



Inimõiguste Instituudi aastakonverents, 10. detsembril 2011

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WHAT ARE THE CAUSES OF VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE POST-SOVIET SPACE?

After the collapse of communism, power in most countries of the post-Soviet space was taken by either 'moderate' communists or the 'moderate' opposition.

In some of those countries, first secretaries of local communist parties took the rule. Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, the Caucasian countries and the countries of Central Asia are examples. Elsewhere, the moderate opposition made a deal with the communist regime, e.g. in Poland. The opposition forces who demanded decommunisation were removed to the edge of the political scene and marginalised.

Guarantees of immunity were offered to leading members of communist parties and secret services. They escaped punishment for crimes committed during the 45 years of their rule and participated in the first and most important phase of privatisation. There were only two countries, Germany and Czechia, who prevented by law the participation in political and a social life of former top party officials and operatives of the communist repressive apparatus. In 1990, anticommunist and national opposition in the Baltic countries, Poland, Ukraine and the Caucasus came forward with an international appeal, urging to bring communist criminals to justice. This appeal had no response. An initiative named 'Nuremberg-2' was flatly rejected by moderate opposition in post-Soviet countries. Communism triumphed once again, while functionaries of former communist parties and repressive apparatus made a metamorphosis and established new parties and organisations. In Poland, former communists now call themselves Social Democrats; under this name they enter the Polish parliament and play a role in the country's politics.

As regards Russia, immediately after the collapse of the USSR it started new military adventures. It unleashed a war in Abkhazia and was a party in the so-called Transnistria conflict. All this culminated in the savage aggression against Chechnia and occupation of the country that proclaimed her independence. The Chechen war is still lasting. It has killed tens of thousands peaceful residents; thousands are missing. Many people are being kept in the so-called 'filtration camps' until now. In the streets of Chechnia and Ingushetia, people disappear without a trace. A flow of refugees to European countries has reached dozens of thousands.

The world turns a blind eye to this lawless practice, considering Russia an equal partner of the civilized community. Moreover, Russia keeps continuing the



Soviet-era practice of masterminding and conducting assassinations against opponents of the Kremlin's regime. Opponents are murdered at home (like Anna Politkovskaya, Natalya Estemirova, Zarema Sadulayeva, Alik Dzhabrailov and others) and abroad. Everyone knows about the assassinations by FSB agents of President of the Chechen Republic Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev on February 13, 2004 in Qatar, of Alexander Litvinenko on November 23, 2006 in London, of Chechen dissident Umar Israilov on January 13, 2009 in Vienna. It is the same pattern as in the times when Soviet special units murdered prominent figures of the anti-Soviet emigration. The most known victims of those times were Bandera, Konovalko, Petlyura and Ramishvili.

The latest war in Georgia involved an armed aggression of Russia against a neighbour state, which arises the issue of large-scale violations of human rights. Once again, dozens of thousand refugees fled the Tskhinvali region. They left their homes, lands and property, and have no prospects for return. Russia has achieved the goal: it established puppet 'states' of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Somewhat later, and sure at a 'request' by Sukhumi and Tskhinvali, Russia will generously annex these parts of Georgia.

In 2000, an organisation named the Center for Journalism in Extreme Situations was established in Russia. Its activities include monitoring violations of the rights of journalists and mass media in Russia and CIS countries. My friend Oleg Panfilov was a co-founder and the first director of that Center. Recently he was forced to leave Russia because the Kremlin deemed him a dangerously independent public figure. All over Russia, the Center for Journalism in Extreme Situations had been disclosing and investigating infringements by authorities on the rights of journalists, murders of journalists on political grounds, cases of assault and battery against editors of regional media. Oleg Panfilov has now acquired Georgian citizenship. A most indicative case that reveals the prevailing public morals in Russia regarding human rights has been rape and murder by Colonel Yuri Budanov of Elza Kungayeva, a Chechen girl. When that gangster was sentenced by a Russian court to a symbolic term, the general public in Russian nearly unanimously advocated for Budanov and made him a hero. This resulted with premature release of Budanov from prison.

Violation of human rights of refugees is massive in my country, Poland. As a member of the Chechen Information Centre since 1995 I was interested in learning about the procedures of granting refuge. The Department of Migration and Refugee Affairs in Warsaw frequently refuses to grant the refugee status to Chechens who had left their homeland to escape torture and persecution by the FSB. There have been many similar cases. Without the refugee status, however, it is rather troublesome to stay in a foreign country, and there is a risk of extradition to the country the refugee had escaped from. By contrast, Magomed Yusupov, an official representative of Ramzan Kadyrov's regime, stays in Warsaw and was paid social benefits by the Polish state. Poland has accepted many such Chechens who, posing as 'refugees', conduct destructive work among



actual refugees dispersed all over Poland. These agents easily acquire the refugee status. The Department of Migration and Refugee Affairs usually does not refuse their applications. By so doing we increase the number of Russian agents in our country with our own hands. I find this strange.

I would also mention the violation of human rights of former Polish dissidents who took part in the struggle against communism with the Solidarity, the Fighting Solidarity and other patriotic movements. After the transformation of the country, started in 1989, veterans of these movements can hardly make ends meet, while their former adversaries, officials of the Polish United Workers' Party and staff employees and secret agents of the security apparatus, have very decent pensions today. Some former dissidents have even committed suicide because of the tragic social conditions. I know personally about three such cases. All this is the result of failing to carry out decommunisation. Criminals not only did avoid holding account but have no reason to complain on their social conditions, while patriots live on verge of poverty. This is a paradox of history.

Everybody knows about the situation with human rights in Belarus. Arrests, searches, prosecution, sentences. But few people know that since 2005 the Lukashenka's regime pursues the course to destroy the Union of Poles in Belarus. There are more than 300 thousand Poles in Belarus (according to official data), and they are represented by this organisation. In 2005 this union held elections of its board of governors. The winner was Andželika Borys, while Józef Łucznik, supporter of the Lukashenka's regime, lost the elections. The authorities of Belarus declared the congress and the elections null and void; some months later they arranged an alternative congress that elected Łucznik. Since then, the authorities are refusing to recognise the organisation led by Andželika Borys, and leaders of the Union of Poles are regularly searched and arrested by the KGB. Currently there are two Polish organisations under the same name: one of them is a megaphone of the authorities and the other is considered by authorities as illegal. Likewise, the right of Poles to their language and culture is violated by the Lukashenka's regime. The number of schools where children of Poles can study their native language is diminishing. Regrettably, it is not only the Polish language that is under threat but the Belarus language as well. In fact, both languages become victims of sheer russification.