

JOIN THE CAMPAIGN OF ADC MEMORIAL #ALLJOBS4ALLWOMEN 8/03/2017-8/03/2018!

March 8 is the day of working women's rights, a fact frequently forgotten in former Soviet countries, where the fight for worker's rights and equality between men and women has been supplanted by flowers, gifts, and treats for "dear ladies."

March 8, 2017 is also the one-hundredth anniversary of the Revolution, which gave all women in the former Russian Empire rights equal to those of men "regardless of gender." The Empire and the Union are long gone, and former Soviet countries have been independent for 25 years now, but many of them have yet to move beyond gender stereotypes and restrictions against women enshrined in the law and based on these stereotypes. A number of countries ban women from certain professions and types of work. These bans, which copy Soviet laws, figure directly in labor laws, which means that women who aspire to find work that is interesting to them are unable to do so if anything about the profession they have chosen has been determined to be "harmful or dangerous for women."

In reality, millions of women have been deprived of the opportunity to fulfill their dreams in interesting and well-paid professions like a number of positions on sea and river vessels and cargo transport, operating electrical trains, working in a mine or the metro, many types of construction and industrial activities, and steeplejack work. An absurd example is the ban existing in a dozen countries that prohibits women from driving intercity passenger buses carrying over 14 passengers (if there are less than 14 passengers, women are allowed to drive, but if there are 15 passengers, than a man has to do it. But why?...)

When women have tried to assert their rights in courts by appealing denials to work in their specializations on river vessels or the metro, RF high courts have rejected their appeals, citing the in-no-way-proven "harmfulness" and even difficulty of the jobs, which



require extreme focus and precision. (Are we to understand that women cannot work quickly and precisely? That they are more stupid than men?!)

A favorite argument of jurists opposed to equality between men and women is "protecting the reproductive health of women," as if working underground, in the air, or in noisy conditions can somehow harm reproductive health. This crafty argument is meant to prove that the ban on profession is not discrimination, but a manifestation of concern about motherhood, and that it cannot be considered a violation of equality (and we can say, for example, that maternity leave is a form of such protection, and no one even maintains that this is discrimination, but a ban on types of activities for all women is another matter entirely).

There are three main objections to statements of concern about women's reproduction:

1. There is no scientific evidence of harm to women's health for virtually any of these "banned types of activities" – why is installation on the ground not harmful, but installation in the air is? Why can women work as crane

operators on dry land, but not on water platforms? The UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women requested that the RF to submit scientific evidence that it is harmful for women to work as a helmsperson-motorist (when it was considering the case of Svetlana Medvedeva, who complained of being denied employment in her specialization with a river fleet – in this case an entire body of restrictions on the labor rights of women was found to be discrimination), but the RF government did not submit any evidence.

2. Women have the right to decide for themselves what is more important to them – being a mother (i.e. realize the reproductive function that the government is so concerned about), or being a successful professional, going out to sea, working in the air, or doing other interesting things, being successful, and attaining career growth. If there is a risk to their reproductive functions, women should be warned about them. In many cases, risks should be taken into account when planning pregnancy, but this should not lead to blanket bans on certain types of activities.

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3. Bans violate the principle of equal rights for men and women – there are no bans connected with risks to the reproductive health of men (even though their reproductive functions could be harmed in a number of professions, like atomic scientists on nuclear submarines). Moreover, men are left the choice of being professionals or engaging in reproduction. The state does not intrude on the choices men make, but it does on the choices women make (in the form of a legislative ban!), which is direct discrimination.

The goal of the campaign All Jobs for All Women is to achieve the cancellation of lists of types of jobs and professions banned to women in all Eastern European and Central Asian countries

Women must be granted equal access to all types of activities and work, professional fulfillment, and good pay.

All women have the right to good jobs corresponding to their qualifications, education, interests, and life plans. Restrictions concerning appearance, age, and “beauty” are as inappropriate in most professions as gender bans (exceptions are modeling and some forms of advertising). For example, the requirement that only slim young beauties can be hired as flight attendants on passenger planes is the same kind of stereotype as the notion that a woman’s duty is to give birth and not work on a ship or in the metro.

Many countries still have similar patriarchal views of the “suitability” of women, when a candidate’s external features are considered more important than her professional qualities (whether there’s a requirement for external “beauty” and “style,” or, on the contrary, if a stylish appearance is seen as interfering with work).

All women have the right to work in their specializations. Their gender, appearance, and “reproductive function” should not impact their opportunity for employment in any direct or indirect way.

PARTICIPANTS AND



Women can work in any field and carry out any task – not worse than the men, in the past a lot of jobs were given only to men, we – women had to make our way in politics, in business, in art. We proved that we can be successful in anything and give impact to everything. Indeed all jobs have to be accessible to all women without discrimination and patriarchal stereotypes.

