



## RUSSIA REFORM MONITOR

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

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**Related Categories:** Arms Control and Proliferation; Democracy and Governance; Economic Sanctions; Europe Military; Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; International Economics and Trade; Public Diplomacy and Information Operations; Terrorism; Warfare; Border Security; Gaza; Israel; Russia; Ukraine

### A COLD SHOULDER FOR MOSCOW AT TURTLE BAY

In what amounts to a blow to the Kremlin's prestige, Russia failed to secure a seat on the UN Human Rights Council earlier this month. A majority of UN General Assembly nations voted against including Russia in the international body, reflecting continued support for international efforts to isolate Russia as a result of its conduct in its war against Ukraine. Instead, the two Council seats allocated to Eastern European countries went to Albania and Bulgaria, both supporters of Ukraine. Moscow still managed to secure 83 votes in its favor, however. Russia was suspended from the Council back in 2021, and its recent attempt to regain a seat reflected an effort to leverage war fatigue and the diverging interests of countries in the international community. (*New York Times*, October 10, 2023)

### UKRAINE AND ISRAEL: A COMMON FIGHT

In the aftermath of the horrific October 7th terror campaign perpetrated by Hamas, officials in Kyiv have been quick to express solidarity with Israel, and to take pains to link the Jewish state's impending fight with their own. For instance, Ukraine's intelligence chief, Kyrylo Budanov, recently told the *Ukrainian Pravda* newspaper that, in addition to Iran, Russia has been complicit in helping to expand the threat posed by Hamas in recent years. "We know for a fact that trophy weapons from Ukraine were transferred by the Russians to the Hamas group," Budanov said. For his part, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has signaled his interest in paying a solidarity visit to Israel – an offer which the Israeli government has demurred for now, as it gears up for a ground offensive in the Gaza Strip. (*New York Times*, October 12, 2023)

[EDITORS' NOTE: Ukraine's positioning reflects an attempt to navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by the unfolding Israel-Hamas war. On the one hand, policymakers in Kyiv are justifiably worried that the conflict will complicate continued Western – specifically American – support for ongoing military aid. On the other, Ukraine now has an opportunity to forge closer links to Israel, which up until now had been slow to provide full support to Kyiv in its fight against Russian aggression for fear of upsetting relations with the Kremlin and thereby complicating its own security calculations.]

### MORE PRESSURE ON TEAM NAVALNY

The Kremlin campaign against imprisoned opposition activist Alexei Navalny and his team continues. Russian authorities have detained three lawyers who represented Navalny and conducted raids on their homes on allegations of "participating in extremist activities." Navalny himself has been imprisoned since 2021 on charges widely regarded as politically motivated. He is currently serving a 19-year jail sentence in a maximum-security prison on extremism charges. The detained lawyers, Vadim Kobzev, Igor Sergunin, and Alexey Liptser, have been taken into custody to await trial – something that won't happen until at least December 13th. (*The Moscow Times*, October 14, 2023)

### A NEW SOURCE OF MILITARY CONSCRIPTS

More than a year and a half since its start, Russia's war against Ukraine remains a deeply unpopular venture, something that has presented the Kremlin with ongoing problems as it seeks to maintain the requisite level of manpower for ongoing operations. The Kremlin has tried to address this in different ways, most conspicuously through a "partial mobilization" that conscripted 300,000 Russians into military service – and led scores more to flee the country. Now, the Putin government is trying a new tactic: namely, drafting migrant workers to fill its manpower needs.

"Since mid-August, police across Russia have rounded up hundreds of migrant workers from Central Asia in a wave of raids that appear to mainly target men who recently received Russian citizenship but didn't complete their compulsory military registration," *Meduza* reports. "According to media reports, police have handed out military summonses on the spot and forcibly taken men to enlistment offices. There, they face the risk of joining the many migrants from Central Asia already working in the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine or fighting on the frontlines." (*Meduza*, September 22, 2023)

## **HOW EUROPEAN FIRMS ARE CIRCUMVENTING SANCTIONS ON RUSSIA**

European firms eager to continue to do business in Russia have found novel ways to skirt Western sanctions and maintain commerce with Moscow, a new study by the Ukrainian Security & Cooperation Center, a Kyiv think tank, has found. While Western sanctions have been effective in curtailing a significant degree of Russian commerce, and their long-term effects are still unfolding, the Kremlin has managed to mitigate at least some of the pain by building a "scheme of procurement" to acquire sanctioned goods – specifically proscribed military materiel - "through the re-export of the components by intermediaries from third countries that have not adopted sanctions." This creates a policy headache – and a legal gray area. "Companies that cooperate with the Russian military-industrial complex do not legally violate any restrictions, but in fact help to circumvent them," the report lays out. (USCC, October 17, 2023)