



The Russian Federation - Military service



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- Germany, Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), Country Analysis
- France, Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (OFPRA), Information, Documentation and Research Unit (DIDR)

The following departments and organisations have reviewed the report, together with EUAA:

- Sweden, Swedish Migration Agency, Country of Origin Information, Section for Information Analysis
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The review carried out by the mentioned departments, experts or organisations contributes to the overall quality of the report but does not necessarily imply their formal endorsement of the final report, which is the full responsibility of EUAA.





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Disclaimer

This report was written according to the EUAA COI Report Methodology (2019). The report is based on carefully selected sources of information. All sources used are referenced.

The information contained in this report has been researched, evaluated and analysed with utmost care. However, this document does not claim to be exhaustive. If a particular event, person or organisation is not mentioned in the report, this does not mean that the event has not taken place or that the person or organisation does not exist.

Furthermore, this report is not conclusive as to the determination or merit of any particular application for international protection. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

'Refugee', 'risk' and similar terminology are used as generic terminology and not in the legal sense as applied in the EU Asylum Acquis, the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees.

Neither the EUAA, nor any person acting on its behalf, may be held responsible for the use which may be made of the information contained in this report.

On 19 January 2022 the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) became the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA). All references to EASO, EASO products and bodies should be understood as references to the EUAA.

The drafting of this report was finalised on 15 November 2022. Additional information was added during the quality review process up until 30 November 2022. More information on the reference period for this report can be found in the [Methodology](#) section of the [Introduction](#).





Glossary and abbreviations

Term	Definition
AFU	Armed Forces of Ukraine
BARS	National Army Combat Reserve, <i>Boevoy Armeyskiy Rezerv Strany</i>
DNR	Self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic
FSB	Federal Security Forces
ISW	Institute for the Study of War
<i>Kadyrovites</i>	Paramilitary units under direct control of Ramzan Kadyrov, the Head of the Chechen Republic (<i>kadyrovtsy</i>)
LNR	Self-proclaimed Luhansk People's Republic
MoD	Ministry of Defence
OMON	Special Purpose Mobile Unit (<i>Otryad Mobilny Osobogo Naznacheniya</i>)
PMC	Private military company
RAF	Russian Armed Forces
RFE/RL	Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty
Rosgvardia	Russian National Guard





Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide information regarding military service in the Russian Federation for international protection status determination, including refugee status and subsidiary protection, and in particular for EUAA Country Guidance on the Russian Federation.

The report focuses on military service in the Russian Federation after Russia's invasion in Ukraine on 24 February 2022. It describes 'military service' in a broad sense: as one-year obligatory military service, professional army contract service, military service under the 'partial' mobilisation — an exceptional event announced by the Russian president the first time since the end of the World War II,¹ as well as contract service and military use of volunteer battalions, mercenaries, and prison convicts in hostilities. The report outlines conditions of recruitment and focuses on deployment of each group to Ukraine. For conscripts — young men aged 18-27 participating in obligatory military service — and people mobilised under the mobilisation order, the topics of exemption and deferrals from military service are particularly addressed. The report also covers military service in the Republic of Chechnya and instances of violations of humanitarian and human rights law by Russian military forces in Ukraine.

The reference period of the report is 24 February 2022 – 15 November 2022. Some important events up to 30 November were included during the finalisation of the report.

Methodology

The report was drafted and reviewed in line with the EUAA COI Report Methodology (2019)² and the EASO COI Writing and Referencing Style Guide (2019)³.

This report was jointly drafted and reviewed by EUAA and national COI departments in EU+ countries⁴ mentioned in the Acknowledgements section.

Defining the terms of reference (ToR)

The terms of reference for this report were defined by EUAA based on discussions held and input received from country of origin information (COI) and policy experts in EU+ countries within the framework of a Country Guidance development on the Russian Federation. The terms of reference for this report can be found in [Annex 2: Terms of Reference](#).

The drafting period finished on 15 November 2022, peer review occurred between 17 – 23 November 2022, and additional information was added to the report as a result of the quality review process during the review implementation up until 30 November 2022.

¹ Al Jazeera, Russia completes partial mobilisation of citizens for Ukraine war, 1 November 2022, [url](#)

² EUAA, EASO Country of Origin Information (COI) Report Methodology, June 2019, [url](#)

³ EUAA, EASO Writing and Referencing Guide for EASO Country of Origin Information (COI) Reports, June 2019, [url](#)

⁴ EU Member States plus Norway and Switzerland.





Collecting information

This report is based on publicly available information in electronic and paper-based sources gathered through desk-based research. It also contains information from several oral sources with ground-level knowledge of the situation in the Russian Federation who were interviewed specifically for this report. For security reasons, oral sources are anonymised unless they have chosen to be named in relation to the organisation represented.

Quality control

The report was peer reviewed by COI specialists from EU+ countries mentioned in the [Acknowledgements](#) section, and internally by EUAA. All comments made by reviewers were taken into consideration and most of them were implemented in the final draft of this report. EUAA has performed the final quality review and editing of the text.

Sources

In accordance with EUAA COI methodology, a range of different published sources has been consulted on relevant topics covered by this report. These include COI reports by EU+ authorities, information from civil society and advocacy groups and NGOs, UN reports, academic publications, and media sources.

In addition to publicly available sources, EUAA interviewed two external experts for this report. On 9 November 2022, EUAA conducted an online interview with Alexander Pomazuev, a lawyer at Anti-Corruption Foundation (*Fond borby s korrupsiey*, FBK). FBK was established in 2011 by Alexey Navalny to investigate and make public instances of corruption among high-ranking Russian officials.⁵

On 11 November 2022, EUAA conducted an online interview with a well-established human rights lawyer in Russia, who preferred anonymity for security reasons. The expert was contacted by email also on 25 November 2022 for further clarifications.

Additionally, EUAA contacted Dr. Huseyn Aliyev, a researcher in Security Studies at Central & Eastern European Studies (CEES) at the University of Glasgow, who provided his input related to military service and recruitment in Chechnya through email communication on 13 and 17 November 2022.

Due to the Russia's invasion in Ukraine on 24 February 2022, research limitations during the drafting of this report were faced, including: restricted media coverage, closing of local media outlets, and increased censorship. On the day of the invasion, the Russia's media regulator, Roskomnadzor, instructed Russian media outlets to use solely information from official Russian sources for their reporting, under the threat of fines and having their websites blocked.⁶ Media

⁵ FBK, Anti-Corruption Foundation, n.d., [url](#)

⁶ OSCE, Media Freedom Representative strongly denounces Russian authorities' restriction on freedom of the media and freedom of information, 24 February 2022, [url](#); Russia, Roskomnadzor, Вниманию средств массовой информации и иных информационных ресурсов [To the attention of the media and other information resources], 24 February 2022, [url](#)





was banned from using the terms ‘war’, ‘invasion’, or ‘assault’ when describing the situation in Ukraine.⁷ In March 2022, new legislation was introduced in the Code of Administrative Offences and the Criminal Code to punish dissemination of ‘false’ information and discrediting of Russian military and state institutions.⁸ Moreover, along with hundreds of journalists, human rights organisations and defenders were registered as ‘foreign agents’ and targeted and/or dissolved as a result.⁹

The sources used in this report are further described in [Annex 1: Bibliography](#).

Structure and use of the report

The report is structured in line with the terms of reference and is divided into six chapters. The first chapter presents an overview of the structure of the Russian Armed Forces (RAF) and focuses on three aspects of military service: obligatory military service, contract military service, and reserve of the RAF. In the subchapter on the obligatory military service, the report describes the organisation of a regular semi-annual conscription, exemptions and deferrals from military service, and possibilities of alternative civil service.

The second chapter focuses on the scope and implementation of the ‘partial’ mobilisation, ordered by a decree of President Putin on 21 September 2022. The chapter gives information about the legal basis of the mobilisation, exemptions and deferrals, and legal ways to avoid mobilisation as well as on irregularities that were reported during the implementation of the mobilisation order.

The third chapter describes various military personnel who has been deployed to Ukraine. In separate subchapters, the following groups are described: conscripts – men aged 18-27– who were deployed to Ukraine during their obligatory military service, persons drafted under the mobilisation order, volunteers and mercenaries, and prison convicts. The chapter further underlines the difference in the status of the abovementioned groups.

The fourth chapter of the report describes conscription and military recruitment in the Chechen Republic.

The fifth chapter focuses on the situation of military evaders, deserters, and people who violate an order by a superior. It also introduces the newest legislation introduced in September 2022 concerning these groups.

The sixth chapter gives information on reported violations of humanitarian and international human rights law by Russian military forces in Ukraine.

⁷ DW, Viral protests: Russians continue to denounce war, risking imprisonment, 16 March 2022, [url](#); Frontline Defenders, Escalating Crackdown on human rights defenders and organisations, 19 April 2022, [url](#)

⁸ Politico, Russia expands laws criminalizing ‘fake news,’ 22 March 2022, [url](#)

⁹ UN OHCHR, Human Rights Committee Considers Report of the Russian Federation in the Absence of a Delegation, Experts Raise Issues on the Persecution of Journalists and the Arrests of Protesters, 20 October 2022, [url](#)



Maps



Map 1. The Russian Federation¹⁰

¹⁰ Map 1: UN, Russian Federation - Map No. 3840, January 2004



Background

In February 2022, prior to the invasion, it was estimated that 190 000 Russian troops were stationed on the border with Ukraine.¹¹ On 24 February 2022, Russia started a large-scale military invasion of Ukraine, targeting Kyiv as well as Kharkiv, Dnipro, Mariupol,¹² and Odesa.¹³ President Vladimir Putin named the invasion a ‘special military operation’,¹⁴ aimed to protect the self-proclaimed ‘Donetsk People’s Republic’ (DNR) and ‘Luhansk People’s Republic’ (LNR).¹⁵ One day before the invasion, the Federation Council of the Russian Federation authorised the use of the Russian military outside Russia, as was requested by President Putin.¹⁶

Following referendums on annexation of their territories to the Russian Federation held between 23 and 27 September,¹⁷ Russia-occupied parts of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia, were formally annexed by Russia.¹⁸ The referendums were named illegal by Ukraine and the Western governments¹⁹ and the UN General Assembly demanded an immediate withdrawal of Russian military forces from Ukraine.²⁰ On 19 October, Russia imposed martial law in the mentioned occupied territories²¹ and ‘medium response’ and ‘high alert’ in Central and Southern federal districts of Russia. The governors of ‘high alert’ regions were given such powers as ‘the right to control entry and exit from their regions.’²²

By the end of September, the Russian Ministry of Defence (MoD) said that Russia’s military losses in Ukraine had reached around 6 000 personnel.²³ On 27 October 2022, the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) estimated the number of Russia’s military fatalities at 69 220.²⁴

On 21 September 2022, President Putin signed a ‘partial mobilisation’ order to offset military losses and the failure of recruitment efforts, including the recruitment of mercenaries and convicts,²⁵ and to call up additional military personnel from the reserve of the Russian Armed

¹¹ Al Jazeera, Explainer: How does conscription work in Russia?, 5 May 2022, [url](#)

¹² BBC, Ukraine conflict: Russian forces attack from three sides, 24 February 2022, [url](#); International Crisis Group, War in Europe: Responding to Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine, 24 February 2022, [url](#)

¹³ International Crisis Group, War in Europe: Responding to Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine, 24 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴ BBC, Ukraine: Ukraine: Putin announces special military operation in TV declaration, 24 February 2022, [url](#)

International Crisis Group, War in Europe: Responding to Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine, 24 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵ TASS, Russian troops launch special military operation to defend Donbass republics — top brass, 24 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶ Reuters, Putin gets green light to deploy troops to eastern Ukraine, 22 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷ Economist (The), Vladimir Putin declares a partial mobilization, 21 September 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸ Euronews, Ukraine war: Russia illegally annexes four regions in east Ukraine, 30 September 2022, [url](#)

¹⁹ RFE/RL, Kyiv Slams Results Of ‘Sham’ Vote In Russian-Occupied Lands As ‘Null And Worthless’, 28 September 2022, [url](#)

²⁰ UN, With 143 Votes in Favour, 5 Against, General Assembly Adopts Resolution Condemning Russian Federation’s Annexation of Four Eastern Ukraine Regions, 12 October 2022, [url](#)

²¹ Euronews, Putin imposes martial law in four Russia-annexed regions of Ukraine, 19 October 2022, [url](#)

²² Pertsev, A., How Martial Law Will Change the Workings of the Russian Government, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 26 October 2022, [url](#)

²³ Reuters, Russia calls up 300,000 reservists, says 6,000 soldiers killed in Ukraine, 21 September 2021, [url](#)

²⁴ Kiyv Independent (The), Putin claims Russia’s war casualties are 10 times less than Ukraine’s, 27 October 2022, [url](#)

²⁵ Economist (The), Vladimir Putin declares a partial mobilization, 21 September 2022, [url](#)





Forces.²⁶ A day before the mobilisation order was signed, the State Duma, the lower chamber of the Russian Parliament, approved a bill to increase ‘punishments for desertion, damage to military property, looting, defection, and insubordination if they are committed during military mobilisation or combat situations.’²⁷ On 24 September, after the amendments were passed by the Federation Council, they were signed by President Putin.²⁸ Early October, Forbes Russia reported that 700 000 people had left Russia in less than the first two weeks after the mobilisation was announced.²⁹

On 11 November 2022, Ukrainian forces retook Kherson. Before retreating, the Russian military destroyed the region’s critical infrastructure.³⁰ After weeks of intense Russian bombardment since mid-October, which severely damaged Ukraine’s energy systems, the country faces a humanitarian disaster.³¹ According to UN OHCHR, 6 557 Ukrainian civilians were killed and 10 074 injured from 24 February to 14 November 2022.³²

²⁶ Conversation (The), Russian army: Putin details the next stage of the Ukraine war and who is being called up, 22 September 2022, [url](#)

²⁷ RFE/RL, Russian Lawmakers Approve Bill Toughening Punishment For Crimes During Mobilization, 20 September 2022, [url](#)

²⁸ RFE/RL, Russia Toughens Penalty For Voluntary Surrender, Refusal To Fight, 24 September 2022, [url](#)

²⁹ Forbes, Россию после 21 сентября покинули около 700 000 граждан [Some 700,000 citizens have left Russia since 21 September], 4 October 2022, [url](#)