*Rita Suszmuth,
former President of Bundestag,
President of ADC Memorial*



Everyone should have the right to choose any profession they want, regardless of their gender. Other than severe health risks during pregnancy – a risk limited to a certain time frame – there are no valid reasons for excluding women from certain jobs.

*Cia Rinne,
poet and artist (Germany)*



Only women should decide for themselves where to work and what professions to choose. The role of the government is only to create comfort and safe conditions at working places so both women and men could joyfully and fully embrace all the benefits of a chosen sphere of work.

*Aliaksandra Dzikan,
Her Rights Center (Belarus)*



I support the All Jobs for All Women campaign and am convinced that women can work in any field, build a successful career, and benefit any company. Bans on professions and types of work not only limit Ukrainian women’s opportunities for self-fulfillment, but also cause the state to lose enormous potential.

*Yevgeniya Lutsneko,
director, Center for Social
and Gender Studies (Ukraine)*

SUPPORTERS OF THE CAMPAIGN



I support the Campaign All Jobs for All Women because I believe that women have the right to choose their jobs and build their careers freely and that all legal provisions that prevent gender equality in employment should be repealed.

*Olga Manole,
Human Rights Program Coordinator,
Promo-LEX Association / Moldova*



I fully support and join the campaign All jobs for all women.

Harmful, discriminative records linked to ban a list of the professions, that is the vestige of the Soviet Union and contradicts the principles of equality and CEDAW Convention must be immediately restricted in the countries which still are facing this discriminative practice.

It is crucial not only to eradicate those records, as well as states should endeavor to ensure protection and preserve of women's labor rights in accordance to their legislation and constitution.

*Elene Rusetskaia Director
Women's Information Center*



On the one hand, the list of professions banned for women is supposedly meant to protect and look out for women by invoking their lesser physical abilities in comparison to men. On the other hand, if we look at the reality of life in a permanent economic crisis, where social protection institutions are simply not functioning and where each day is struggle to survive, then we see that a large number of women have the hardest and lowest-paying jobs. This includes in mines, where they are not officially listed as miners and supposedly work in offices on the surface. This means that female miners do not receive social protection, do not receive the same pensions as male miners, and, in the event of an accident, their relatives do not receive insurance, benefits, subsidies, or state support. Like many other women, female miners received reduced "envelope" wages, and if they are not paid, they cannot demand justice from state authorities. They are "invisible" while performing the most complicated, dirty work.

*Maria Kulikovskaya,
artist, architect, curator, auctioneer*



The list of professions banned for women in Russia is an echo of the totalitarian Soviet system, where the state believed it was entitled to make decisions for people by hiding behind "noble" purposes. If professions on this list are harmful, then the state's responsibility is to inform people of possible risks and consequences, while the right to choose lies with us.

*Tatyana Chistova,
film director (Russia)*



I am not what I am allowed to be,
I am what I choose to become.

*Yevgeniya Ivanova, expert
at the Civil Society Institute (Armenia)*

SUPPORT OF THE CAMPAIGN IN THE EU: MEETINGS IN THE FRENCH MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

On March 8-11, 2017 participants of the campaign from different countries of Eastern Europe took part in a number of advocacy meetings taking place in the European Union (among them were Yevgenia Ivanova from Armenia, Alexandra Dikan from Belarus, Elena Rusetskaya from Georgia, Olga Manole from Moldova, Yevgenia Lutsenko from Ukraine).

Many political figures and activists of the women's movement expressed their support of the campaign. Scarves with the emblem of the campaign became one of the symbols of recognition of the importance of giving all women access to all professions.

On March 8, 2017 the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Paris mayor's office invited the organizers and participants of the campaign for the round table discussion, where the situation of women's rights in different countries was discussed. The discussion was attended by representatives of international human rights organizations, including FIDH and Frontline Defenders, as well as many journalists, experts and researchers. Representatives of the French Foreign Ministry Florence Manjean, Director for Continental Europe, and Francois Croquette,



Participants of the round table discussion in the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Evguenia Ivanova, Julia Ouahnon, Coline Maestracci, Maria Chichtchenkova (Frontline Defenders), Alexandra Dikan, Florent Schaeffer (CCFD Terre Solidaire), Thomas Fansten (in charge of human rights and gender equality, general delegation for international relations at the Paris City hall), Evgenia Lutsenko, Nadejda Kutepova, Olga Abramenko, Francois Croquette Human Rights Ambassador, Olga Manole, Veronique Oge (Organization ACER-Russie), Elene Rusetskaya, Olga Prokopieva (Russie Liberte), Florence Mangin, Stefania Koulaeva, Sacha Koulaeva, Johanna Bouye



Stephania Kulaeva, ADC «Memorial», and other conference speakers with the French president Francois Hollande

Ambassador for Human Rights, pointed out that the problem of discrimination and violation of women's rights should become a necessary and constant point of the agenda in the dialogue between the countries of the European Union and countries associated with the EU or those participating in the Eastern Partnership.

