



Country Profile: Russia

The breakup of the USSR in 1991 left the Russian Federation with ethnic conflicts in many of its Oblasts (provinces.) Many provinces in the North Caucasus area were historically autonomous republics that are now provinces in a federation in which they are ethnic minorities, with governors nominated by Moscow.

Peoples of the Caucasus region face xenophobia within the Russian Federation. The Russian government has acknowledged a growing number of Neo-Nazi youth gangs that violently target dark skinned citizens and religious minorities, mainly Muslims, such as Chechens, Ingush, Bashkirs, and Turkic peoples. A growing "Russia for Russians" nationalist movement is challenging Prime Minister Putin's United Russia party, driven by forces that would exclude non-Christian, non-Russian peoples.

Prime Minister Putin recently attributed growing ethnic polarization in Russia to the historical development of the Russian Empire. Putin argues that the "ethnicity problem" is a result of imperial Russia being neither a "mono-ethnic state nor a U.S style melting-pot where almost everyone was at one point an immigrant." (Putin)

People from the North Caucasus and ethnic Africans face serious danger in the larger cities of Russia. 38 Africans were murdered and 377 brutally injured by gangs in 2010. Along with growing racism in the country, the Russian Federation also has had increasing religious intolerance against Muslims and gender discrimination in Muslim provinces. This problem was most violently expressed during the independence wars in Chechnya.

Under the Leadership of Ramzan Kadyrov, Chechen rebel turned Russian loyalist, freedom of religion is virtually impossible. Kadyrov has noted that his "republic would be better off if it were ruled by Sharia law". Against Russian law, Kadyrov has started campaigns to punish those in Chechnya who do not abide by Sharia law. Kadyrov has also been known to openly endorse honor killings and polygamy. In Chechnya, women have been targeted and attacked for not adhering to Muslim traditional dress. Law enforcement has started shooting women with paintball guns who choose to walk in public without a headscarf or with short sleeves.

While Russia continues to violate the civil rights of its own citizens, Russia continues to fund the military regime in Syria. Syria is Russia's last stronghold in the Arab world. Their naval base in Tartus is the operating base for Russia's \$1.5 billion arms trade in Syria (Trenin). Russia has vetoed any UN Security Council Resolution to halt the killing in Syria.

One of the most important risk factors for genocide is the presence of an exclusionary ideology. Another is past genocide perpetrated with impunity against the victim groups, by Stalin under the USSR. A third is an authoritarian political system. Although progress has been made toward democracy, Russia is still effectively a one-party, authoritarian police state. The growth of populist movements with exclusionary ideologies against non-Russian, Muslim minorities is a sign of growing Polarization.

Russia is at Stage 5: Polarization.