³⁰ AP, Explainer: How important is a Russian retreat from Kherson, 11 November 2022, [url](#)

³¹ Washington Post (The), Ukrainian energy systems on brink of collapse after weeks of Russian bombing, 23 November 2022, [url](#)

³² UN OHCHR, Ukraine: civilian casualty update 14 November 2022, 14 November 2022, [url](#)



1. The Russian Armed Forces

1.1. Overview of the Russian Armed Forces

The Russian Armed Forces (RAF) have a hybrid structure, consisting of professional soldiers employed under term contracts and conscripts drafted for one-year compulsory military service.³³ As a part of military reforms initiated following the invasion in Georgia in 2008,³⁴ Russia has focused on the professionalisation of its armed forces and has reduced the term of the compulsory military service from two years to one year.³⁵ While the share of the professional soldiers has reportedly doubled between 2012 and 2019³⁶ and the number of conscripts has decreased from 307 000 in 2016 to 261 150 in 2021,³⁷ conscripts still constitute around 25 %³⁸ – 30 %³⁹ of active-duty personnel of the RAF. After completing compulsory military service conscripts are enlisted in the reserve, whose size is estimated at around 25 million.⁴⁰

The total size of the RAF is estimated at 1.9 million.⁴¹ The number of combat personnel was set at 1.013 million by a presidential decree of November 2017.⁴² On 25 August 2022, another presidential decree was signed to increase the size of the RAF from 1.9 million to 2.04 million and the size of combat personnel to 1.151 million. The decree should take effect on 1 January 2023.⁴³ In its 2021 overview, the Military Balance⁴⁴ estimated the actual number of RAF military personnel at 900 000.⁴⁵ According to US-based researcher Pavel Luzin,⁴⁶ the size of combat personnel of the RAF could be estimated at around 740 000 – 780 000 as of the beginning of 2022.⁴⁷ By the type of service, as conveyed by the Military Balance, 280 000 servicemen

³³ CSIS, The Best or Worst of Both Worlds?, 23 September 2020, [url](#); ISW, Explainer on Russian Conscription, Reserve, and Mobilization, 5 March 2022, [url](#), p. 1

³⁴ Congressional Research Service: Russian Armed Forces: Military Modernisation and Reforms, 20 July 2020, [url](#), p. 1; CSIS, The Best or Worst of Both Worlds?, 23 September 2020, [url](#)

³⁵ CSIS, The Best or Worst of Both Worlds?, 23 September 2020, [url](#)

³⁶ EPRS, Russia's armed forces, Defence capabilities and policy, March 2021, [url](#), p. 2

³⁷ Statista, Number of military conscripts in Russia from 2012 to 2022, by draft, 2 November 2022, [url](#)

³⁸ Freeman, S.B and Kjellström Elgin K., What the use of Russian conscripts tells us about the war in Ukraine, Politico, 17 March 2022, [url](#); EPRS, Russia's armed forces, Defence capabilities and policy, March 2021, [url](#), p. 3

³⁹ TASS, Conscripts' share in Russian Army declines to 30%, says lawmaker, 15 March 2021, [url](#); LWJ, Ukraine's Counteroffensives in Kharkiv and Kherson and the Road Ahead, 16 September 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁰ BBC, Ukraine war: Putin orders partial mobilisation after facing setbacks, 21 September 2022, [url](#)

⁴¹ Reuters, Putin signs decree to increase size of Russian armed forces, 25 August 2022, [url](#)

⁴² EPRS, Russia's armed forces, Defence capabilities and policy, March 2021, [url](#), p. 2; Reuters, Putin signs decree to increase size of Russian armed forces, 25 August 2022, [url](#); Luzin, P., Russia's Military Manpower Crunch Will Worsen, CEPA, 21 September 2022, [url](#)

⁴³ Reuters, Putin signs decree to increase size of Russian armed forces, 25 August 2022, [url](#); Luzin, P., Russia's Military Manpower Crunch Will Worsen, CEPA, 21 September 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁴ The Military Balance is an 'annual authoritative assessment of the military capabilities and defence economics worldwide' by the International Institute for Strategic Studies, see Taylor & Francis Online, The Military Balance, n.d., [url](#)

⁴⁵ EPRS, Russia's armed forces, Defence capabilities and policy, March 2021, [url](#), p. 3; Regional trends in 2021, The Military Balance, Vol. 122, 2022 p. 164

⁴⁶ Pavel Luzin holds a doctorate in international relations from the Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO). He is an expert on Russia's politics, defence affairs, and global security, see Foreign Policy Institute, Pavel Luzhin, n.d., [url](#)

⁴⁷ Luzin, P., Russia's Military Manpower Crunch Will Worsen, CEPA, 21 September 2022, [url](#)



were listed in the Army, 180 000 in the Command and Support, 165 000 in the Air forces, 150 000 in the Navy, 50 000 in the Strategic Rocket Force, 45 000 in the Airborne forces, 29 000 in the Railway Forces, and 1 000 in the Special Operations Forces. The number of Gendarmerie and Paramilitary forces was estimated at 554 000.⁴⁸

1.2. Military service

1.2.1. Conscription and conditions of military service

Conscription has historically constituted ‘the main source of military manpower’ of the RAF⁴⁹ since it is used to ensure that Russia would have a military reserve that can be used in case of a major war.⁵⁰ According to Article 59 of the Constitution, all Russian citizens have ‘a duty and obligation’ to defend the country. The same Article stipulates that every citizen is obliged to ‘carry out military service according to the federal law.’ The right to alternative civil service is guaranteed by paragraph 3 of the same Article and the way of its realisation is set to be regulated by the federal law.⁵¹ For information on alternative civil service, please refer to the chapter [1.2.3 Alternative civil service](#).

General regulations

One-year military service is compulsory for all Russian men aged 18 – 27.⁵² The MoD notes that completing compulsory military service is a prerequisite for a career in the public sector and governmental institutions.⁵³ The number of men eligible to be drafted for military service is estimated at 1.2 million each year and around half of this number receives a draft notice requiring them to present themselves at a local military recruitment office (*voenkomat*).⁵⁴

Prior to conscription into obligatory military service, young men aged 16 – 17 undergo an initial military registration, which is carried out by military recruitment offices. As stated by MoD, the purpose of the initial registration is ‘to identify the number of pre-conscripts and define if they are medically fit for military service’ as well as to evaluate their level of education for further education or training. During the medical examination, pre-conscripts are assigned categories defining their physical and psychological fitness for military service.⁵⁵

As stipulated by Article 25 of the Federal Law on Military Duty and Military Service, the military draft is organised upon a presidential order and is carried out semi-annually: between 1 April and 15 July and between 1 October and 31 December. Three groups of Russian nationals have different conscription periods: residents of the Far North or certain areas equated to the Far

⁴⁸ Regional trends in 2021, The Military Balance, Vol. 122, 2022, p. 193

⁴⁹ Luzin, P., Russia’s Military Manpower Crunch Will Worsen, CEPA, 21 September 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁰ Freeman, S.B and Kjellström Elgin K., What the use of Russian conscripts tells us about the war in Ukraine, Politico, 17 March 2022, [url](#); Al-Jazeera, Explainer: How does conscription work in Russia?, 5 May 2022, [url](#); Luzin, P., Russia’s Military Manpower Crunch Will Worsen, CEPA, 21 September 2022, [url](#)

⁵¹ Russia, The Constitution of the Russian Federation, n.d., [url](#)

⁵² Al Jazeera, Fearing front-line deployment, some Russians resist conscription, 18 March 2022, [url](#); Freeman, S.B and Kjellström Elgin K., What the use of Russian conscripts tells us about the war in Ukraine, Politico, 17 March 2022, [url](#)

⁵³ Russia, MoD, Conscription service, n.d., [url](#)

⁵⁴ ISW, Explainer on Russian Conscription, Reserve, and Mobilization, 5 March 2022, [url](#), p. 1

⁵⁵ Russia, MoD, Military registration, [url](#)





North (from 1 May to 15 July and from 1 November to 31 December), conscripts living in rural areas and engaged in sowing or harvesting works (only fall conscription with the dates from 15 October to 31 December is carried out), and teaching staff (conscription is organised only in spring, between 1 May and 15 June).⁵⁶

According to the law, Russian men aged 18 – 27 who are subject to statutory military service must notify their local military recruitment office about the place of their residence.⁵⁷ Military recruitment officers were reported to have regularly visited homes (official addresses where a person is registered) and workplaces of reservists.⁵⁸ A failure to inform military officials about a change of one's place of residence as well as a failure to present oneself at a military recruitment office is an administrative offence under Article 21.5 of the Code of Administrative Offences and is punishable by a fine in the amount of 500 – 3 000 roubles [8 – 50 EUR].⁵⁹

Article 31 of the Federal Law on Military Duty and Military Service requires that a draft notice is handed in person and that a person must sign for it upon receipt.⁶⁰ After receiving the draft notice, the person is obliged to report to the military recruitment office, where he must undergo a medical commission. If proven fit for military service, the person must present himself at a recruitment commission, whose role is to decide whether he will be conscripted, granted exemption or deferral from military service, or admitted to the reserve (*zapas*). If the commission decides that the person will be conscripted, he will be notified about the location of his military service. The recruitment commission also decides on requests to serve alternative civil service.⁶¹

Article 328 part 1 of the Criminal Code stipulates that 'evasion of conscription in the absence of lawful grounds for release from the military service' is punishable by either a fine up to 200 000 roubles [3 272 EUR], or in the amount of the wage or salary, or any other income of the convicted person for a period up to 18 months,⁶² or by compulsory labour for a period up

⁵⁶ Russia, Законы, кодексы и нормативно-правовые акты Российской Федерации [Laws, codes and regulations of the Russian Federation], Федеральный закон от 28.03.1998 N 53-ФЗ (ред. от 24.09.2022) "О воинской обязанности и военной службе" [Federal Law of 28 March 1998 N 53-FZ (version of 24 September 2022) On Military Duty and Military Service], [url](#)

⁵⁷ Meduza, 'Prepare to stand up for your convictions' During mobilization, escaping the draft is a legal problem for many Russians. Here's a military lawyer's advice for those who don't want to fight., 22 September 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁸ Moscow Times (The), 'I Don't Trust What They Say': Russian Draft Dodgers Stay in Hiding Even as Putin Announces Mobilization's End, 2 November 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁹ Russia, Кодекс Российской Федерации об административных правонарушениях, от 30.12.2001 N 195-ФЗ (ред. от 04.11.2022) ["Code of Administrative Offences of the Russian Federation, of 30.12.2001 No 195-FZ (amended on 04.11.2022), n.d., [url](#)

⁶⁰ Russia, Законы, кодексы и нормативно-правовые акты Российской Федерации [Laws, codes and regulations of the Russian Federation], Федеральный закон от 28.03.1998 N 53-ФЗ (ред. от 24.09.2022) "О воинской обязанности и военной службе" [Federal Law of 28 March 1998 N 53-FZ (version of 24 September 2022) On Military Duty and Military Service], [url](#)

⁶¹ Garant.ru, Повестка в военкомат: содержание, порядок вручения, обязанности и ответственность [Draft notice to report to military enlistment office: contents, delivery procedure, duties and responsibilities], 20 October 2022, [url](#)

⁶² Russia, The Criminal Code of the Russian Federation No. 63-FZ of June 13, 1996, IMOLIN, 28 December 2004, [url](#); Russia, Уголовный кодекс Российской Федерации от 13.06.1996 N 63-ФЗ (ред. от 24.09.2022) [Criminal Code of the Russian Federation of 13.06.1996 N 63-FZ (version 24.09.2022)], 24 September 2022, [url](#)





to two years,⁶³ by arrest for up to six months, or by up to 2 years in prison.⁶⁴ The criminal responsibility under Article 328 applies only in cases when the person has been found a draft evader by a court. The charges can be initiated in cases if a person deliberately ignores draft notices and calling-up for military service.⁶⁵ As explained by a Prosecutor's office of Chelyabinsk region, a failure to report to military recruitment office after having received a draft notice or a failure to report to a place of assembly for a departure to a military unit are understood as draft evasion. The source explained further that actions such as self-inflicted injury to avoid military service, a failure to present oneself for a medical examination, or a failure to receive draft notices sent by a military recruitment office as well as obtaining fake documents to get an exemption from military service are considered draft evasion.⁶⁶

After being drafted, conscripts receive a one- to two-month basic training, followed by advance training lasting from three to six months, after which they are sent to their designated units.⁶⁷ Not all conscripted young men are assigned directly to the armed forces, with some sent to serve at Rosgvardia or the Ministry of Emergency Situations.⁶⁸ The number of conscripts varies according to the type of service and units⁶⁹ but they constitute about a quarter of the Special Forces (*spetsnaz*).⁷⁰

Conscripts can sign a contract with the RAF after three months of obligatory military service. Those who decide to continue their obligatory military service instead of enlisting with the RAF on a contract basis are used, as summarised by researcher Joris Van Bladel,⁷¹ as personnel whose tasks are to ensure 'the functioning of the garrisons in their day-to-day routine': maintenance workers, drivers, security, and kitchen staff.⁷² After completing obligatory military service, former conscripts are registered in the reserve.⁷³

Many Russian young men, especially from a wealthier social class⁷⁴ and residents of large cities, such as Moscow and St Petersburg, try to avoid conscription. Legitimate ways to do this is to use a deferral due to studies or medical exemptions,⁷⁵ other options include paying bribes and forging university attendance.⁷⁶ Although the law requires that a draft notice must

⁶³ Russia, Уголовный кодекс Российской Федерации от 13.06.1996 N 63-ФЗ (ред. от 24.09.2022) [Criminal Code of the Russian Federation of 13.06.1996 N 63-FZ (version 24.09.2022)], 24 September 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁴ Russia, The Criminal Code of the Russian Federation No. 63-FZ of June 13, 1996, IMOLIN, 28 December 2004, [url](#); Russia, Уголовный кодекс Российской Федерации от 13.06.1996 N 63-ФЗ (ред. от 24.09.2022) [Criminal Code of the Russian Federation of 13.06.1996 N 63-FZ (version 24.09.2022)], 24 September 2022, [url](#)

⁶⁵ Russia, Дальнереченский муниципальный район [Dalnerechensk municipal district], 30 November 2020, [url](#)

⁶⁶ Prokuratura Chelyabinskoy oblasti, Evasion of military service, 4 December 2020, [url](#)