In the evening of March 8 All Jobs for All Women campaign was presented at a conference of the French Foreign Ministry on women's rights, where prominent women's rights advocates and French politicians spoke (including the French president Francois Hollande and ministers of foreign affairs and family, childhood and women's rights).

SUPPORT OF THE CAMPAIGN IN THE EU: MEETING IN THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

On March 9-10, 2017 a number of important meetings of the campaign participants took place in Brussels. The campaign found support from the staff of the European Commission and the members of the European Parliament, who were very interested in the problem of occupations banned for women in the post-Soviet countries.

Rebecca Harms, co-chair of the Group of the Greens/Free European Alliance of the European Parliament, spoke about the need to include this topic in the EU parliamentary talks and other forms of dialogue with countries, where such prohibitions exist. According to MEP Ana Gomes, it would be useful to hold special hearings in the European Parliament on this issue.



Meeting in European Commission: Olga Manole, Elene Rusetskaya, Hanna Jahns (Advisor to European Commissioner Johannes Hahn, in charge of Relations with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Relations cooperation in the East, Eastern Partnership), Stefania Kulaeva, Evgenia Lutsenko, Coline Maestracci, Alexandra Dikan, Evgenia Ivanova.



Meeting in European Parliament: Coline Maestracci, Inessa Sakhno, Elene Rusetskaya, Evgenia Lutsenko, Olga Manole, Stefania Koulaeva, Rebecca Harms (President of the Delegation to the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly, Member of the Delegation to the EU-Ukraine Parliamentary Association Committee, Substitute member to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Substitute Member to the Delegation to the EU-Russia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee), Olga Abramenko, Alexandra Dikan, Evgenia Ivanova.

MEP Ana Gomes (left) and Olga Abramenko of ADC «Memorial»



CEDAW UN RECOMMENDS UKRAINE TO REVIEW THE BAN ON CERTAIN PROFESSIONS

Press release of ADC Memorial and the Center of Social and Gender Research (Kyiv)

The UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) has published its concluding observations on the Ukraine after considering the country's 8th report. The Committee also reviewed the shadow report Ukrainian Women: Caught Between New Challenges and Long-Standing Discrimination, submitted by Anti-Discrimination Centre Memorial with the support of the Centre for Social and Gender Research (Kiev).

Concerns expressed in the shadow report has seen CEDAW issue important recommendations to Ukraine to improve anti-discriminative legislation and ensure non-discrimination and the inclusion to women belonging to vulnerable groups: namely, internally displaced women and girls, LGBTI, Roma, and women affected by migration.

One of the main aims of ADC Memorial was to draw CEDAW's attention to discrimination faced by all women in Ukraine regarding access to over 450 professions deemed as hazardous for their reproductive health. CEDAW concluded that the list of occupations that are prohibited for women, which covers a wide range of occupations and branches where there is no objective justification for the prohibition, limits women's economic opportunities, as well as their access to power in a number of areas, in particular in the military forces, agriculture and industry.

ADC Memorial welcomes the Committee's recommendation to: Review the list of prohibited occupations and sectors and promote and facilitate women's access to previously prohibited occupations by improving working conditions and occupational health and safety.

The CEDAW has already made such recommendations to other countries, acknowledging that lists of banned professions for women are discriminatory. In 2016 similar recommendations were issued to Armenia and Belarus.

Earlier last year in its verdict in a case against Russia the CEDAW stated that, "the adoption of a list of 456 occupations and 38 branches of industry contradicts the State party's obligations under the Convention because it treats men and women differently, it in no way promotes the employment of women and it is based on discriminatory stereotypes".

In order to support implementation of these important recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and to insure the gender equality in labour rights, ADC Memorial has launched the All rights for all women campaign on 8 March 2017.



The complicated situation in the country caused by political changes, aggression from neighboring Russia, subsequent military actions, the economic crisis, and social problems have impacted the situation of women, particularly women from vulnerable groups. Many of them continue to face discrimination, even though the

government has improved laws and established additional guarantees for the observance of human rights.

In Ukraine, women are still banned from over 450 professions, which is a gross violation of their rights to work, employment equality, and non-discrimination. Lists of banned professions also exist in other countries in the region, and CEDAW has repeatedly recommend their cancellation – in 2016, when it reviewed the situation of women in Armenia and Belarus, and prior to this, when it adopted a separate decision finding the denial of employment to a female helmsperson-motorist in Russia to be discrimination (pursuant to the complaint of S. Medvedeva regarding the ban on professions).

