



## RUSSIA REFORM MONITOR

The American Foreign Policy Council's Review of  
Russian Government Actions and U.S. Policy

# Russia Reform Monitor No. 2491

October 11, 2021 **Ilan I. Berman, Kate Flaherty**

**Related Categories:** Democracy and Governance; Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; NATO; Resource Security; Europe; Russia

### ACTIVIST EXPOSES PRISON TORTURE

Human rights defender Vladimir Osechkin and his team revealed last week that they had obtained videos of prison inmates being tortured by agents of both the Federal Security Service (FSB) and the Federal Penitentiary Service (FSIN). Osechkin provocatively wrote on Facebook that the videos are "proof" that the agents are not only actively using torture to force inmate compliance, but intensifying the "torture machine" culture of snitching and lying on the part of the inmates in order to avoid the violence. Shortly after Osechkin released the videos, Andrei Ivanov, spokesman for the Prosecutor-General's Office, announced that a preliminary investigation has been launched, and that the facilities in question will be checked. Regardless of the charges, Saratov chairman Denis Sobolev alleged that despite several visits to the prison hospitals shown in the videos, "none of the inmates there complained about anything." (*Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, October 5, 2021)

### THE KREMLIN AND RUSSIA'S CARBON FOOTPRINT

Experts from *Carbon Brief*, a climate analytics website, have ranked Russia as third in the world for annual carbon emissions. Contributing nearly 7% of the world's carbon dioxide emissions since 1850, Russia ranks just behind China (11%) and the U.S. (20%). For the first time, *Carbon Brief's* analysis included emissions from land use and forestry, targeting two key sectors of Russia's economy that contribute to almost a third of Russia's total CO2 emissions. *Carbon Brief's* analysis comes just three weeks before the COP26 climate conference, a critical summit in the eyes of climate scientists to prevent increasing global temperatures. Although Russian government representatives will be in attendance at the summit, they have yet to commit to any new major climate reforms. However, there have been talks of a 2060 goal of carbon neutrality on the part of the Kremlin - a pledge that would cut net carbon dioxide emissions by almost 80% between 2019 and 2050. (*The Moscow Times*, October 5, 2021; *Bloomberg*, October 5, 2021)

### RUSSIAN DIPLOMATS IN U.S. THREATENED WITH EXPULSION

Senators Bob Menendez (D-NJ), Mark Warner (D-VA), Jim Risch (R-ID), and Marco Rubio (R-FL) have advised the White House to expel up to 300 Russian diplomats if Moscow does not issue more visas for Americans to represent Washington in that country. An expulsion on this scale would mark a sharp escalation of embassy staffing-related tensions between Moscow and Washington. Back in August, the Kremlin forced the U.S. embassy in Moscow to fire nearly 200 employees and dozens of contractors, leaving it with only about 100 diplomats in Russia, as compared to Russia's approximately 400 in the United States. The bipartisan group of senators wrote to President Biden that the "disproportionality in diplomatic representation is unacceptable," and that - should Moscow not provide more visas - the Administration must take measures to level the diplomatic playing field. (Reuters, October 5, 2021)

### DETERRING RUSSIA: THE VIEW FROM WARSAW

Officials in Poland are pressing NATO for closer cooperation in order to prevent Russian expansionism. Speaking at the Warsaw Security Forum earlier this month, Polish President Andrzej Duda argued that closer cooperation between the Alliance and the countries of Eastern Europe was necessary to thwart mounting Russian aggression. "We need a strong partnership between NATO and the European Union that ensures a synergy of both organizations," Duda said. "Russia is expanding its military presence and it endangers NATO not only from the east, but also from the north and south."

Other Polish statesmen have struck the same chord. "There is an ongoing development of the military potential of the Russian Federation," Pawel Soloch, head of Poland's National Security Bureau, said at the same forum. "On our part, this creates a need for a further adaptation of NATO's capacities, also with the use of the instruments held by the European Union. Naturally, NATO has a significantly larger potential than Russia, but on the alliance's borders, the forces accumulated by Russia give a tactical, and, for a defined time, also an operational advantage to this country." In light of Russia's evolving strategy, Soloch argued, Europe "needs to have a single strategy that merges the potential of NATO and the European Union." (*Defense News*, October 5, 2021)

## **RUSSIA'S DANGEROUS ENERGY LEVERAGE OVER EUROPE**

Europe is now largely at the mercy of Moscow's manipulation of the energy market, analysts are warning, and the Kremlin could use this enhanced leverage to force the certification of its recently-completed Nord Stream II natural gas pipeline. The energy route, construction of which was recently completed over U.S. objections, still awaits formal certification from the German government to begin operations - and fears are now rising that, as temperatures plummet and continental energy prices rise, Russia could use its preferential position to force approval of the project by Berlin. "Europe has now left itself hostage to Russia over energy supplies," Timothy Ash of Bluebay Asset Management has written. It is "crystal clear that Russia has Europe (the EU and U.K.) in an energy headlock, and Europe (and the U.K.) are too weak to call it out and do anything about it... Europe is cowering as it fears [that] as it heads into winter Russia will further turn the screws (of energy pipelines off) and allow it to freeze until it gets its way and NS2 is certified." (*CNBC*, October 7, 2021)