⁶⁷ ISW, Explainer on Russian Conscription, Reserve, and Mobilization, 5 March 2022, [url](#), p. 1

⁶⁸ Regional trends in 2021, The Military Balance, Vol. 122, 2022 p. 164

⁶⁹ Freeman, S.B and Kjellström Elgin K., What the use of Russian conscripts tells us about the war in Ukraine, Politico, 17 March 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁰ CSIS, The Best or Worst of Both Worlds?, 23 September 2020, [url](#)

⁷¹ Joris Van Bladel is a researcher at Egmont Royal Institute for International Relations whose areas of specialisation include Russian military and strategic culture, see, Egmont, Joris Van Bladel, n.d., [url](#)

⁷² Bladel, J. Van, Russian Spring 2022 Recruitment Cycle – Putin's Camouflaged Referendum? Egmont Policy Brief 284, July 2022, [url](#), pp. 2-3

⁷³ Human rights lawyer, Online interview with EUAA, 11 November 2022

⁷⁴ Conversation (The), Russian army: Putin details the next stage of the Ukraine war and who is being called up, 22 September 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁵ EU Reporter, More Russian men look to avoid military service, some lawyers and rights groups say, 12 July 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁶ Al Jazeera, Fearing front-line deployment, some Russians resist conscription, 18 March 2022, [url](#)





be delivered in person and signed upon receipt, recruitment officials used to leave draft notices in mailboxes which also offered potential conscripts a legitimate way to avoid conscription.⁷⁷ The unpopularity of the military service is reportedly connected to hazing (*dedovshchina*), which has created ‘the complete domination of junior soldiers by their elders and results ‘in a widespread culture of robbery, torture, and sexual assault.’⁷⁸

Conscription in 2022

In 2022, conscripts receive a monthly allowance ranging from 2 086 to 4 300 roubles [around 35 to 70 EUR], depending on duties and conditions of service.⁷⁹ The number of conscripts to be drafted for military service in 2022 was set at 254 000,⁸⁰ which is the lowest in the last ten years and 7 150 persons less than in 2021.⁸¹

On 31 March 2022, President Putin signed a decree ordering the spring draft to be conducted between 1 April and 15 July and stipulating that 134 000 conscripts would be drafted during the exercise.⁸² The MoD underlined that the spring conscription was not related to the special operation in Ukraine and that the conscripted men would not be sent to any ‘hot spots’,⁸³ which is a reported euphemism for the armed conflict in Ukraine.⁸⁴ By 11 July, 89 000 conscripts were reportedly assigned to their military units.⁸⁵ The launch of the spring conscription campaign sparked fears that new conscripts would be sent to Ukraine notwithstanding the statements by the authorities and many reached out to NGOs for legal support to avoid military service.⁸⁶

On 30 September 2022, Putin signed a decree to start the autumn conscription to draft 120 000 men. The conscription was set to take place from 1 November to 31 December.⁸⁷ The autumn draft started one month later than usual due to the ‘partial mobilisation’,⁸⁸ which was officially held between 21 September and 31 October 2022.⁸⁹ Similarly to the spring campaign, MoD said that the draft was not ‘in any way related to the special operation.’⁹⁰ The General Staff of the RAF, said that conscripts would not be used in hostilities in Ukraine and ‘the conscripts that are discharged upon the end of their service will be sent home.’⁹¹ According to the law, residents of 24 municipalities across five regions in Russia – Yakutia, Chukotka,

⁷⁷ Meduza, A history of forced conscription - A history of forced conscription Russia's first military draft of 2022 ends soon. That could spell danger for recent college graduates, 26 February 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁸ Post (The), The Russian army's number one problem? Hazing, 29 March 2022, [url](#)

⁷⁹ Neprizovnoy.ru, Размер зарплаты в РФ срочникам [Salary for conscripts in the army of RF], n.d., [url](#)

⁸⁰ Reuters, Russia drafts 134,500 conscripts but says they won't go to Ukraine, 31 March 2022, [url](#); TASS, Russia to start fall conscription on November 1, plans to call up 120,000 people, 30 September 2022, [url](#)

⁸¹ Statista, Number of military conscripts in Russia from 2012 to 2022, by draft, 2 November 2022, [url](#)

⁸² Reuters, Russia drafts 134,500 conscripts but says they won't go to Ukraine, 31 March 2022, [url](#)

⁸³ Reuters, Russia drafts 134,500 conscripts but says they won't go to Ukraine, 31 March 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁴ Al-Jazeera, Explainer: How does conscription work in Russia?, 5 May 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁵ Luzin, P., Russia's Military Manpower Crunch Will Worsen, CEPA, 21 September 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁶ Washington Post (The), As Russia drafts young men, some fear ending up on Ukraine's front line, 2 April 2022, Factiva

⁸⁷ TASS, Russia to start fall conscription on November 1, plans to call up 120,000 people, 30 September 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁸ Lenra.ru, В России с 1 ноября начинается осенний призыв. Где будут служить срочники и кому положена отсрочка? [The autumn conscription starts in Russia on 1 November. Where will conscripts serve and who is entitled to deferment?], 1 November 2022, [url](#)

⁸⁹ Reuters, After weeks of chaos, Russia says partial mobilisation is complete, 31 October 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁰ Reuters, Russia's Putin signs decree on routine autumn conscription – TASS, 30 September 2022, [url](#)

⁹¹ TASS, Russia to start fall conscription on November 1, plans to call up 120,000 people, 30 September 2022, [url](#)





Transbaikal, Kamchatka and Khabarovsk territories – are drafted only in the spring draft. According to the authorities, there would be no conscription in the occupied DNR, LNR, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia regions.⁹² As of 27 November 2022, no information that the persons in abovementioned occupied regions would be still drafted under semi-annual conscription was found. In a separate process, self-appointed leaders of DNR and LNR have ordered mobilisation of their population on 19 February 2022.⁹³

1.2.2. Exemptions and deferrals from military service

The reasons for draft exemption are defined by Article 23 of the Law on Military Duty and Military Service of 1998. The exemption is made for persons who were found unfit due to health-related reasons, persons who have completed the obligatory military service or alternative service, persons with an academic degree, and persons whose father or brother died while performing military service or training or as result of an injury received during military service. Other groups exempted from military service are convicts serving their sentence, persons with an outstanding criminal record, or persons under investigation.⁹⁴

There is a list of medical illnesses that disqualify a person from entry to military service.⁹⁵ The list is a part of a regulation on army medical examination of 4 July 2013. Based on the assigned category, which is designated by the first five letters of the Cyrillic alphabet (А, Б, В, Г, Д),⁹⁶ some of the listed medical conditions exempt the person from military service and others limit the person's military duty to service in a certain branch of military forces or give a temporary exemption.⁹⁷

Deferral conditions are stipulated in Article 24 of the Law on Military Duty and Military Service of 1998. Deferral is granted if a person is found temporarily unfit for military service (up to one year) or is a full-time student. Deferral is also provided if a person delivers care for their relatives who need constant assistance or supervision on health grounds, has been assigned as a permanent custodian or guardian of his underage sibling, is a single father, has two or more children, has a child with a disability under the age of three,⁹⁸ or has a child and a pregnant wife (over 22 weeks). Employment with certain institutions can also provide a ground for deferral from military service. These institutions comprise the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Federal Fire Service, law enforcement agencies, customs authorities, and Rosgvardia. Deferral

⁹² Lenra.ru, В России с 1 ноября начинается осенний призыв. Где будут служить срочники и кому положена отсрочка? [The autumn conscription starts in Russia on 1 November. Where will conscripts serve and who is entitled to deferment?], 1 November 2022, [url](#)

⁹³ Reuters, Separatist leaders in eastern Ukraine declare full military mobilisation, 19 February 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁴ Russia, MoD, Draft exemption and deterrents, n.d., [url](#); Russia, Законы, кодексы и нормативно-правовые акты Российской Федерации [Laws, codes and regulations of the Russian Federation], Федеральный закон от 28.03.1998 N 53-ФЗ (ред. от 24.09.2022) "О воинской обязанности и военной службе" [Federal Law of 28 March 1998 N 53-FZ (version of 24 September 2022) On Military Duty and Military Service], [url](#)

⁹⁵ Al Jazeera, Explainer: How does conscription work in Russia?, 5 May 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁶ Fontanka.ru, Болезнь по расписанию. Рассказываем, что дает отсрочку от мобилизации и кто признается годным к службе [Disease on the table. We tell you what gives you a deferral from mobilisation and who is deemed fit to serve], 23 September 2022, [url](#)

⁹⁷ Prizyva.net, Расписание болезней: инструкция [Table of diseases: the instructions], n.d., [url](#)

⁹⁸ Russia, MoD, Draft exemption and deterrents, n.d., [url](#); Russia, Законы, кодексы и нормативно-правовые акты Российской Федерации [Laws, codes and regulations of the Russian Federation], Федеральный закон от 28.03.1998 N 53-ФЗ (ред. от 24.09.2022) "О воинской обязанности и военной службе" [Federal Law of 28 March 1998 N 53-FZ (version of 24 September 2022) On Military Duty and Military Service], [url](#)



is also granted to persons elected as deputies in the State Duma, the legislative bodies of the state authorities of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation, or local government (for the time of the employment) or persons registered as an office seeker of federal or local authorities.⁹⁹

In March 2022, a deferral from statutory military service was granted to IT specialists¹⁰⁰ who have a university degree in such fields as mathematics, computer science, physics, etc., are employed full-time, and have worked in the profession at least for 11 months or had started to work within 1 year after completion of studies. The employer must submit the documents about the employment to the Ministry of Digital Development, Communications, and Mass Media, which then forwards them to MoD.¹⁰¹ This deferral was granted under the governmental regulation of 28 March which was issued in compliance with the presidential order [informal translation] 'On measures to ensure the accelerated development of the information technology industry in the Russian Federation.'¹⁰²

1.2.3. Alternative civil service

Conscientious objectors have a right to substitute active military service with alternative civil service (*alternativnaya grazhdanskaya sluzhba*, AGS).¹⁰³ This right is stipulated by Article 59.3 of the Russian Constitution and is applied if a person's 'convictions or religious beliefs contradict military service'¹⁰⁴ or 'in other cases envisaged by the federal law.'¹⁰⁵ The right to substitute military service with alternative civil service is also applicable to young men from small indigenous ethnic minorities who pursue a traditional way of life.¹⁰⁶ Alternative civil service is regulated by the Federal Law 'On Alternative Civil Service.'¹⁰⁷ The period of alternative civil service is either 18 or 21 months, depending on the profile of the organisation where it is performed.¹⁰⁸ As explained by MoD, 18-month service is applied if a person is engaged as civilian personnel at the RAF or other military institutions.¹⁰⁹

A person who wants to choose alternative service on the grounds of religious beliefs or personal convictions must follow a bureaucratic procedure,¹¹⁰ which consists of a written application, substantiated by documentation and/or witness statements.¹¹¹ As noted by Sergey

⁹⁹ Russia, Законы, кодексы и нормативно-правовые акты Российской Федерации [Laws, codes and regulations of the Russian Federation], Федеральный закон от 28.03.1998 N 53-ФЗ (ред. от 24.09.2022) "О воинской обязанности и военной службе" [Federal Law of 28 March 1998 N 53-FZ (version of 24 September 2022) On Military Duty and Military Service], [url](#)

¹⁰⁰ Economic Times, Russia 'postpones' military service for IT specialists, 29 March 2022, 29 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰¹ Prizyva.net, Призыв в армию в 2022 году [Conscription in 2022], 3 November 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰² Russia, Правительство Российской Федерации – Постановление от 28 марта 2022 года, No 490 [The Government of the Russian Federation – Regulation of 28 March 2022, No. 490], 28 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰³ Al Jazeera, Fearing front-line deployment, some Russians resist conscription, 18 March 2022, [url](#); Al-Jazeera, Explainer: How does conscription work in Russia?, 5 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁴ Russia, The Constitution of the Russian Federation, n.d., [url](#); Al Jazeera, Explainer: How does conscription work in Russia?, 5 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁵ Russia, The Constitution of the Russian Federation, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁰⁶ TASS, Farewell to Arms: Russia's 'alternative' to military service, 1 April 2017, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Fearing front-line deployment, some Russians resist conscription, 18 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷ Russia, MoD, Alternative service, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁰⁸ Prizyva.net, Призыв в армию в 2022 году [Conscription in 2022], 3 November 2022, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹ MoD, Alternative Service in the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, n.d., [url](#)

¹¹⁰ Al Jazeera, Fearing front-line deployment, some Russians resist conscription, 18 March 2022, [url](#)

¹¹¹ Prizyva.net, Призыв в армию в 2022 году [Conscription in 2022], 3 November 2022, [url](#)



Krivenko, the head of the human rights group Citizen. Army. Law., in his interview with the Danish Immigration Service (DIS) in May 2022, the right to apply for alternative service is used only during enlistment and it does not apply to people already undergoing military service.¹¹² For information on alternative civil service under the ‘partial’ mobilisation order, see chapter 2.2.2. Legal ways to avoid mobilisation.