Female residents of war-torn Ukrainian oblasts facing external aggression are in a difficult situation. Many women have been forced to leave their homes without their husbands in order to take their children to a safe place. Virtually all female forcibly displaced persons have no money and have experienced problems enrolling their children in day care and finding work and housing. The situation is

even harder for displaced Roma fleeing aggression and pogroms: Roma families often struggle to acquire IDP status and benefits due to lack of education, issues with documents, and prejudice, and their children cannot continue attending school.

LGBTI people in eastern oblasts of Ukraine (the self-proclaimed DNR and LNR) and in Crimea are at high-risk due to homophobic laws adopted in these territories and growing intolerance in society. The situation is most complicated for transgender women, who have been left without access to hormone therapy, are subjected to constant document checks, and are unable to leave for a safe area.

The economic crisis, unemployment, and social problems have pushed many women into labor migration, and the life of Ukrainian women working abroad is fraught with difficulties and deprivations.

ONE HUNDRED YEARS SINCE THE ABOLITION OF DISCRIMINATION

The recent attempt by the Russian Orthodox Church to seize St. Petersburg's St. Isaac's Cathedral in February 2017, has led many to recall the events of the Russian Revolution a century before. The patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church also apparently considered the centenary of the Russian revolution as an opportune moment to bring the cathedral into the church's full ownership, appearing to suggest that these actions formed part of some sort of indemnity for the suffering of the church in stating that "the peaceful atmosphere surrounding the return of the churches should become the symbol of harmony and mutual forgiveness". An anecdotal illustration of this vision of "peace between the Reds and the Whites" appeared as the church procession around St. Isaac's on February 19 was also attended by some activists wearing badges of the "Krasnogvardeysky diocese" (a reference to the name of the district, which in turn refers to the Red Guards of 1917).

There is no consensus among contemporaries about whether St. Isaac's should remain a museum or should become a church (consensus on the need to combine the museum with some religious functions has long been reached). People are rebelling against turning St. Isaac's into a church, the museum is trying to resist, and even the authorities are divided on this issue.

As for forgiveness, the situation is even more complex. During a heated debate on the fate of the cathedral vs. the museum, forgiveness was referred to at least twice. First, by Duma deputy Piotr Tolstoy, who recently had to apologise "if I hurt anyone" in the wake of strong public reaction to his infamous statement that the revolution had been orchestrated by people "who had jumped out from the Pale of Settlement" (a western region of Imperial Russia known for Jewish residency). Then it was the infamous Duma deputy Milonov, who picked up the idea that the ancestors of some contemporary oppositional deputies had supposedly been responsible for the persecution of Christians. The excuses of both of these deputies rang hollow as they tried to assure that they had not been referring to Jews, but rather to some "other" people, who somehow had revolvers and arenas for feeding the

ancestors of Milonov to the wild beasts. Those offended by the statements may be having hard time forgiving. Indeed, these officials themselves are not readily forgiving people, being far from reconciliation with the journalists and bloggers they accuse of misconstruing their supposedly innocent attempts to protect the church from its "enemies" (as well as the descendants of its "enemies").

Each of us, it would seem, has their own "family memories" about the events of bygone days and his or her own personal reaction to the February revolution of 1917. For my part, the most significant event of one hundred years ago was the abolition of discrimination. Even before the tsar abdicated, even before the Provisional Government was established, the first document of the revolutionary government, prepared jointly by the Interim Committee of the State Duma and the Petrograd Soviet, announced the abolition of "all class, religious and ethnic restrictions". A little later, the abolition of state discrimination against ethnic, religious and social groups was adopted by the Provisional Government. Moreover, it was back then, in the spring of 1917, that Russian women got their rights, including "the right to vote, without the distinction of gender".

My ancestors – despite having neither revolvers nor arenas at their disposal – acquired rights that were denied to them under monarchy. Two of my grandmothers were able to seek fulfilment in pursuing their chosen professions: lawyer and doctor. By 1917, both were already adults, had completed additional after school studies, but could not get a university diploma (these were not given to women before 1917). They had also been denied the possibility of working in courts or state hospitals (these were jobs prohibited to Jews before the revolution).

The wake of revolutionary fervour nevertheless saw them endure many hardships: their fathers were deprived of voting rights (the abolition of discrimination according to social class did not last long), there was famine, the horrors of the civil war, the loss of lawyer status and the arrest of one of their sons in the 1930, the undertaking of superhuman hospital work during the siege of Leningrad, and ultimately the untimely death of both of these women. During their relatively short lives (a little over 50 years) they witnessed two world wars, a civil war, terror and hunger, a

siege and the Gulag. Moreover, during their childhood and adolescence they had been victims of discrimination, humiliating inequality, discrimination in respect of their enjoyment of their "rights and dignity", and the inability to pursue their chosen professions because of pre-1917 "restrictions".

