



RUSSIA REFORM MONITOR

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

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THE PENALTIES FOR FAILING TO FIGHT

Russian President Vladimir Putin's has signed into law a recent bill put forward by the State Duma raising the penalties for wartime acts like desertion and "voluntary" surrender. The changes "introduce the concepts of 'mobilization, martial law and wartime'" into the Russian Criminal Code for the first time, *The Moscow Times* reports. They also levy stiff punishments for a failure to comply with mobilization orders – with desertion garnering a decade behind bars and "voluntary" surrender to an enemy warranting 15 years in prison. (*The Moscow Times*, September 24, 2022)

PUTIN'S UNWILLING RECRUITS

Discontent among Russia's various ethnic groups is growing as a result of President Putin's mobilization order, which many minorities feel disproportionately targets them. For instance, many ethnic Mongolians in the Buryatia region of Russia received enlistment papers despite having medical exemptions, or not having prior military experience. In response to the order, Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj, the former president of Mongolia and current head of the World Mongol Federation, made several scathing remarks, stating that "The Buryat Mongols, Tuva Mongols, and Kalmyk Mongols have... been used as nothing more than cannon fodder," and called for Putin to end the war in Ukraine. As it becomes more difficult and costly to leave Russia, Elbegdorj ensured that the people trying to escape the draft would be met with "a warm welcome" if they traveled to Mongolia.

Nor are Russia's Mongols the only minorities being targeted by the Kremlin's recruitment drive. The country's Muslim minority is likewise bearing the brunt of Russia's war effort (and suffering disproportionate casualties as a result). "[T]he majority of those mobilized there are representatives of the Muslim world," Oleg Danilov, the Secretary of Ukraine's National Security and Defense Council, has observed. "It so happened that they were born on the territory of the Russian Federation, especially in Tatarstan, Dagestan, and other Muslim communities." (Reuters, September 25, 2022; UKRINFORM, September 29, 2022)

HELSINKI TURNS A COLD SHOULDER

As Russians continue to flee in droves in order to dodge conscription, the Finnish government has joined its European counterparts in closing its border to Russian tourists. The number of Russians who have crossed the Finnish border reached 17,000 by the time of the closure, an 80% increase when compared to the week prior. The closure will not, however, affect entry for "work, studies, and family visits," the Finnish government said. Finnish Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto has explained that "the entry of Russian citizens in tourist purposes into Finland endangers Finland's international relations." The decision was made after Helsinki engaged in a dialogue with several nearby allies, including Ukraine, signaling that the Finnish government – a NATO aspirant – may be seeking to align its policies with those adopted by existing NATO member nations. The policy position maintained by the Baltic states and Poland has been that "Russian tourists posed a national security threat." (Reuters, September 29, 2022)

A POST-MOBILIZATION EXODUS...

Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine, and his increasingly desperate efforts to shore up his war machine, is causing population flight on a mass scale. According to *Forbes Russia*, nearly a million Russians have fled the country since the Russian President's September 21st announcement of a "partial mobilization" of reservists. Official estimates from the Kremlin put the figure of those who have fled at 600,000-700,000 people, but private estimates put the number at significantly higher. Of these, 200,000 are estimated to have headed to neighboring Kazakhstan, and it is unknown how many – if any – have plans to return to Russia once the current conflict has abated. (*Forbes Russia*, October 4, 2022)

...PROMPTS THE KREMLIN TO SHORE UP RUSSIA'S CREATIVE CLASS

These stark figures have led the Russian government to attempt some remedial measures. President Putin has reportedly signed an executive order exempting graduate and night students who are attending accredited higher education institutions from being called up as part of the Kremlin's Ukraine war drive. The order broadens an earlier, September edict exempting current undergraduate university students from military service. (*Meduza*, October 5, 2022)