According to data from MoD, as reported by Al Jazeera in May 2022, the yearly number of applications for alternative service is around 2 000, with an estimated half of them receiving a positive decision.¹¹³ According to the statistics of the Federal Service of Labour and Employment, 1 152 young men were enrolled in alternative civil service as of 1 February 2022.¹¹⁴

According to Article 328.2 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, evasion from alternative civil service is ‘punishable by a fine in the amount of up to 80 thousand roubles [1 310 EUR], or in the amount of the wage or salary, or any other income of the convicted person for a period up to six months, or by compulsory labour for a term of 180 to 240 hours, or by arrest for three to six months.’¹¹⁵

As reported by Jehovah’s Witnesses Office of Public Information to UN OHCHR in March 2022, there have been instances in which conscripts, fearing to reveal their religious affiliation, have requested alternative civil service on the grounds of personal convictions which has made the substantiation of their requests more difficult. The source also reported that the conscripts requesting alternative civil service on the grounds of their religious beliefs have been threatened by members of recruitment commissions and their requests have been rejected.¹¹⁶ Jehovah’s Witnesses was banned in Russia as an ‘extremist’ organisation and its members face raids, detentions, and arrests.¹¹⁷

1.3. Contract military service

Contract soldiers are concentrated in the cadre and elite units, especially the airborne units.¹¹⁸ As explained by MoD, servicemen who are to join the forces under contract are to pass ‘the rigid multi-level system of selection of candidates’, which includes mandatory instruction in training centres of educational institutions in preparation for contracts.¹¹⁹

¹¹² Denmark, DIS, Rusland – Militærtjeneste [Russia – Military Service], July 2022, [url](#), p. 61

¹¹³ Al Jazeera, Explainer: How does conscription work in Russia?, 5 May 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁴ News.ru, Сознательные отказчики: у призывников вырос интерес к альтернативной службе [Conscientious objectors: interest in alternative service among conscripts increased], 16 May 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁵ Russia, The Criminal Code of the Russian Federation No. 63-FZ of June 13, 1996, IMOLIN, 28 December 2004, [url](#); Russia, Уголовный кодекс Российской Федерации от 13.06.1996 N 63-ФЗ (ред. от 24.09.2022) [Criminal Code of the Russian Federation of 13.06.1996 N 63-FZ (version 24.09.2022)], 24 September 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁶ Jehovah’s Witnesses, Office of Public Information, Information on Conscientious Objection to Military Service Involving Jehovah’s Witnesses, Contribution for OHCHR Quadrennial Analytical Report on Conscientious Objection to Military Service, 21 March 2022, [url](#), p. 12

¹¹⁷ USCIRF, Russia’s Persecution of Jehovah’s Witnesses, 14 October 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁸ ISW, Explainer on Russian Conscription, Reserve, and Mobilization, 5 March 2022, [url](#)

¹¹⁹ Russia, MoD, Contract service, n.d, [url](#)



There are two ways to enlist in contract service with the RAF. Russian men from the age of 18 can join the ranks of contract soldiers by applying at a military enlistment office,¹²⁰ signing a temporary contract with MoD.¹²¹ Moreover, former conscripts are offered to sign a contract after completing their one-year obligatory military service and the employment at the RAF is accepted by many.¹²² If a conscript has obtained a university degree or completed a vocational education by the time he has started obligatory military service, he can opt to enlist as a contract soldier instead of starting the obligatory one-year military service and is offered to do so by recruitment officers. Conscripts can also sign a contract with the RAF after completing three months of their military service (instead of continuing the obligatory one-year service) and are ‘pressed by their commanders to do this.’¹²³

Before May 2022, the age limits for signing a first contract with RAF were 18 – 40 for Russian nationals and 18 – 30 for foreign nationals.¹²⁴ In May 2022, the State Duma approved a bill to raise the upper age limit for enlistment in the RAF on a contractual basis.¹²⁵ Signed by the president, the new law removed the upper age limit of 40¹²⁶ and enabled men up to the age of 65 to enlist.¹²⁷ As explained by Russian lawmakers, the change of the legislation was made to attract ‘highly professional specialists’ who would use ‘high-precision weapons and operate weapons and military equipment’¹²⁸ as well as medical personnel and engineering specialists.¹²⁹

1.4. Reserve

There are two types of reserves (*Zapas Vooruzhennyh Sil*) in the Russian military system.¹³⁰ The general reserve is defined as ‘inactive mobilisation reserve’ or ‘mobilisation human resource.’¹³¹ It consists of persons who:

- were discharged from the RAF and then enrolled in the reserve of the RAF;
- have completed their military service or alternative civil service;
- have completed studies at a military educational institution or a training at military training centers at state educational institutions;
- have been exempted from military service or have obtained a deferral from military service until reaching the age of 27;
- have not been subjected for military service because of reaching the age of 27;

¹²⁰ Russian Federation, MoD, Contract Service – Terms of admission, n.d., [url](#)

¹²¹ DW, Russian soldiers being jailed in occupied Donbas, 8 April 2022, [url](#)

¹²² Human rights lawyer, Online interview with EUAA, 11 November 2022

¹²³ Luzin, P., Russia’s Military Manpower Crunch Will Worsen, CEPA, 21 September 2022, [url](#); Pavel Chikov, Telegram, 2 March 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁴ RFR/RL, Russian Duma Approves Bill Raising Age Limit For Military Personnel To 65, 25 May 2022, [url](#); Reuters, Russia scraps age limit for new troops in Ukraine push, 29 March 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁵ RFR/RL, Russian Duma Approves Bill Raising Age Limit For Military Personnel To 65, 25 May 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁶ Reuters, Russia scraps age limit for new troops in Ukraine push, 29 March 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁷ Reuters, Russia scraps age limit for new troops in Ukraine push, 29 March 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁸ Moscow Times (The), Russian Lawmakers Scrap Upper Age Limit for Military Service, 25 May 2022, [url](#)

¹²⁹ RFR/RL, Russian Duma Approves Bill Raising Age Limit For Military Personnel To 65, 25 May 2022, [url](#);

¹³⁰ Global Security.org, Russia – Military, Reserves, n.d., [url](#); Russia, Законы, кодексы и нормативно-правовые акты Российской Федерации [Laws, codes and regulations of the Russian Federation], Федеральный закон от 28.03.1998 N 53-ФЗ (ред. от 24.09.2022) О воинской обязанности и военной службе [Federal Law of 28 March 1998 N 53-FZ (version of 24 September 2022) “On Military Duty and Military Service”], [url](#), see Article 51.2.

¹³¹ Cranny-Evans, S., Understanding Russia’s Mobilisation, RUSI, 28 September 2022, [url](#)



- have not completed obligatory military service without having a legal basis for exemption;
- women who have acquired military specialisations.¹³²

While the head of MoD claimed that there were 25 million people with combat experience in the RAF's reserve, the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) noted that this was a 'wildly' exaggerated number.¹³³ Article 53 of the Federal Law on Military Duty and Military Service divides persons in the RAF's reserve into three categories, as displayed in the table below:

Table 1. Persons in the RAF's reserve

	Age of Russian nationals in the RAF's reserve		
	First tier	Second tier	Third tier
Soldiers, sailors, sergeants, petty officers, warrant officers, and midshipmen	up to 35	up to 45	up to 50
Junior officers	up to 50	up to 55	up to 60
Majors, Captains of the 3rd rank, Lieutenant Colonels, Captains of the 2nd rank	up to 55	up to 60	up to 65
Colonels, Captains of the 1st rank	up to 60	up to 65	
Superior officers	up to 65	up to 70	

Source: *Federal Law on Military Duty and Military Service*, informal translation¹³⁴

The indication of a category of person in the RAF's reserve is indicated in the person's military service record card. In case of a mobilisation, the persons who have an indication of a first tier in their card are to be called to the service first.¹³⁵ According to Article 53, women in the RAF's

¹³² Obyasnyаем.rf. Чем отличаются военнообязанные, находящиеся в запасе, от резервистов? [What is the difference between the people in the reserve and reservists?], 26 September 2022, [url](#)

¹³³ ISW, Russian Defense Minister Sergei #Shoigu's interview offers more insight into what the Russian "partial mobilization" really means. We will unpack some of the key points in this thread, Twitter, 21 September 2022, [url](#)

¹³⁴ Russia, Законы, кодексы и нормативно-правовые акты Российской Федерации [Laws, codes and regulations of the Russian Federation], Федеральный закон от 28.03.1998 N 53-ФЗ (ред. от 24.09.2022) "О воинской обязанности и военной службе" [Federal Law of 28 March 1998 N 53-FZ (version of 24 September 2022) On Military Duty and Military Service], [url](#), see Article 53.

¹³⁵ Sluzhba podderzhki, Telegram, 21 September, [url](#)





reserve are assigned the third category. Women in officer rank remain in the reserve until reaching the age of 50, others remain until they reach the age of 45.¹³⁶

Next to the general reserve described above, there is also an active mobilisation reserve, defined as ‘mobilisation human reserve’¹³⁷, which consists of persons who have completed military service and acquired a military rank or have completed military training for army officers in reserve¹³⁸ and signed a contract with a military unit commander.¹³⁹ Persons included into the active mobilisation reserve commit to taking part in military training, for which they receive financial compensation.¹⁴⁰ The first contract is signed for three years. Every subsequent contract is signed for a period of three or five years, or for a shorter period if a person reaches the age limit to be included in the reserve.¹⁴¹ According to International Institute for Strategic Studies, Russia’s reserve was estimated at two million people.¹⁴² However, as noted by ISW, the country had not been able to ensure a regular training for the reservists.¹⁴³

In August 2021, an initiative ‘to create a high-readiness mobilisation reserve force’ called BARS-2021 (National Army Combat Reserve, *Boevoy Armeyskiy Rezerv Strany*) was launched in the Southern Military District¹⁴⁴ (previously, the North Caucasus Military District, to which Crimea was added in 2014¹⁴⁵), which has the headquarters in Rostov-on-Don.¹⁴⁶ Within the initiative aimed at recruiting, it was planned to recruit 38 000 reservists, who were to sign a three-year contract ‘as reserve soldiers, sergeants, and officers’ and become assigned to a specific military unit.¹⁴⁷ As reported by ISW, based on Russian-language sources, ‘[e]ligible reservists included soldiers younger than 42, junior officers younger than 47, colonels younger than 57, and other senior officials younger than 52.’¹⁴⁸ It was planned that the reservists ‘would attend military-training camps for three weeks’ once a year.¹⁴⁹ According to researcher Sam Cranny-Evans,¹⁵⁰ 9 000 contracts within BARS initiative were signed in the Central Military

¹³⁶ Russia, Законы, кодексы и нормативно-правовые акты Российской Федерации [Laws, codes and regulations of the Russian Federation], Федеральный закон от 28.03.1998 N 53-ФЗ (ред. от 24.09.2022) "О воинской обязанности и военной службе" [Federal Law of 28 March 1998 N 53-FZ (version of 24 September 2022) On Military Duty and Military Service], [url](#)

¹³⁷ Global Security.org, Russia – Military, Reserves, n.d., [url](#)

¹³⁸ Russia, Ofitsialny sait goroda Novosibirska, О мобилизационном резерве [About the mobilisation reserve], 24 February 2022, [url](#)

¹³⁹ Riarno, Военный призыв весной 2022 года: что нужно знать [Military draft in the spring of 2022: what you need to know], 21 May 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴⁰ Pavel Chikov, Telegram, 10 March 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴¹ Russia, Ofitsialny sait goroda Novosibirska, О мобилизационном резерве [About the mobilisation reserve], 24 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴² How Do the Militaries of Russia and Ukraine Stack Up?, 4 February 2022, [url](#)

¹⁴³ ISW, Explainer on Russian Conscription, Reserve, and Mobilization, 5 March 2022, [url](#), p. 2

¹⁴⁴ Regional trends in 2021, The Military Balance, Vol. 122, 2022, p. 168

¹⁴⁵ OSW, Eyes west! A shift in focus in Russia’s Southern Military District, 8 September 2020, [url](#)

¹⁴⁶ Regional trends in 2021, The Military Balance, Vol. 122, 2022, p. 188

¹⁴⁷ Regional trends in 2021, The Military Balance, Vol. 122, 2022, p. 168

¹⁴⁸ ISW, Explainer on Russian Conscription, Reserve, and Mobilization, 5 March 2022, [url](#), p. 2

¹⁴⁹ Regional trends in 2021, The Military Balance, Vol. 122, 2022, p. 168

¹⁵⁰ Sam Cranny-Evans is a Research Analyst at Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), see, RUSI, Sam Cranny-Evans, [url](#)





District,¹⁵¹ which has headquarters in Yekaterinburg.¹⁵² BARS reservists have been reportedly deployed to Ukraine to participate in the hostilities.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Cranny-Evans, S., Understanding Russia's Mobilisation, RUSI, 28 September 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵² Regional trends in 2021, The Military Balance, Vol. 122, 2022, p. 203

¹⁵³ Cranny-Evans, S., Understanding Russia's Mobilisation, RUSI, 28 September 2022, [url](#)



2. Mobilisation

2.1. The scope of the ‘partial’ mobilisation

On 21 September 2022, President Putin signed an order on a ‘partial mobilisation in the Russian Federation’. According to the presidential order, Russian nationals called for military service would have the status of contract servicemen.¹⁵⁴ The mobilisation was named ‘partial’ as it had to be applied to only those Russian nationals who had previously served in the Russian military forces and had acquired certain specialisations,¹⁵⁵ such as riflemen, tank operators, artillery gunners, drivers, and driver-mechanics.¹⁵⁶

According to MoD, the mobilisation aimed at calling to the service 300 000 reserve servicemen,¹⁵⁷ which constituted 1.2 % of the number of the people listed in the reserve.¹⁵⁸ As explained by a rear admiral, who spoke with the independent news outlet Meduza as an official representative of the RAF, mobilisation was to ‘affect rank-and-file soldiers up to 35 years old, junior officers up to 50 years old, and senior officers up to 55 years old’. According to the source, the first reservists who would be drafted were those with the most required military skills and combat experience. The source also noted that the need for medical support, in which women could be engaged, was minimal.¹⁵⁹

The mobilisation order was met with criticism because of lack of transparency. Critics said that despite the mobilisation was named ‘partial’, the non-classified articles of the order contained no definitions according to which the drafting of the reservists could be limited.¹⁶⁰ The 7th paragraph of the decree, which is supposed to have the target number of people to be drafted under the mobilisation order, is classified.¹⁶¹ According to Novaya Gazeta, this paragraph would allow to draft up to one million reservists,¹⁶² while Meduza, referring to its sources in ‘one of the country’s federal ministries,’ gave a number of 1.2 million.¹⁶³ The Kremlin has denied these claims.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁴ Russia, President of Russia, Executive Order on partial mobilisation in the Russian Federation, 21 September 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵⁵ RUSI, Vladimir Putin’s Speech – Scrutinised, 22 September 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵⁶ Meduza, Russia’s not-so-partial ‘partial mobilization’ More details emerge about the Kremlin’s draft, 22 September 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵⁷ Garant.ru, Частичная мобилизация – 2022: краткие ответы на важные вопросы [Partial mobilisation - 2022: short answers to important questions], 22 September 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵⁸ Vazhnye Istorii, Какие регионы отдали больше всего мужчин на войну [Which regions sent more men to the war], 5 October 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵⁹ Meduza, Russia’s not-so-partial ‘partial mobilization’ More details emerge about the Kremlin’s draft, 22 September 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁰ Radio Svoboda, На сухопутных пограничных пунктах в России – очереди из автомобилей [Car queues at Russian land border checkpoints], 22 September 2022, [url](#); Alexander Pomazuev, interview with EUAA, 9 November 2022

¹⁶¹ Meduza, Rostov and Kursk governors announce ‘second wave’ of mobilization, 11 October 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶² Novaya Gazeta, Kremlin source: hidden article in Putin’s mobilisation order allows Russia to draft one million people, 22 September 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶³ Meduza, Russia to conscript 1.2 million people, 23 September 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁴ RFE/RL, Russia Continues Crackdown On Spreading Anti-Mobilization Protests As Draft Criticism Grows, 26 September 2022, [url](#)



Uncertainty about the profiles of people who would be mobilised created a panic across the country.¹⁶⁵ Novaya Gazeta reported that 261 000 Russian men left the country between 21 and 24 September 2022.¹⁶⁶

On 4 October 2022, MoD reported that 200 000 people had been drafted under the mobilisation order of 21 September.¹⁶⁷ Research by independent media project Vazhnye Istorii (Stories that Matter, alternatively Important Stories) and Conflict Intelligence Team (CIT), published on 5 October 2022, found that 212 200 people were drafted in 53 out of 85 administrative regions of Russia, which suggested that the number of people drafted across the country should be higher.¹⁶⁸ Independent news outlet Mediazona has calculated, based on the number of marriages that were registered after the announcement of the mobilisation, that 492 000 men were drafted country-wide by mid-October.¹⁶⁹ EUAA was not able to verify the methodology used by the source.