Some people, apparently, hold a disregard for the "achievements of the February revolution" when it comes to discrimination. This seems apparent when so-called members of "parliament" insist that their remarks have been "misunderstood" and that they didn't refer to the "ethnic context". Indeed, perhaps they were alluding to religion. After all, the pre-revolutionary "restrictions" formally concerned not ethnicity per se, but religious persuasion. Certainly, it was on religious grounds that the Pale of Settlement had been organized. However, for those affected by pre-revolution restrictions, the issue was very much one of human dignity – an inability to renounce one's fate and its misfortunes, to refuse to be baptized for the sake of liberation. Discrimination based on ethnic origin and religious beliefs is often so similar that the difference is simply overlooked. It is often believed that until Hitler's ascent to power discrimination against Jews had always been religiously based, and that it was the Nazis who introduced "blood" (i.e. ethnicity) as the core criteria for such treatment. This belief is misguided – even during the Spanish Inquisition's persecution of the Jews, "bloodline" was the preoccupation of inquisitors. Even families that had converted to Christianity generations before could be denounced for failing to disclose Jewish ancestry and exiled (at best).

Likewise, present-day anti-Semites do not particularly distinguish between a religious and ethnic "context" (as Mr. Milonov so accurately refers to it). They conflate not only a church with a museum, but can even mix up the regional parliament of the country's cultural capital with a place of worship: those reading Mr Milonov's apologies should note that his Facebook account makes clear that prior to becoming a deputy in the State Duma, Milonov had been "a priest in the Legislative Assembly of St. Petersburg".

Stefania KULAEVA

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RUSSIA: JUDICIAL HARASSMENT OF WOMEN ARRESTED DURING PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATION ON MARCH 8

Picture by David Frenkel



FIDH and its member organisation Anti-Discrimination Centre (ADC) Memorial denounce arrests of women who came out in Saint Petersburg on International Women's Day on 8 March 2017 for an impromptu demonstration (or walk) to support the fight of women all over the world for their rights.

Some women brought signs protesting against domestic violence and calling for the protection of women's reproductive rights and gender equality in the socio-economic and political spheres. Police officers stated that "women with feminist views" were violating the procedures for holding an event and started detaining people who brought signs, people who were singing songs, and people who tried to hold onto one another in solidarity with those detained. A total of 14 people were arrested; the majority (at least 10) were accused of violating the rules for holding events (Article 20.2) and with failing to obey the orders of police officers (Article 19.3). Those charges are generally lodged against peaceful demonstrators detained in Russia.

The participants of the walk were officially accused that they "chanted the slogans "Freedom, Equality, Sisterhood," "Russia will be Free," with the goal of

expressing their opinion and shaping the opinion of the people around and listened to and participated in discussions about the issue of equality of women in society, i.e. participated in holding a meeting that was not coordinated with the Committee for Law, Public Order, and Security of Saint Petersburg".

Several of the women detained were wounded by the police officers' actions – one reported that she suffered two injuries (contusions) as a result of the harsh treatment, and another two had to urgently address to a doctor because of health problems (trouble breathing, panic attack). The detained women were held for an inordinately long time in police cars and then in a room that lacked sufficient seating (some stood or lay on the floor until the evening).

The police department chief (OP 78) told two of the detainees (a man and a woman), that they could also be charged under an article of the Criminal Code (Article 318 of the RF Criminal Code, violence against a police officer), even though according to the witnesses there were no grounds for this accusation against them.

The protesters were released on the evening of March 8. People who came to support them were repeatedly chased out

of the precinct, and OMON officers and Russian Guards troops used physical force to disperse the group of supporters. Trials are expected to take place later, but no official notice of the date was announced yet.

"Meanwhile, as the country's leaders hypocritically congratulated women in the media, those who protested against discrimination were detained, beaten, and falsely accused of violating the Administrative Code" – head of ADC Memorial Stephanie Kulaeva.

FIDH and ADC Memorial deplore the break-up of this peaceful demonstration to protect women's rights and the use of physical force against people who went for a peaceful walk on the internationally recognised day of women's rights to draw attention to gender inequality, femicide, and the violation of women's economic rights.

"The rights of women – including the right to state one's opinion and protect one's rights – must be fully observed. Women's rights cannot serve as a decorative screen (covered in flowers) to conceal violence and the abuse of power" – FIDH President Dimitris Christopoulos.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS NOT JUST ON WOMEN'S DAY

The festivities of "Women's Day" are over and the gloomy days of late winter roll in one after the other. Indeed, March in Russia has about as much connection to real spring as women's rights have to the strange tradition of handing out mimosa flowers and drinking to "dear ladies" on 8 March.

