

## **Russia: Withdrawal from the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture Puts Detainees at Grave Risk**

We, the United against Torture Consortium and Crew against Torture, express deep concern at the Russian Federation's recent decision to formally withdraw from the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Other Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (the "Convention"), ratified by Russia in 1998. This decision follows Russia's withdrawal from the European Convention on Human Rights in September 2022 and represents yet another deliberate dismantling of international human rights safeguards.

Torture is already widespread and systematic in the Russian Federation. It is routinely perpetrated by law enforcement, penitentiary authorities, and the Federal Security Service (FSB). The Global Torture Index assesses the risk of torture in Russia as very high. Reports from international human rights bodies, civil society organisations, including UATC members and partners, and survivors consistently document patterns of beatings, electric shocks, asphyxiation, sexual violence, and prolonged isolation used to extract confessions or punish dissent. Conditions in many facilities may amount to cruel and inhuman treatment in themselves, with severe overcrowding, lack of medical care, and routine denial of contact with lawyers or families. Political prisoners, human rights defenders, Ukrainian detainees, and other vulnerable groups – including ethnic minorities, migrants, LGBTQ+ persons – face heightened risks of torture and reprisals.

The withdrawal from the Convention is not simply a procedural matter. It ends the only system of independent, unannounced international visits to detention facilities in Russia. Without oversight, torture is more likely to remain undetected, unpunished, and unchallenged. By closing its doors to monitors, Russia is deliberately turning detention facilities into "black holes" where abuses can continue unchecked. It is a stark rejection of the repeated warnings and recommendations of international bodies and a signal that Russia intends to further entrench the institutionalisation of torture and impunity.

We remind the Russian authorities that the state's legal obligations to prevent and end torture remain binding. The prohibition of torture is a *jus cogens* norm, which remains universally applicable. Moreover, Russia continues to be a party to the United Nations Convention against Torture (UNCAT), which absolutely prohibits torture, requires comprehensive preventive measures, effective investigation and prosecution, and protection and redress for victims.

We call for urgent action to prevent a complete collapse of safeguards, calling on:

- **The Government of the Russian Federation** to immediately reconsider its denunciation of the Convention and restore cooperation with the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture, including granting access for oversight bodies without delay and ensuring protection for witnesses, torture survivors, monitors, and lawyers.
- **All states parties to regional and international torture prevention treaties** to publicly express concern regarding Russia's withdrawal, reaffirm their commitment to these mechanisms and support their continued implementation.

- **International bodies** (Council of Europe, UN Special Procedures, UN treaty bodies) to continue monitoring and reporting on the situation of torture and ill-treatment in Russia, including in occupied territories.
- **Civil society organisations and media** to continue to document and expose torture and ill-treatment, and ensure protection for witnesses, survivors, monitors, and lawyers at risk of reprisals.