As reported by Meduza, there were no official quotas on the number of people to be drafted. However, each federal subject of the Russian Federation had a ‘separate target’ for the number of servicemen to draft, which was based on ‘existing human mobilisation reserves.’¹⁷⁰ Several regions reported applying additional mobilisation quotas.¹⁷¹ On 11 October 2022, the governor of Rostov region said that the regional authorities had received ‘a new mobilisation assignment’. The same day, a start of a ‘second wave’ of mobilisation was announced by the government of Kursk region.¹⁷² In mid-October, additional quotas were also announced by the authorities of Voronezh region and Udmurtia.¹⁷³ According to a human rights lawyer, interviewed by EUAA in November 2022, the target numbers for people to be drafted during the mobilisation had been adjusted on several occasions. According to the source, the initial target for Tatarstan comprised 10 000 men and was reduced to 3 000 after a wave of public dissent; after some time, the target was raised to 8 000. The source said that this has likely happened also in other regions, in which there was concern about the public’s reaction.¹⁷⁴

On 28 October 2022, the Minister of Defence Sergei Shoigu announced that the mobilisation was completed. The minister reported that 82 000 of 300 000 drafted persons were deployed to Ukraine and 218 000 were undergoing training.¹⁷⁵ Legal experts have noted that the mobilisation can be completed only with a presidential order, as the order about the

¹⁶⁵ Klain D., Mobilization Can’t Save Russia’s War, FP, 4 October 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁶ Novaya Gazeta, Sources: FSB reports 260,000 men left Russia, wants to close borders, 26 September 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁷ Meduza, Rostov and Kursk governors announce ‘second wave’ of mobilization, 11 October 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁸ Vazhnye Istorii, Какие регионы отдали больше всего мужчин на войну [Which regions sent more men to the war], 5 October 2022, [url](#); Meduza, A new report shows discrepancies in Russian draft statistics 213,000 have been mobilized in Russia — but this only accounts for two-thirds of its regions, not the whole nation, as claimed by Shoigu, 5 October 2022, [url](#)

¹⁶⁹ Mediazona, Married and drafted. Almost half a million Russian men were mobilised in a month based on a spike in marriages, 25 October 2022, [url](#).

¹⁷⁰ Meduza, Russia's not-so-partial 'partial mobilization' More details emerge about the Kremlin's draft, 22 September 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷¹ Novaya Gazeta, Mobilisation gets dodgy, 14 October 2022, [url](#); A human rights lawyer, Online interview with EUAA, 11 November 2022

¹⁷² Meduza, Rostov and Kursk governors announce ‘second wave’ of mobilization, 11 October 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷³ Novaya Gazeta, Mobilisation gets dodgy, 14 October 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁴ A human rights lawyer, Online interview with EUAA, 11 November 2022

¹⁷⁵ Reuters, Russia's partial mobilisation is complete, Shoigu says, 28 October 2022, [url](#)





beginning of the mobilisation has no end date.¹⁷⁶ According to Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov, there was no need for a presidential decree to end the mobilisation and there would be no new mobilisation wave in the framework of the existing presidential decree.¹⁷⁷

2.2. Legal framework of the mobilisation order

The legal basis for mobilisation is laid down by two federal laws: on Mobilisation Preparations and Mobilisation and on Military Duty and Military Service.¹⁷⁸ The draft process is carried out at regional and municipal levels via conscription commissions dealing with mobilisation. Prior to the conscription under the mobilisation, a commission must carry out a medical examination, based on which a draftee is assigned one of the categories, designated by first five letters of the Cyrillic alphabet: *А* – ‘fit for military service’; *Б* – ‘fit with minor restrictions’; *В* – ‘fit with limitations’; *Г* – ‘temporarily unfit for military service’; *Д* – ‘unfit for military service.’ People recognised as ‘temporarily unfit’ get a deferment from conscription for six months and people who were established to be ‘unfit’ are not conscripted and removed from the reserve.¹⁷⁹

2.2.1. Exemptions and deferrals

According to Article 18 of the Federal Law on Mobilisation Preparations and Mobilisation, a deferral from conscription under mobilisation conditions is granted to people who:

- are found unfit for military service (the deferral is up to 6 months);
- provide care for family members in need of constant assistance on health grounds;
- were assigned as a permanent custodian or a guardian for their minor sibling;
- have 4 or more dependent children under the age of 16 or are a single father of at least one child under the age of 16 (for women: have at least one child under the age of 16 or are over 22 weeks pregnant);
- have a pregnant wife (over 22 weeks) and 3 dependent children under the age of 16;
- have 4 or more siblings under the age of eight raised only by a mother;
- are members of the Federation Council or the State Duma.¹⁸⁰

On 4 November 2022, the abovementioned law was amended to include deferral for people who joined volunteer military formations.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁶ Novaya Gazeta, At least 100 Russian conscripts drafted to fight in Ukraine confirmed dead so far, 1 November 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁷ Novaya Gazeta, Kremlin: there is no ‘need’ for presidential decree on end of mobilisation in Russia, 1 November 2022, [url](#); Fontanka.ru, Указ об окончании мобилизации — нужен или нет? «Фонтанка» посоветовалась с юристами [Is the decree on ending mobilisation necessary or not? "Fontanka talks to lawyers"], 1 November 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁸ Russia, President of Russia, Executive Order on partial mobilisation in the Russian Federation, 21 September 2022, [url](#)

¹⁷⁹ Pavel Chikov, Telegram, 22 September 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁰ Lidings, Deferral from Conscription for Military Service on Mobilisation, 19 October 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸¹ Russia, Федеральный закон от 26 февраля 1997 г. N 31-ФЗ "О мобилизационной подготовке и мобилизации в Российской Федерации" (с изменениями и дополнениями) [Federal Act No. 31-FZ of 26 February 1997 on mobilization training and mobilization in the Russian Federation (as amended)], 4 November 2022, [url](#)





According to Article 18, a deferral is also to be granted to ‘other citizens or certain categories of citizens’ who would be given a right for a deferral by a presidential order.¹⁸² A decree signed by President Putin on 21 September granted exemption from the mobilisation draft to people employed by defence sector companies.¹⁸³ On 24 September, deferrals were granted to full-time and part-time students ‘enrolled in educational programmes of a corresponding level for the first time,’¹⁸⁴ in the amended version of the order, a deferral was extended to such groups as post-graduate students and researchers.¹⁸⁵

On 23 September, MoD announced that IT sector employees, bankers, and state media journalists would not be drafted under the mobilisation order. MoD stated that employers are to be asked to prepare a list of employees who meet the criteria and submit it to MoD offices.¹⁸⁶

On 3 October, fathers of three and more children under the age of 16 were exempted from the draft.¹⁸⁷

According to military officials, other groups which were exempted from conscription under the mobilisation were retired veterans removed from the draft register as well as Russian nationals who lived abroad and were removed from the draft register in Russia.¹⁸⁸ For information on implementation of the rules on exemptions and deferrals, see chapter [2.3.1. Irregularities reported during the mobilisation.](#)

2.2.2. Legal ways to avoid mobilisation

Lawyers and NGOs reported being ‘overwhelmed by demands for support’ on how to avoid the draft under the mobilisation order.¹⁸⁹ Anti-mobilisation activists advised Russian men to avoid reporting to military recruitment offices to avoid being drafted immediately.¹⁹⁰

Similar to delivery of a draft notice for obligatory military service, draft notice under the mobilisation terms must be delivered in person and signed upon receipt.¹⁹¹ Leaving a draft notice in a mailbox or handing it to relatives is against the law, and a failure to follow a draft notice delivered in this way would bring ‘no legal consequences or liability.’ A draft notice may be also served to a person at their work or study place.¹⁹² Failure to receive a draft notice is punishable in accordance with Article 21.5 of the Code of Administrative Offences with a fine

¹⁸² Lidings, Deferral from Conscription for Military Service on Mobilisation, 19 October 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸³ Russia, President of Russia, Executive Order on partial mobilisation in the Russian Federation, 21 September 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁴ Russia, President of Russia, Executive Order On Deferment of Conscription for Military Service during Mobilisation, 24 September 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁵ Russia, President of Russia, Amendments to Executive Order On Deferment of Conscription for Military Service during Mobilisation, 6 October 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁶ BBC, Ukraine war: Russia reveals exemptions as men flee call-up, 23 September 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁷ Novaya Gazeta Europe, Drafted Russian father of three killed in Ukraine, 21 October 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁸ Meduza, Russia's not-so-partial 'partial mobilization' More details emerge about the Kremlin's draft, 22 September 2022, [url](#)

¹⁸⁹ Reuters, Lawyers overwhelmed by requests to help Russians avoid fighting in Ukraine, 4 October 2022, [url](#)

¹⁹⁰ Guardian (The), Kremlin attempts to calm Russian fury over chaotic mobilization, 1 October 2022, [url](#)

¹⁹¹ Moscow Times (The), ‘I Don’t Trust What They Say’: Russian Draft Dodgers Stay in Hiding Even as Putin Announces Mobilization’s End, 2 November 2022, [url](#)

¹⁹² ALRUD, Answers to the most common questions about partial mobilisation, 7 October 2022, [url](#), p. 4



of up to 3 000 roubles [50 EUR].¹⁹³ According to a human rights lawyer, interviewed by EUAA in November 2022, there were ‘just a few such cases’ as they must be initiated by military recruitment offices, and they have no resources for that.¹⁹⁴

Article 21 of the Federal Law on Mobilisation Preparations and Mobilisation stipulates that the Russian nationals who are subject to mobilisation should report to assembly points (*sborny punkt*) as specified in mobilisation orders, draft notices, or orders by relevant authorities. It also prohibits the Russian nationals appearing on the draft register from leaving their place of residence without a special permission by relevant authorities.¹⁹⁵ However, the law does not stipulate a punishment for leaving one’s place of residence.¹⁹⁶

As explained by a human rights lawyer in November 2022, a draft notice requires a person to report themselves to a military recruitment office for a medical examination. Following the decision of the medical commission, the person is either sent back or receives instructions to come at a certain date to an assembly point, after which he is considered a military man. After this, a person can be punished in accordance with the current legislation on military service.¹⁹⁷

According to the experts interviewed by EUAA in November 2022, alternative civil service was not granted to people who had received a draft notice under the mobilisation order.¹⁹⁸ The same information was provided on the official portal ‘Explain.rf’.¹⁹⁹

2.3. Implementation of the mobilisation order

Local authorities started issuing draft notices immediately after the announcement of the mobilisation.²⁰⁰ The day after the mobilisation was announced, media reported that draft notices were delivered to eligible men in the middle of the night,²⁰¹ after which they were given an hour to pack their things and appear at enlistment centres.²⁰² Media sources

¹⁹³ Russia, Кодекс Российской Федерации об административных правонарушениях, от 30.12.2001 N 195-ФЗ (ред. от 04.11.2022) [“Code of Administrative Offences of the Russian Federation, of 30.12.2001 No 195-FZ (amended on 04.11.2022), n.d., [url](#)]

¹⁹⁴ Human rights lawyer, Online interview with EUAA, 11 November 2022

¹⁹⁵ Russia, Федеральный закон от 26 февраля 1997 г. N 31-ФЗ “О мобилизационной подготовке и мобилизации в Российской Федерации” (с изменениями и дополнениями) [Federal Act No. 31-FZ of 26 February 1997 on mobilization training and mobilization in the Russian Federation (as amended)], 4 November 2022, [url](#)

¹⁹⁶ Meduza, ‘Prepare to stand up for your convictions’ During mobilization, escaping the draft is a legal problem for many Russians. Here’s a military lawyer’s advice for those who don’t want to fight., 22 September 2022, [url](#)

¹⁹⁷ Human rights lawyer, Online interview with EUAA, 11 November 2022

¹⁹⁸ Alexander Pomazuev, Online interview with EUAA, 9 November 2022; Human rights lawyer, Online interview with EUAA, 11 November 2022

¹⁹⁹ Russian Free Press, The Russian authorities said that alternative service during mobilization is not provided, 25 September 2022, [url](#)

²⁰⁰ Meduza, ‘Prepare to stand up for your convictions’ During mobilization, escaping the draft is a legal problem for many Russians. Here’s a military lawyer’s advice for those who don’t want to fight., 22 September 2022, [url](#); Caucasian Knot, Elderly reserve officer mobilized in Volgograd Region despite conclusion of doctors, 23 September 2022, [url](#); Bathon, R., Putin’s cannon fodder, IPS, 28 September 2022, [url](#)

²⁰¹ Guardian (The), ‘It’s a 100% mobilisation: day one of Russia’s drive to build its army, 22 September 2022, [url](#); Mediazona, Son-in-law, husband, son, father. First days of the special mobilisation operation in the Republic of Buryatia, 1 October 2022, [url](#)

²⁰² Guardian (The), ‘It’s a 100% mobilisation: day one of Russia’s drive to build its army, 22 September 2022, [url](#)



reported that draft notices had been distributed at factories.²⁰³ In Nizhny Novgorod, 37 workers were reportedly ‘mobilised’ while at work and sent to a military unit for training.²⁰⁴ In mid-October, it was reported that draft notices requiring men to report to a military recruitment office were handed out at passport offices in St. Petersburg and Leningrad region.²⁰⁵