Certainly, not everyone spent this day listening to adulation and toasts – activists speaking out in support of women's rights in St. Petersburg are now awaiting trial. Their crime? Taking to the streets and "listening to and discussing the policy of the federal government on the problem of women's equality in society with the aim of expressing their opinion and shaping the opinion of others, violating the established regulations for holding rallies" (as per the police protocol for the administrative offense).

All 14 persons detained on 8 March 2017 (including only one male) were charged with this violation – an offense articulated in the masculine gender in the protocol! Having to listen to the State's policy on women's equality on International Women's Day, is already a stretch of tolerance. Those assembled on St. Petersburg's Nevsky prospect on 8 March, however, were additionally arrested, forcibly dragged into police vans, kicked, thrown around, driven through the city streets for hours, kept in custody for the rest of the day into the evening, and then taken to court.

A Russian federal government policy aimed at countering "the problem of women's equality" does alas, indeed exist.

For clarity – Russian authorities consider women's equality problematic, and fail to recognise women's rights to equal opportunities to work and equal pay.

The authorities of the Russian Federation (as those of Soviet Union before them) prohibit women from working in hundreds of jobs that have been included on a list of "professions dangerous and harmful for women". Women are prohibited from becoming miners and sailors, can't drive trucks, trains or subway trains, nor long-haul buses that carry more than 14 passengers. They cannot mount anything at a height, engage in underwater work, or even work as carpenters or locksmiths. These prohibitions are justified by reference to apparent concern for the "reproductive function of women", which can allegedly suffer in such vocations. However, it is difficult to understand the rationale that women would be harmed by mounting a weight at altitude but not at ground level – where they are permitted to work. Likewise, it is difficult to comprehend the logic behind the assertion that work on the deck of a ship should be forbidden while many kinds of hard labour are allowed in manufacturing, agriculture, etc. The debate about what does or does not harm women's reproductive health itself seems to be the state's principle approach to "equality problems". Indeed, no one forbids men from working where they like, even where certain activities are harmful to them or pose risks to their reproductive capabilities.

Women should enjoy the same rights as men in choosing their work and profession in accordance with their

preferences and abilities. To effectively achieve this right for all women, the all-jobs4all-women campaign has been launched. The campaign's website presents the stories of those prevented from pursuing their professional career due to the ban on "harmful occupations" (female seamen, for example), as well as stories from those not prevented from working in hard, low-paid jobs in the mining sector (where women are not accepted for prestigious and better paid jobs of miners, but are allowed to manually re-load tons of coal). These personal stories unmask the discrimination faced by women in seeking the right to work, as well as the hypocrisy of prohibitions that lead only to humiliation and poverty for women.

In early 2017 the Russian Ministry of Labour announced its readiness to reconsider certain restrictions, taking into account technical progress, so as to allow women to work in some previously prohibited spheres. We hope that such a revision will be thorough, and that of the 456 types of work prohibited to women, more than just two or three professions will be opened up. Indeed, women themselves are demanding that hundreds of interesting, well-paid jobs be rendered accessible to them.

Despite threats of persecution, police charges for supposed administrative violations, and dismissals, women need to continue to defend their rights and criticize federal government policy. Such activism must be undertaken on all days of the year, not just 8 March.

Women and girls can do a lot. Saglana Salchak, a 4-year-old girl from Tuva, marched alone for 8 kilometers through boreal forest in the freezing cold to call for aid for her dying grandmother. Despite this courageous act of appeal, the authorities could not accept this plea from a distant forest region. As Salgana's peers throughout the country congratulated their mothers and grandmothers with Women's Day, Salgana's own mother was prosecuted for the actions of her brave and strong little daughter, who lived in a remote hut deep in the woods with her grandmother (as her ancestors had since ancient times).

Whether the authorities accept it or not, women and girls are capable of doing more than they are allowed to. They too can overcome the "problem of women's equality in society"..

Stefania KULAEVA

First published in the blog on "Radio Liberty" website



Picture by David Frenkel

HOMOPHOBIA AND TOTALITARIAN REGIMES TODAY

The snippets of information trickling down to the media on the persecution of gay people in Chechnya are terrifying in the scale, deliberateness and extreme brutality of the violence being meted out against this group. It prompts one to recall other, very recent and no less terrifying events, such as the persecution of LGBTI persons in the Donbass region, Ukraine.

