

In 2001-2002, the Moscow Helsinki Group monitored the manifestations of nationalism, xenophobia, and intolerance in the Russian Federation and came to the conclusion that a whole series of severe problems exist in these areas today.

The Russian authorities in their public rhetoric claim an adherence to the principles of tolerance and equality. They also claim that they are striving to have a dialogue with groups of ethnic and religious minorities. The authorities insist that various nations and cultures in the country live in peace and harmony and that the struggle with political extremism, xenophobia, and intolerance is at the center of attention for President Putin, the Government, and the law enforcement agencies.

However, we assert that during the last several years a menacing growth in xenophobia and nationalist moods took place in Russian society. Such negative views as Chechenophobia, Caucasophobia, Romaphobia, and a general intolerance towards ethnic migrants and religious minorities intensified.

The authorities persistently refer to a lack of violence on racial/ethnic grounds as an indicator of the harmony in inter-ethnic and inter-religious relations. However, the events in 2001-2002 completely refute these claims. Russia is experiencing an unprecedented amount of crime based on racial and ethnic hatred. Moreover, clashes between representatives of various ethnic groups (the last clash took place in Krasnoarmeisk in the Moscow region where a conflict broke out between Russians and Armenians living there) and attacks on racial grounds by so-called skinheads are taking place. The latter phenomenon is becoming particularly dangerous. In 2001 in Moscow, two pogroms took place, the second one, which occurred at the end of October, being particularly outrageous, as up to 300 skinheads participated and there was a loss of life.

Despite what these events themselves say, law enforcement agencies refuse to acknowledge the growth of violent crimes carried out on racial grounds. In the overwhelming majority of cases, either the criminals remain unpunished or the investigative and judicial agencies ignore the racist component of the act. Until recently, the authorities in fact did not take into account the growth of the activity of extreme youth groups. Due to their inaction, in particular, there were riots in the center of Moscow in June 2002. The riots were organized by football fans, and the skinheads in the group were particularly active. During the riots, crimes on racial grounds also took place.

The situation in Moscow and in the Moscow region - places which attract a considerable part of the migration flows - is significant but not unique. An analogous situation has developed in the majority of large cities in the European part of the country and in the Ural region. In a number of regions, particularly in the south of Russia, regional authorities themselves serve as spreaders of racist and xenophobic moods, patronize nationalistic groups, and promote intolerance in society. The situation in the Krasnodar territory, where the aggressive nationalist rhetoric of the authorities is combined with openly discriminatory policies and practices, is completely

unacceptable. Moreover, the Krasnodar Governor, A. Tkachev, maintains that the region's ethnic policy is completely supported by the federal authorities and personally by the President, and neither the federal authorities nor the President even try to disclaim this.

We maintain that, despite the declaration about the unacceptability of nationalism in all forms and public gestures, the federal authorities are not taking effective measures to stop the discriminatory practices in the regions.

We call upon the state members of the OSCE to turn to the Russian authorities with the following recommendations regarding the protection of minorities and the establishment of a climate of tolerance in the country:

- High-ranking state officials must energetically come forward with condemnations of specific displays of nationalism and xenophobia, especially those displays that are aggressive.
- Nationalist propaganda, especially propaganda coming from officials at all levels, must be effectively stopped.
- Law enforcement and other state agencies must stop discriminatory practices with respect to the Chechens, Kurds, Meskhetin Turks, Roma and other vulnerable ethnic groups.
- The Russian Federation must develop cooperation with regional and international agencies (treaty bodies and other) in order to struggle against racism, xenophobia, discrimination, and intolerance, and in order to expand the use of the appropriate international human rights mechanisms that offer preventive measures and aim at eliminating racism, xenophobia, discrimination, and intolerance.
- The introduction of educational programs that focus on the dangers of racism, nationalism, and xenophobia and that foster a respectful attitude towards cultural diversity in officials, especially in police officials, judges, and law enforcers, is necessary in Russia.