During the first week since the announcement of the mobilisation order, thousands of men across the country were reportedly drafted into the RAF.²⁰⁶ On 22 September, the Guardian noted that ‘more than 100 potential draftees’ had boarded the plane in Khurba, Khabarovsk region in Russia’s Far East. In Neryungri, the second largest town in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), ‘dozens of men’ were reportedly brought to a football stadium and ‘loaded onto busses bound for recruitment centres.’²⁰⁷ The next day, the Caucasian Knot reported that first groups had been deployed from Makhachkala and Kaspisk (Dagestan) as well as from Krasnodar.²⁰⁸ In Buryatia, ‘buses with mobilised men’ from all over the region were reportedly arriving at the recruitment centre in the regional capital Ulan-Ude.²⁰⁹

In Moscow and St. Petersburg, police and enlistment officers reportedly organised conscription raids at entrances to metro stations.²¹⁰ In Moscow, a reporter at Sota.Vision news outlet said that draft notices to report at military recruitment offices were given to people taking part in anti-mobilisation protests on 21 September.²¹¹ In a city in the Moscow region, law enforcement officers reportedly blocked a restaurant exit to distribute draft notices to men.²¹² In Moscow, conscription raids were also reportedly organised in hostels,²¹³ with people ‘with DNR passports’ given draft notices next to Russian nationals.²¹⁴ More than 200 men were reportedly taken to an enlistment center during a night raid on dormitories of a construction company and ‘dozens’ were reportedly rounded up in a raid on a Moscow shelter for homeless.²¹⁵

²⁰³ Mediazona, Конвейер. Как заводы и другие крупные предприятия сотнями отправляют своих сотрудников в армию [Conveyor. How factories and other large enterprises send their employees by the hundreds to the army], 28 September 2022, [url](#); RBK, Сотрудники рассказали о массовой выдаче повесток на территории «Зингера» [Staff said draft notices were distributed at Singer premises], 6 October 2022, [url](#)

²⁰⁴ Mediazona, Конвейер. Как заводы и другие крупные предприятия сотнями отправляют своих сотрудников в армию [Conveyor. How factories and other large enterprises send their employees by the hundreds to the army], 28 September 2022, [url](#)

²⁰⁵ Insider (The), В Петербурге повестки выдают мужчинам, которые пришли получать загранпаспорт [In St Petersburg, draft notices are issued to men who come to receive a foreign passport], 15 October 2022, [url](#)

²⁰⁶ DW, Russia's partial mobilization: Conscripts report chaos, 30 September 2022, [url](#)

²⁰⁷ Guardian (The), ‘It’s a 100% mobilisation: day one of Russia’s drive to build its army, 22 September 2022, [url](#)

²⁰⁸ Caucasian Knot, Elderly reserve officer mobilized in Volgograd Region despite conclusion of doctors, 23 September 2022, [url](#)

²⁰⁹ Mediazona, Son-in-law, husband, son, father. First days of the special mobilisation operation in the Republic of Buryatia, 1 October 2022, [url](#)

²¹⁰ Moscow Times (The), Telegram, 14 October 2022, [url](#); Washington Post (The), Russia is grabbing men off the street to fight in Ukraine, 16 October 2022, [url](#)

²¹¹ Guardian (The), ‘It’s a 100% mobilisation: day one of Russia’s drive to build its army, 22 September 2022, [url](#)

²¹² SOTA, Telegram, 7 October 2022, [url](#)

²¹³ Washington Post (The), Russia is grabbing men off the street to fight in Ukraine, 16 October 2022, [url](#); Al Jazeera, How Russia is rounding up reluctant army recruits for Ukraine, 19 October 2022, [url](#)

²¹⁴ SOTA, Telegram, 7 October 2022, [url](#)

²¹⁵ Washington Post (The), Russia is grabbing men off the street to fight in Ukraine, 16 October 2022, [url](#)



2.3.1 Irregularities reported during the mobilisation

Sources reported on numerous irregularities in the implementation of the mobilisation order,²¹⁶ including drafting people above the age stipulated for mobilisation according to particular military ranks;²¹⁷ people who have passed the draft age;²¹⁸ people physically unfit for military service,²¹⁹ and who had been previously exempted from military service for health reasons;²²⁰ people who had not performed military service before;²²¹ people who were enrolled as full-time students;²²² fathers of three²²³ or four or more children.²²⁴

As noted by a human rights lawyer in an interview with EUAA on 11 November 2022, MoD issued no specific regulations on the ‘partial’ mobilisation, and no normative acts were published prior to the announcement of the mobilisation order. Conditions of exemptions and deferrals were changed several times, which created a situation, in which military recruitment offices across the country were applying different reasoning for the conscription under the mobilisation order.²²⁵ According to Alexander Pomazuev, interviewed by EUAA on 9 November 2022, the mobilisation was ‘total’: even if the authorities tried to limit it by applying some categories, this was not possible to implement in practice due to the fact that the legislation and procedures are designed ‘for a total mobilisation.’²²⁶

Alexander Pomazuev also stated that in practice officials in military recruitment offices ignored the lists of employees that were granted deferrals as the legislation on mobilisation did not provide for an exemption for these groups. Moreover, according to the source, military officials had no technical means to distinguish people non-eligible for mobilisation due to deferrals. He also noted that such exemptions were applied only to chief specialists.²²⁷

²¹⁶ DW, Russia's partial mobilization: Conscripts report chaos, 30 September 2022, [url](#); RFE/RL, Join, Flee, Or Resist: Russia Pushed To The Brink Amid Putin's Chaotic Mobilization Order, 2 October 2022, [url](#)

²¹⁷ Caucasian Knot, Elderly reserve officer mobilized in Volgograd Region despite conclusion of doctors, 23 September 2022, [url](#); Caucasian Knot, Relatives succeed in seeking demobilization of Krasnodar resident, 30 September 2022, [url](#); DW, Russia's partial mobilization: Conscripts report chaos, 30 September 2022, [url](#)

²¹⁸ RFE/RL, Russia Continues Crackdown On Spreading Anti-Mobilization Protests As Draft Criticism Grows, 26 September 2022, [url](#); BBC, Ukraine war: Russia admits mobilisation errors, amid growing public opposition, 26 September 2022, [url](#); DW, Russia's partial mobilization: Conscripts report chaos, 30 September 2022, [url](#); RFE/RL, Join, Flee, Or Resist: Russia Pushed To The Brink Amid Putin's Chaotic Mobilization Order, 2 October 2022, [url](#)

²¹⁹ BBC News, Ukraine war: Russia admits mobilisation errors, amid growing public opposition, 26 September 2022, [url](#); Guardian (The), Kremlin attempts to calm Russian fury over chaotic mobilization, 1 October 2022, [url](#); RFE/RL, Join, Flee, Or Resist: Russia Pushed To The Brink Amid Putin's Chaotic Mobilization Order, 2 October 2022, [url](#)

²²⁰ BBC, Ukraine war: Russia reveals exemptions as men flee call-up, 23 September 2022, [url](#)

²²¹ RFE/RL, Russia Continues Crackdown On Spreading Anti-Mobilization Protests As Draft Criticism Grows, 26 September 2022, [url](#); BBC News, Ukraine war: Russia admits mobilisation errors, amid growing public opposition, 26 September 2022, [url](#); Caucasian Knot, Relatives succeed in seeking demobilization of Krasnodar resident, 30 September 2022, [url](#)

²²² Insider (The), Students snatched from classes in Ulan-Ude as part of mobilization, 22 September 2022, [url](#); RFE/RL, Join, Flee, Or Resist: Russia Pushed To The Brink Amid Putin's Chaotic Mobilization Order, 2 October 2022, [url](#)

²²³ Novaya Gazeta Europe, Drafted Russian father of three killed in Ukraine, 21 October 2022, [url](#)

²²⁴ Bumaga, “Officers are shocked to see the kind of people sent their way.” Drafted Saint Petersburg man, who has four children, tells about the chaos at the military base and a soldier’s suicide, 30 October 2022, [url](#)

²²⁵ Human rights lawyer, Online interview with EUAA, 11 November 2022

²²⁶ Alexander Pomazuev, Online interview with EUAA, 9 November 2022

²²⁷ Alexander Pomazuev, Online interview with EUAA, 9 November 2022



Contrary to the requirements stipulated by the law on mobilisation, newly drafted persons reportedly received no medical examination at a military recruitment office to determine whether they were medically fit for military service.²²⁸ As explained by Alexander Pomazuev, the legislation requires that all Russian men in the age group of 18 – 50 years keep informing military recruitment offices about their health status; however, no one does this in practice. Therefore, the records in the mobilisation system indicate an outdated information on people's health condition, and everyone can get a draft notice. The source also noted that military recruitment offices have no human resources to check the medical conditions of draftees.²²⁹

2.3.2. Lodging complaints

Media sources reported on instances where men drafted under the mobilisation order were returned home following complaints to the authorities filed by their relatives or lawyers. Such was the case of a 38-year-old resident of Krasnodar who was initially conscripted despite suffering from visual impairment and having a specialty that allowed a deferral from the military service.²³⁰ Other cases involved a 42-year-old person in the army reserve who had no combat experience,²³¹ a 59-year-old surgeon with several medical conditions, and a 21-year-old full-time university student.²³²

On 22 September, the head of human rights NGO Agora, Pavel Chikov, stated via Telegram, that a person who disagrees with a decision of the recruitment commission or the conclusion of the medical examination can initiate a court procedure by filing a request with a municipal court at a location of the military recruitment office. Simultaneously, a person should request preliminary protection measure since in the conditions of mobilisation — and differently from challenging a decision on obligatory military service or military training — filing a complaint with the court does not suspend the obligation to join the military forces.²³³ In October 2022, a city court in Gatchina, Leningrad region, granted a preliminary protection measure to a person challenging his draft under mobilisation. The person described as 'Evangelical Christian' had reportedly completed his alternative civil service in 2019-2021 and received a draft notice on 24 September 2022. After reporting the next day to a military enlistment office, he was immediately drafted: his request for alternative civil service was ignored and no medical examination took place. The court suspended the decision of the military recruitment commission until the hearing scheduled for 15 November.²³⁴ No information about the court decision was found in the time constraints for this report.

In an interview with EUAA on 11 November, a human rights lawyer noted that there were 80 cases challenging a mobilisation decision in St. Peterburg only. According to their estimation,

²²⁸ DW, Russia's partial mobilization: Conscripts report chaos, 30 September 2022, [url](#)

²²⁹ Alexander Pomazuev, interview with EUAA, 9 November 2022

²³⁰ Caucasian Knot (The), Relatives succeed in seeking demobilization of Krasnodar resident, 30 September 2022, [url](#)

²³¹ DW, Russia's partial mobilization: Conscripts report chaos, 30 September 2022, [url](#)

²³² RFE/RL, Join, Flee, Or Resist: Russia Pushed To The Brink Amid Putin's Chaotic Mobilization Order, 2 October 2022, [url](#)

²³³ Pavel Chikov, Telegram, 22 September 2022, [url](#)

²³⁴ Kommersant, Mobilization will be tested for convictions, 19 October 2022, [url](#)



there should be hundreds of such cases across the country.²³⁵ According to Alexander Pomazuev, the legal ways to make an effective claim against mobilisation decision were ‘practically non-existent’ as people who were already recruited didn’t have technical means to do so (for instance access to smartphones, pens, etc.). Moreover, the legal procedure to prove the illegality of the draft was lengthy and, in some cases, persons who were drafted and sent to the frontlines were killed before lawyers received a positive decision on their cases.²³⁶ Such was, for instance, the case of a 33-year-old IT specialist employed at one of the main Russian banks, who had been drafted despite he had the right for an exemption due to his job position. This person was drafted on 23 September, deployed to the combat area near Svatovo, Luhansk region, on 7 October, and killed on 13 October.²³⁷

2.3.3. Drafting of ethnic minorities

In October 2022, the media reported that ethnic minority populations of Siberia and the North Caucasus²³⁸ as well as Crimean Tatars²³⁹ were disproportionately affected during the mobilisation. On 5 October, citing the research by Vazhnye Istorii and CIT, Meduza reported that the percentage of people drafted under the mobilisation order reached 5.5 % in the Krasnoyarsk region, 4 % in Sevastopol, 3.7 % in Buryatia, 2.6 % in Dagestan, and 2.2 % in Kalmykia. It was also noted that poorer regions had mobilised a larger share of the reserve. Thus, 23 out of 26 regions that have drafted more than 1 % of their reservists had lower per capita average income than the national average.²⁴⁰ Poorer regions have a higher number of people with military experience since the contract with the RAF is one of the few employment opportunities in these areas. According to researcher Sam Cranny-Evans as well as Meduza, this could explain why the higher number of reservists conscripted under the mobilisation order was in poorer regions.²⁴¹ The same ethnic groups reportedly had disproportionate numbers of war casualties.²⁴²

Activists in Buryatia reported on intense recruitment following the announcement of the mobilisation order. According to the head of the Free Buryatia Foundation, Alexandra

²³⁵ Human rights lawyer, Online interview with EUAA, 11 November 2022

²³⁶ Alexander Pomazuev, lawyer at FBK, Online interview with EUAA, 9 November 2022

²³⁷ Meduza, В Украине погиб мобилизованный айтишник «Райффайзенбанка». Ему полагалась отсрочка, но его забрали в армию и через две недели отправили на войну [A mobilised IT employee of Raiffeisenbank died in Ukraine. He was supposed have a deferral but was drafted into the army and sent to war two weeks later], 21 October 2022, [url](#)

²³⁸ Guardian (The), ‘It’s a 100% mobilisation’: day one of Russia’s drive to build its army, 22 September 2022, [url](#); RFE/RL, Join, Flee, Or Resist: Russia Pushed To The Brink Amid Putin’s Chaotic Mobilization Order, 2 October 2022, [url](#)

²³⁹ Guardian (The), ‘A way to get rid of us’: Crimean Tatars decry Russia’s mobilisation, 25 September 2022, [url](#); RFE/RL, Join, Flee, Or Resist: Russia Pushed To The Brink Amid Putin’s Chaotic Mobilization Order, 2 October 2022, [url](#); IWPR, Russia Targets Crimean Tatar Community, 4 October 2022, [url](#)