Very few of those who have escaped the horrors of violence and torture now taking place in the Donetsk and Luhansk areas of Ukraine's Donbass region have spoken out: most LGBTI persons prefer not to recall their experiences. One man from the Luhansk region, has confirmed that violence, including sexual violence, had been often used to further humiliate homosexuals. However, sexual assault is not something that people are ready to tell even their closest friends, especially since for those who stayed in the Donbass, disclosure of any such information could result in increased risk of targeting. It might be assumed that in Chechnya LGBTI people would have more safeguards in place than those in the Donbass region, which has been steeped in an atmosphere of chaos and armed conflict for three years now. Certainly, the relative prevailing peace in Chechnya should afford sufficient rights protections, including to the right to life, which is formally guaranteed by law and assigned to the state and special bodies of authority responsible for monitoring the implementation of legal acts and observation of human rights. However, the reality is that the situation of Chechen LGBTI individuals is little better than that of those in Eastern Ukraine.

Chechen authorities have shocked the international community with their reaction to a report on the torture and inhuman treatment of gay people in the Republic. For example, Chechen "human rights activist" Kheda Saratova, commenting on what was happening there, said that the murder of gay men would not be condemned not only by ordinary residents, but also by judicial authorities and law enforcement agencies. She then tried to explain what she had said, by adding that she was in a state of affect, surprised by the very fact that gay persons had been discovered in Chechnya. Reactions towards LGBTI persons in Eastern Ukraine have been similar, though in this area the self-proclaimed authorities of the so-called Donetsk and Luhansk republics have openly called for the killing of anyone even connected to homosexuals.

It is unsurprising that LGBTI persons generally have sought to leave Chechnya as soon as they could, and continue to do so.

Those who have already been subjected to repression or are now in fear of reprisals or violence are also trying to leave. The same has happened in the Donbass region, the only difference being that military activities in the region have not given people much time to reflect or choose routes of escape or destinations. LGBTI persons fleeing from the region have had to go through checkpoints, which posed even greater dangers and risks of violence, ranging from captivity and placement in illegal detention and the threat of being forced to remain in the region. At least one case of shooting targeting a gay person near the Yasinovataya checkpoint has been registered. LGBTI persons have tried to leave areas where particularly homophobic armed groups are stationed, including Nikitovka in Donetsk, where, according to LGBTI interviewees, Chechen fighters were deployed.

Representatives of the LGBTI community have reported that on the territory of Eastern Ukraine, in which there are numerous illegal places of detention, people are often taken "into the basement" (the former building of the Ukrainian Security Service in Donetsk). Given the prevailing military conflict, illegal imprisonment, torture and violence occur on a regular basis in this region. In Chechnya, however, gay persons are likewise being systematically tortured in such a secret prison in the "peaceful" city of the Argun. Such treatment is illegal, running counter to the basic legal norms guaranteed by national and international legislation.

The detention of gay persons in Chechnya has, as far as we know, been based on orders issued by representatives of local authorities. This was likewise the case in the so-called Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics, where armed men have acted on the homophobic orders of their commanders. It is reported that some detainees have been offered a reduction in their punishment for reporting gay persons to the authorities. For example, in the so-called Donetsk People's Republic, a minor who had been detained by armed men for smoking, was forced to report on a gay person he knew and the latter's brother. To save themselves from torture and violence, some detainees in the Donbass region have informed on gay friends and acquaintances. The very same practice of forceful extraction of information regarding the identity of LGBTI individuals also exists in Chechnya. At the same time, in both regions ransoms have been demanded for the release of detained gay persons. Torture, humiliation and ill-treatment of homosexuals kept in illegal detention centers takes place in both Chechnya and the self-proclaimed Donbass republics.

Some of those who have faced violence and humiliation in Chechnya have found the opportunity and courage to speak out about what is happening there. This public testimony is capable of saving those whose lives and health remain currently at risk. LGBTI individuals from the Donbass region have virtually no opportunity to seek assistance and support. One of the few organizations that helped them to leave the territories affected by the war, Kiev-based NGO, "Insight", provides temporary shelter to those in need. However, when the most horrific events have occurred in the Donbass, people have preferred either to hide or to leave the region in any direction and as quickly as possible. Sometimes people from the Donbass region have found themselves unable to say where their LGBTI friends have gone, as some have simply disappeared. Witnesses believe that a number of LGBTI persons who lived in the region have simply been "subjected to extermination".

The International Community and individual countries have effectively failed to react to the horrors that have been going on in eastern Ukraine for several years now. The situation in these territories is beyond the control of the official authorities of Ukraine, as communication with the self-proclaimed authorities of unrecognized republics is simply impossible on the part of any state. Whilst there is an obvious absence of protection guarantees in territories affected by this war, it is unacceptable to allow the repetition of such inhuman acts in a state, which de jure recognizes human rights, and is regulated by both international and national legislation. The behavior of representatives of the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights of Chechnya and the denial of ongoing lawlessness by the Council on Human Rights of Chechnya is unacceptable. But the position of the Russian authorities, who are inclined to deny the facts of violence and inhuman treatment in Chechnya, is no less reprehensible. As a result of this cynical behaviour, gay persons in the Chechen Republic find themselves without human rights guarantees just as those in military conflict, find themselves unable to protect their most basic right, the right to life. Russia's claim to accept the legal existence of so-called republics should be contingent on the exclusion of violent homophobic acts by parts of the state apparatus. Russian authorities should take adequate measures to secure the rights of all LGBTI persons in Chechnya. Indeed, if it does not, how does the Russian state differ from a territory suffering a total absence of the rule of law, where decisions are made on the basis of brutal force and availability of weapons?

