization of being too soft on Russia throughout the scandal and thereby destroying the credibility of the global anti-doping system. (London *Guardian*, January 7, 2019)

MOSCOW LEANS ON BRITISH MEDIA

In the last two weeks of January, Russia's state media regulator, ROSKOMNADZOR, plans to undertake a compliance review of the BBC's Russian broadcasting license. In a public statement announcing the review, ROSKOMNADZOR officials declared that BBC's decision to include direct quotations from Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in its online content was equivalent to "broadcast[ing] the ideological attitudes of international terrorist organizations" and potentially violating Russia's anti-extremism legislation. However, the review likely constitutes a form of Kremlin retaliation: in recent years (and particularly in the aftermath of the Salisbury Novichok attack) British regulator Ofcom has frequently complained that RT's coverage in Britain regularly fails media impartiality rules. (BBC, January 10, 2019)

A BLOODY CELEBRATION

In the week-long holiday spanning New Year's Day and Orthodox Christmas on January 8th, Russian authorities regularly chart a spike in traffic deaths and murders. This year was no exception: the Russian national traffic police reported 1,700 traffic accidents, resulting in 227 fatalities during this time period. The murder rate also doubles during the holiday week, with an average 250 homicides on New Year's Eve alone. "Any widely celebrated holiday becomes a kind of 'Petri dish' for violence, Russian criminology expert Vladimir Kudryavtsev opines. (*The Moscow Times*, January 10, 2019)

THE KREMLIN'S WARNING TO KYIV

Ukraine's government is pursuing a dangerous geopolitical course that could lead to a fragmentation of the country and the loss of its sovereignty, a top Russian official has warned in what is being seen as a thinly-veiled threat of a fresh escalation in the half-decade old conflict between the two countries. "[T]he Kiev authorities are doing everything to split Ukraine, implementing the West's scenario to break Ukraine away from Russia, while ignoring the interests of its own people," Nikolai Patrushev, the Secretary of Russia's powerful Security Council, told *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* in a recent interview. "The continuation of such policy by the Kiev authorities can contribute to the loss of Ukraine's statehood."

"The population of the western regions [of Ukraine] does not trust natives of southeast considering them to be supporters of the 'Russian world.' In southern and eastern regions, Kiev's power is ensured, to a large extent, at the expense of moral and physical pressure exerted on the local population by radical nationalists," he elaborated. "Because of that, anti-government sentiment in the aforementioned regions is mounting, with the public rift exacerbated by the inter-church standoff." (Moscow Itar-TASS, January 15, 2019)