²⁴⁰ Meduza, A new report shows discrepancies in Russian draft statistics 213,000 have been mobilized in Russia — but this only accounts for two-thirds of its regions, not the whole nation, as claimed by Shoigu, 5 October 2022, [url](#)

²⁴¹ Cranny-Evans, S., Understanding Russia’s Mobilisation, RUSI, 28 September 2022, [url](#); Meduza, A new report shows discrepancies in Russian draft statistics 213,000 have been mobilized in Russia — but this only accounts for two-thirds of its regions, not the whole nation, as claimed by Shoigu, 5 October 2022, [url](#)

²⁴² Guardian (The), ‘It’s a 100% mobilisation’: day one of Russia’s drive to build its army, 22 September 2022, [url](#); RFE/RL, Join, Flee, Or Resist: Russia Pushed To The Brink Amid Putin’s Chaotic Mobilization Order, 2 October 2022, [url](#); Meduza, A new report shows discrepancies in Russian draft statistics 213,000 have been mobilized in Russia — but this only accounts for two-thirds of its regions, not the whole nation, as claimed by Shoigu, 5 October 2022, [url](#); Washington Post (The), Russia is grabbing men off the street to fight in Ukraine, 16 October 2022, [url](#)



Garmazhapova, more than 3 000 draft notices were delivered in the republic within the first day of the mobilisation.²⁴³ Dorjo Dugarov, one of the leaders of the Buryat National Democratic Movement, told TV Rain (Dozhd TV) ‘that up to five thousand people were mobilised overnight.’²⁴⁴ The mobilisation efforts were reportedly organised ‘more like a raid,’ with draft notices being delivered late at night ‘and handed out indiscriminately to everyone.’²⁴⁵ In one of the villages, 450 people were reportedly mobilised within the first 24 hours.²⁴⁶ According to Victoria Maladaeva, vice president of the foundation *Svobodnaya Buryatia* (Free Buryatia), 20-30 men were drafted from every village. The local authorities admitted that draft notices had been issued to 70 fathers of large families: all of them were reportedly returned home following clarifications, even though some of them had already been assigned to respective military units. In one of the reported cases, a draft notice was issued for a man who died two years ago.²⁴⁷

Disproportionately high numbers of the mobilised men were reported also for the Crimean Tatar community,²⁴⁸ who constitute around 13 % of the 2 million population of Russia-occupied Crimea.²⁴⁹ A Ukrainian human rights NGO Crimea SOS, as reported by the Guardian on 25 September, estimated that 90 % of draft notices in Crimea were issued to Crimean Tatars.²⁵⁰ No other sources were found to corroborate on this figure.

2.3.4. Protests

Mobilisation caused protests across Russia,²⁵¹ including in regions with high ethnic minority populations, such as Dagestan and Yakutia.²⁵² According to UN OHCHR, around 2 400 people were arrested across the country during protests in the period between 21 and 26 September. Some protests included attacks on military recruitment offices and administrative buildings.²⁵³ On 21 September 2022, protesters set fire to an administrative building in Togliatti (Samara region) and threw a Molotov cocktail at military recruitment office in Nizhny Novgorod.²⁵⁴ According to Mediazona, which maps arson attacks across the country, the mobilisation order triggered a second wave of such attacks: out of total 75 arsons, registered between 24 February and 2 November, 41 were committed after the announcement of mobilisation. Buildings that were targeted include military recruitment and enlistment offices, police offices,

²⁴³ Guardian (The), ‘It’s a 100% mobilisation’: day one of Russia’s drive to build its army, 22 September 2022, [url](#)

²⁴⁴ Telekanal Dozhd, Telegram, 22 September 2022, [url](#); Mediazona, Son-in-law, husband, son, father. First days of the special mobilisation operation in the Republic of Buryatia, 1 October 2022, [url](#)

²⁴⁵ Mediazona, Son-in-law, husband, son, father. First days of the special mobilisation operation in the Republic of Buryatia, 1 October 2022, [url](#)

²⁴⁶ Guardian (The), ‘It’s a 100% mobilisation’: day one of Russia’s drive to build its army, 22 September 2022, [url](#)

²⁴⁷ Mediazona, Son-in-law, husband, son, father. First days of the special mobilisation operation in the Republic of Buryatia, 1 October 2022, [url](#)

²⁴⁸ Guardian (The), ‘A way to get rid of us’: Crimean Tatars decry Russia’s mobilisation, 25 September 2022, [url](#); RFE/RL, Join, Flee, Or Resist: Russia Pushed To The Brink Amid Putin's Chaotic Mobilization Order, 2 October 2022, [url](#); IWPR, Russia Targets Crimean Tatar Community, 4 October 2022, [url](#)

²⁴⁹ Politico, ‘A kind of murder’: Putin’s draft targets Crimea’s Tatars, 4 October 2022, [url](#)

²⁵⁰ Guardian (The), ‘A way to get rid of us’: Crimean Tatars decry Russia’s mobilisation, 25 September 2022, [url](#)

²⁵¹ OVD-info, Списки задержанных в связи с акциями против мобилизации 21 сентября [Lists of people detained in connection with anti-mobilisation rallies on 21 September], 21 September 2022, [url](#); FT, Anti-mobilisation protests spread in Russia, 25 September 2022, [url](#)

²⁵² France 24, ‘Danger to the regime?’ Russia faces anti-mobilisation protests among ethnic minorities, 30 September 2022, [url](#)

²⁵³ UN OHCHR, Arrests in Russia at protests over troop mobilisation, 27 September 2022, [url](#)

²⁵⁴ Bathon, R., Putin’s cannon fodder, IPS, International Politics and Society, 28 September 2022, [url](#)





offices of FSB and Rosgvardia as well as administrative buildings.²⁵⁵ On 26 September, in Ust-Ilim town in the Irkutsk region an enlistment officer was shot and seriously injured by a 25-year-old local resident.²⁵⁶

The organisation of the mobilisation process caused 'rare-complaints by pro-Kremlin voices.'²⁵⁷ Already on 26 September 2022, amid public opposition, the irregularities in the drafting process under the mobilisation order were admitted both at federal²⁵⁸ and local levels.²⁵⁹ The Kremlin laid the responsibility for the failure to follow the criteria for conscription and exemptions on local institutions.²⁶⁰ Several governors admitted mistakes committed by local military recruitment offices and promised to discharge people who had been drafted by mistake.²⁶¹ Several military commissioners were reportedly dismissed from their duties: for instance, in Magadan region and in Khabarovsk region, where half of several thousand drafted men were returned home after being found unfit for military duty.²⁶²

²⁵⁵ Mediazona, Fire! As Russians set fire to draft offices, we map the arson attacks, 13 October 2022, updated 2 November 2022, [url](#)

²⁵⁶ Moscow Times (The), Russian Enlistment Officer Shot, Recruitment Centers Torched as Kremlin Admits Mobilization 'Errors', 26 September 2022, [url](#)

²⁵⁷ RFE/RL, Russia Continues Crackdown On Spreading Anti-Mobilization Protests As Draft Criticism Grows, 26 September 2022, [url](#)

²⁵⁸ BBC News, Ukraine war: Russia admits mobilisation errors, amid growing public opposition, 26 September 2022, [url](#); Washington Post (The), Russia is grabbing men off the street to fight in Ukraine, 16 October 2022, [url](#)

²⁵⁹ DW, Russia's partial mobilization: Conscripts report chaos, 30 September 2022, [url](#)

²⁶⁰ ISW, Russian Offensive Campaign, 26 September 2022, [url](#); Bathon, R., Putin's cannon fodder, IPS, 28 September 2022, [url](#)

²⁶¹ DW, Russia's partial mobilization: Conscripts report chaos, 30 September 2022, [url](#)

²⁶² Al Jazeera, Thousands of mobilised Russians sent home, deemed unfit for duty, 3 October 2022, [url](#)





3. Russian military forces in Ukraine

According to US-based researcher Pavel Luzin, the military forces used by the Russian Federation in Ukraine consist mainly of RAF units, which are supported by Rosgvardia (the second largest military formation in Russia) and its Chechen units, loyal to Ramzan Kadyrov, the head of the Chechen Republic, paramilitary units of the Federal Security Service (FSB), mercenary units, and recruited soldiers from DNR and LNR.²⁶³ As noted by researcher Joris van Bladel in July 2022, the variety of military actors used by Russia in Ukraine gives a 'taxonomy of Russian soldiers' in which 'each category of soldiers has a different recruitment method, pay schedule, command & control channel, and mission resulting in a kaleidoscope of varying warfighting cultures.'²⁶⁴

3.1. Use of conscripts in the war in Ukraine

The current legislation of the Russian Federation allows the deployment of conscripts to armed conflict zones after they complete four months of military training.²⁶⁵ This is stipulated by Article 2.3 of the Presidential Order no 1237 Regulations on the Procedure for Performing Military Service, adopted on 16 September 1999 and revised on 4 October 2022.²⁶⁶ After completing three months of compulsory military service, a person can sign a contract with the RAF and can be sent to combat areas. A person can also sign a contract after one month of his military service, if his previous education allows for it.²⁶⁷ When used during hostilities, conscripts who have signed contracts with the RAF are generally involved in tasks that require 'less technical expertise,' such as positions in logistics, due to their limited period of training.²⁶⁸

Several days before Russia announced the beginning of the 'special military operation' on 24 February 2022, the Committee of Soldiers' Mothers reported on phone calls from parents of conscripted soldiers, stating that their sons had either been forced to sign contracts with the RAF or were deployed to military units on the Russia-Ukraine border, with the majority being sent to the military bases in Belgorod region.²⁶⁹ In March 2022, independent TV channel Current Time reported on instances in which conscripts in Belgorod region were pressured to

²⁶³ Luzin, P., Russia's Military Manpower Crunch Will Worsen, CEPA, 21 September 2022, [url](#)

²⁶⁴ Bladel, J. Van, Russian Spring 2022 Recruitment Cycle – Putin's Camouflaged Referendum? Egmont Policy Brief 284, July 2022, [url](#), pp. 3-4

²⁶⁵ Human rights lawyer, Online interview with EUAA, 11 November 2022

²⁶⁶ Russia, Указ Президента РФ от 16.09.1999 N 1237 (ред. от 04.10.2022) "Вопросы прохождения военной службы" [Order of the President of RF as of 16.09.1999 No. 1237 (version of 4.10.2022 Regulations on the Procedure for Performing Military Service)], [url](#)

²⁶⁷ Meduza, 'I'm panicking — where is my child?' Conscript soldiers are being sent to fight against Ukraine, their relatives say. Here's what their families told Meduza, 25 February 2022, [url](#)

²⁶⁸ Freeman, S.B and Kjellström Elgin K., What the use of Russian conscripts tells us about the war in Ukraine, Politico, [url](#)

²⁶⁹ Meduza, 'I'm panicking — where is my child?' Conscript soldiers are being sent to fight against Ukraine, their relatives say. Here's what their families told Meduza, 25 February 2022, [url](#)



sign contracts with the Russian Armed Forces and those who refused to go to Ukraine were threatened with the articles on desertion of the Criminal Code.²⁷⁰

Early March, a member of the Federation Council, Lyudmila Narusova, spoke about 100 conscripts who were sent to Ukraine after being forced to sign a contract with the RAF; according to her, only four of them survived.²⁷¹ On 8 March 2022, President Putin said that conscripts were not used in hostilities in Ukraine, noting also that there would be ‘no additional call-up of reservists.’²⁷² The next day, MoD acknowledged that some conscripts had been deployed to combat zones in Ukraine, noting that ‘some of them, serving in supply units had been taken prisoner by the Ukrainian army.’²⁷³ The spokesperson of Kremlin, Dmitry Peskov, said that Putin had ordered the Military Prosecutor’s Office to investigate the deployment of conscripts to Ukraine and to punish the officials responsible for it.²⁷⁴

On 7 June 2022, a military prosecutor of the Western Military District said that 600 conscripts had been sent to Ukraine and that around 12 army officers were prosecuted in connection with their deployment; some of the officers were dismissed from service.²⁷⁵

Since Russia’s invasion in Ukraine, Ukrainian media have reported about Russian conscripts captured or killed during the fighting.²⁷⁶ According to investigative group Aгенstvo, conscripts might have constituted more than half of the crew of the Russian flagship Moskva, which sank in the Black Sea on 14 April.²⁷⁷ A sailor who served his military service²⁷⁸ as a cook on the ship at the time of the incident²⁷⁹ was confirmed dead in August.²⁸⁰

On 11 November, a human rights lawyer told the EUAA that they were not aware of any recent involvement of conscripts in hostilities in Ukraine. The source noted that, although the law allows the use of conscripts, there have been many reassurances from the authorities that they would not be used. However, as further explained by the source, conscripts were ‘widely moved to the border regions’, such as Belgorod, Kursk, Bryansk, Rostov, Krasnodar, and Russia-occupied Crimea. According to this source, there were no reports of conscripts being deployed to the newly annexed territories in Ukraine.²⁸¹

²⁷⁰ Nastoyascheye vremya, "Они не хотят туда ехать, их пугают уголовной статьей о дезертирстве". Мать российского военного – об "учениях" и угрозах в армии ["They don't want to go there, but they are threatened with a criminal code's article on desertion." A mother of a Russian serviceman – about "exercises" and threats in the army], 3 March 2022, [url](#)

²⁷¹ AP, War in Ukraine fuels fears among draft-age Russian youths, 2 April 2022, [url](#)

²⁷² Reuters, Putin says will not use conscript soldiers in Ukraine, 8 March 2022, [url](#)

²⁷³ Reuters, Russia acknowledges conscripts were part of Ukraine operation, some are POWs, 9 March 2022, [url](#)

²⁷⁴ RFE/RL, Russian Defence Ministry Confirms Presence Of Conscripts In Ukraine War For First Time, 9 March 2022, [url](#); Reuters, Russia acknowledges conscripts were part of Ukraine operation, some are POWs, 9 March 2022, [url](#)

²⁷⁵ Moscow Times (The), Russia Prosecutes 12 Officers Over Conscript Deployments to Ukraine, 7 June 2022, [url](#)

²⁷⁶ Moscow Times (The), Russia Prosecutes 12 Officers Over Conscript Deployments to Ukraine, 7 June 2022, [url](#)

²⁷⁷ Aгенstvo.Novosti, Telegram, 4 May 2022, [url](#); Ukrainska Pravda, More than half the crew of the cruise ship "Moskva" might have consisted of conscripts - the media, 4 May 2022, [url](#)