Inessa SAKHNO

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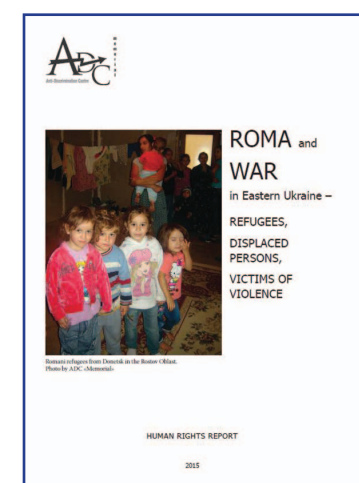
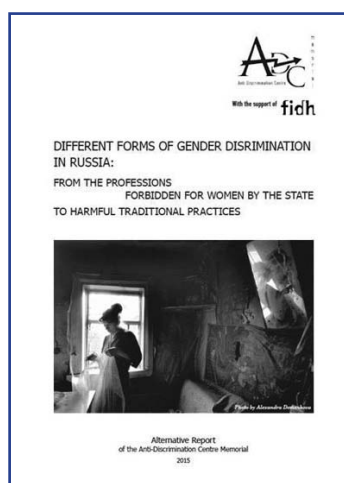
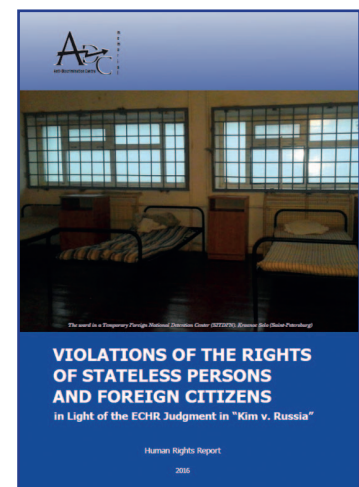
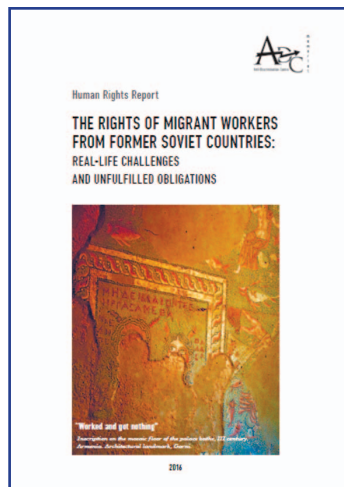
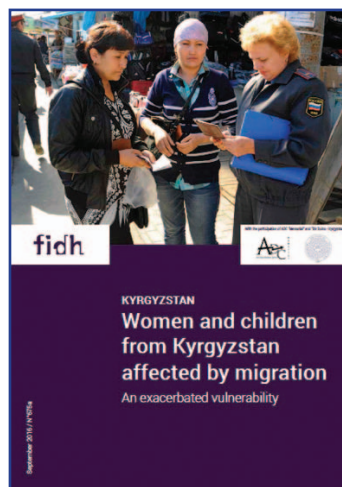
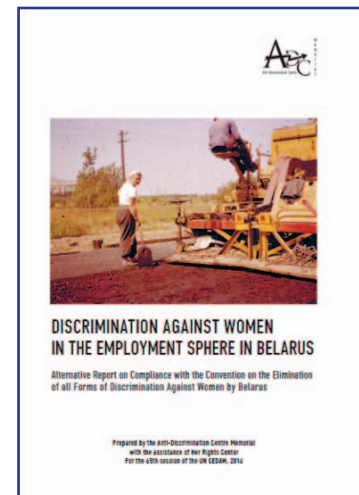
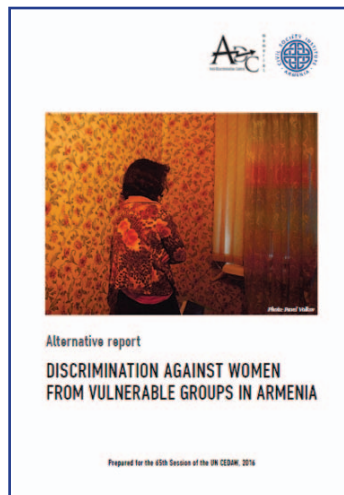
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