²⁷⁸ RFE/RL, Отец "пропавшего" на крейсере "Москва" получил свидетельство о смерти сына [Father of missing person on Moskva cruiser received a death certificate], 2 August 2022, [url](#)

²⁷⁹ Al Jazeera, Explainer: How does conscription work in Russia?, 5 May 2022, [url](#)

²⁸⁰ RFE/RL, Отец "пропавшего" на крейсере "Москва" получил свидетельство о смерти сына [Father of missing person on Moskva cruiser received a death certificate], 2 August 2022, [url](#)

²⁸¹ Human rights lawyer, Online interview with EUAA, 11 November 2022



3.2. Deployment to Ukraine and conditions of service of persons drafted under the mobilisation order

On 28 October, the Minister of Defence Sergey Shoigu said that 82 000 men drafted under the mobilisation order were deployed to combat areas in Ukraine;²⁸² on 1 November, Shoigu stated that 87 000 men were mobilised.²⁸³

Persons drafted under the mobilisation order cannot decline their deployment to the frontlines, and the time of their military service is not limited by any end date.²⁸⁴ Newly drafted persons were promised monthly salaries of 135 000 – 200 000 roubles [2 210 – 3 272 EUR], depending on their rank. On 28 September, the State Duma passed a bill that ‘freezes loan repayments, including mortgages and consumer loans’ for men conscripted under the mobilisation order and other military personnel participating in the war in Ukraine.²⁸⁵

Sources reported on deployments of the ‘new recruits’ to the frontlines almost immediately after they were drafted, without being examined by a medical commission²⁸⁶ or provided any substantial training.²⁸⁷ As noted by researcher Pavel Luzin, as of 14 October, around 16 000 newly mobilised men were taking part in hostilities in Ukraine after having received between 5 and 15 days of military training.²⁸⁸ It was also reported that the recruits were not provided equipment and supplies²⁸⁹ and had to buy these themselves.²⁹⁰

Referring to the Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, ISW reported on 3 November that the newly drafted personnel were used in offensives near Bakhmut, Vuhledar, and Avdiivka in Donetsk region, next to mercenaries and former inmates.²⁹¹

On 1 November 2022, Novaya Gazeta Europe reported that more than a hundred of mobilised men had been killed since 21 September, both on the frontlines and in Russia.²⁹² According to

²⁸² Reuters, Russia's partial mobilisation is complete, Shoigu says, 28 October 2022, [url](#)

²⁸³ Novaya Gazeta, Russia's Defence Minister Shoigu: 87,000 draftees out of 300,000 deployed to combat zones, 1 November 2022, [url](#)

²⁸⁴ Economist (The), Vladimir Putin declares a partial mobilization, 21 September 2022, [url](#)

²⁸⁵ RFE/RL, Sweetening A Bitter Pill: Russia Offers Debt Breaks, Other Benefits To Entice Draftees, 28 September 2022, [url](#)

²⁸⁶ Moscow Times (The), Russia Sends Mobilized Men to Ukraine Front After Days of Training – Activists, 27 September 2022, [url](#)

²⁸⁷ Moscow Times (The), Russia to Send Conscripts to Ukraine With Little Training, Old Equipment, 29 September 2022, [url](#); New York Times (The), ‘Coffins Are Already Coming’: The Toll of Russia's Chaotic Draft, 16 October 2022, [url](#)

²⁸⁸ Luzin, P., Is Mobilization Really Over in Russia?, The Jamestown Foundation, Eurasia Daily Monitor, Vol. 19, Issue 164, 3 November 2022, [url](#)

²⁸⁹ Moscow Times (The), Russia to Send Conscripts to Ukraine With Little Training, Old Equipment, 29 September 2022, [url](#); Klain D., Mobilization Can't Save Russia's War, FP, 4 October 2022, [url](#); New York Times (The), ‘Coffins Are Already Coming’: The Toll of Russia's Chaotic Draft, 16 October 2022, [url](#)

²⁹⁰ RFE/RL, 'Everyone's Drunk. No Uniforms. No Food.' Inside The Confusion Greeting Some Of Russia's Newly Mobilized Troops, 9 October 2022, [url](#); Guardian (The), ‘The army has nothing’: new Russian conscripts bemoan lack of supplies, 20 October 2022, [url](#)

²⁹¹ ISW, Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, 3 November 2022, [url](#)

²⁹² Novaya Gazeta Europe, At least 100 Russian conscripts drafted to fight in Ukraine confirmed dead so far, 1 November 2022, [url](#). For the information on people killed in Ukraine, see also Washington Post (The), Russia is grabbing men off the street to fight in Ukraine, 16 October 2022, [url](#)



the source, 23 drafted persons died during training because of ‘physical altercations, alcohol, drugs, suicide, and accidents.’²⁹³ The service Siberia.Realities of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) reported that many deaths were recorded as suicides and some as ‘unexplained’.²⁹⁴ On 15 October, two men, whom MoD later defined as nationals from a former Soviet Union republic, who volunteered to go to fight in Ukraine, opened fire during a training session in Belgorod region, killing 11 and injuring 15 people.²⁹⁵

3.3. Volunteer battalions and mercenaries

3.3.1. Volunteer battalions

During the period between July and August 2022, Russia reportedly started to recruit volunteers to be deployed in Ukraine. Volunteer battalions were to be formed in all 85 federal subjects.²⁹⁶ The Institute for the Study of War (ISW) cited Russian war correspondent and military blogger Maksim Fomin, who stated that Russia had started a ‘volunteer mobilization’ by demanding every region to provide at least one volunteer battalion (*dobrobat* in Russian²⁹⁷). ISW further reported that volunteer battalions were formed instead of calling for a mobilisation of reservists.²⁹⁸ According to Nikolai Petrov, senior Research Fellow at Russia and Eurasia Programme of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, ‘volunteer battalions’ started to be established since April and May 2022 throughout Russia.²⁹⁹ As of 8 August 2022, over 40 volunteer battalions within 20 regions had been established. In some areas the process was at recruiting level while in other areas the recruited individuals were at training phase or ‘unit cohesion’ and in other areas the recruited individuals were already deployed into combat zone.³⁰⁰

Chechen groups have been fighting in Ukraine since the start of the war in February 2022³⁰¹ and the Chechen leader later revealed the formation of four additional battalions (namely North-Akhmat, South-Akhmat, West-Akhmat and East-Akhmat).³⁰² At least 1 200 Chechen fighters (known as *Kadyrovtsy* or *Kadyrovites*) were deployed to Ukraine in late February³⁰³ and ‘two Chechen divisions of Russian Guard’ in September 2022.³⁰⁴ For information on recruitment in the Chechen Republic, see chapter [4. Conscription and military recruitment in Chechnya](#).

²⁹³ Novaya Gazeta, At least 100 Russian conscripts drafted to fight in Ukraine confirmed dead so far, 1 November 2022, [url](#)

²⁹⁴ RFE/RL, ‘Everyone’s Drunk. No Uniforms. No Food.’ Inside The Confusion Greeting Some Of Russia’s Newly Mobilized Troops, 9 October 2022, [url](#)

²⁹⁵ BBC, Belgorod shooting: Gunmen kill 11 in attack on Russian trainee soldiers, 16 October 2022, [url](#)

²⁹⁶ Russia.Post, Volunteer battalions: from offense to (territorial) defense?, 19 August 2022, [url](#); CNN, Russia is recruiting thousands of volunteers to replenish its ranks in Ukraine. Prior experience isn’t always required, 29 July 2022, [url](#)

²⁹⁷ Russia.Post, Volunteer battalions: from offense to (territorial) defense?, 19 August 2022, [url](#)

²⁹⁸ ISW, Russian offensive campaign assessment, 13 July 2022, [url](#), p. 1

²⁹⁹ Russia.post, Volunteer battalions: from offense to (territorial) defense?, 19 August 2022, [url](#)

³⁰⁰ Russia.Post, Volunteer battalions: from offense to (territorial) defense?, 19 August 2022, [url](#)

³⁰¹ Al Jazeera, Chechen leader, a Putin ally, says his forces deployed to Ukraine, 26 February 2022, [url](#)

³⁰² Russia.Post, Volunteer battalions: from offense to (territorial) defense?, 19 August 2022, [url](#)

³⁰³ Al Jazeera, The real role of pro-Russian Chechen in Ukraine, 18 August 2022, [url](#)

³⁰⁴ The Odessa Journal, Kadyrov announced the dispatch of the National Guard from Chechnya to the war in Ukraine, 8 September 2022, [url](#)



The republic of North Ossetia-Alania deployed one of the first volunteer battalions in Ukraine in February 2022, called 'Alania'. They later announced the creation of another yet unnamed battalion in June 2022.³⁰⁵ In August 2022, the head of North Ossetia reportedly stated that two additional volunteer battalions would be created and go under the names 'Alagir' and 'Nogir' (districts of North Ossetia).³⁰⁶ As of July 2022, thousands of volunteers were recruited by Russia to expand its ranks.³⁰⁷ The formation or deployment of volunteer battalions in Kursk, Primorskyi Krai, Republic of Bashkortostan, Chuvashia Republic, Chechnya, Republic of Tatarstan, Moscow City, Perm, Nizhny Novgorod, and Orenburg regions were reported end of June and beginning of July 2022. On 7 July 2022, the Tyumen region's authorities reported on the formation of volunteer units.³⁰⁸ As of 31 July 2022, Russian officials started to recruit volunteers in Leningrad region for the Nevsky and Ladoga Battalions.³⁰⁹ The head of Republic of Bashkortostan declared that the 'Shaimurato' and 'Dostavalov' volunteer battalions, for which recruitment was announced around end of May 2022, were sent to Ukraine on 29 August 2022.³¹⁰

Regional officers reportedly recruited men aged up to 50 (or 60 for separate military specialties),³¹¹ who were contracted for a duration of six months and being offered an average monthly salary of 220 000 to 350 000 roubles [around 3 600 to 5 725 EUR]. In addition, separate subjects offered an immediate recruitment bonus of an average 200 000 roubles [3 272 EUR], which was provided 'from the region's budget and social benefits for the servicemen and their families'.³¹² A Russian volunteer from Tatarstan who had reportedly returned from the Ukraine war indicated that volunteer fighters were paid 205 000 roubles [3 355] per month. According to him, they were not paid their daily combat pay of 8 000 roubles [130 EUR] per day.³¹³

Russian assigned officials in the occupied regions of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia reportedly 'announced the formation of "volunteer" units to fight with the Russian military against Ukraine'.³¹⁴ Earlier in June 2022, over 200 volunteers were recruited³¹⁵ in the occupied

³⁰⁵ Ukrainska Pravda, Russia announces sending new "Ossetian volunteer battalion" to Ukraine, 19 September 2022, [url](#); The Odessa Journal, Russia is going to send an Ossetian volunteer detachment to Ukraine, 19 September 2022, [url](#)

³⁰⁶ ISW, Russian offensive campaign assessment, August 29, 29 August 2022, [url](#), p. 13; RFE/RL, Kavkaz.Realii, Глава Северной Осетии поручил подготовить именные батальоны для участия в войне в Украине, [informal translation 'The head of North Ossetia instructed to prepare personal battalions for participation in the war in Ukraine'], 29 August 2022, [url](#)

³⁰⁷ CNN, Russia is recruiting thousands of volunteers to replenish its ranks in Ukraine. Prior experience isn't always required, 29 July 2022, [url](#)

³⁰⁸ ISW, Russian offensive campaign assessment, 13 July 2022, [url](#), p. 1

³⁰⁹ ISW, Russian offensive campaign assessment, 31 July 2022, [url](#), p. 2

³¹⁰ ISW, Russian offensive campaign assessment, 29 August 2022, [url](#), p. 13

³¹¹ Telegraph (The), Russian army needs 34,000 more soldiers to restore full force in Ukraine, 14 July 2022, [url](#); Atalyar, Russia calls on volunteers and mercenaries after Ukrainian counteroffensive, 19 September 2022, [url](#)

³¹² ISW, Russian offensive campaign assessment, 13 July 2022, [url](#), p. 1

³¹³ RFE/RL, 'We Were Nothing To Them': Russian Volunteer Reservists Return From War Against Ukraine Feeling Deceived, 12 August 2022, [url](#)

³¹⁴ CT, Russian offensive campaign assessment, 20 September 2022, [url](#)

³¹⁵ TASS, Volunteer battalions begin to be formed in Zaporozhye Region — authorities, 15 June 2022, [url](#)





Ukrainian city of Zaporizhzhia.³¹⁶ No further information on the recruitment of volunteers in Zaporizhzhia could be found within the consulted sources.

3.3.2. Mercenaries

As part of the general mobilisation, Russia made use of both the conventional draft and recruitment of mercenary companies such as the Wagner group.³¹⁷ According to the Russian MoD, a military contract can be signed with Russian nationals and foreign nationals.³¹⁸ Individuals deployed to Ukraine ‘as part of a private military contractor’ are considered as mercenaries.³¹⁹

As of March 2022, the President Putin reportedly called on foreign volunteers to fight in Ukraine and the head of MoD indicated that 16 000 volunteers (including Chechens and mercenaries joining Wagner group from Syria and Libya³²⁰) were ready in the Middle East to fight together with RAF in Ukraine.³²¹ Russia reportedly recruited mercenaries from Syria and Libya and offered each fighter between 300 and 600 dollars [around 300 – 600 EUR]. ISW cited Ukrainian intelligence reporting that following the opening of 14 recruitment centres in Syria, where mercenaries received training, Russia reportedly transferred them to Chkalovsky airbase (in Moscow region). Russia allegedly assembled ‘thousands’ of Syrian forces (belonging to Syrian ‘National Defense Forces and 5th Corps’), mostly the ones ‘specialized in heavy artillery and sniper weapons’.³²² As of 13 March 2022, Russian armed forces reportedly instructed its base in Hmeimim (Syria) to deploy on a daily basis up to 300 fighters from Syria to Ukraine.³²³ However, ISW reportedly has not perceived ‘any deployments of cohesive units of Syrian or Libyan fighters’, and the reported recruitments appeared to be ‘individual fighters operating under the umbrella of the Wagner Group’.³²⁴

In April 2022, there were reportedly between 300 to 500 Syrian and Libyan mercenaries in Popasna (eastern Ukraine).³²⁵ CNN cited ‘Andrii Yusov, a spokesperson for Ukraine’s defense intelligence agency who has been monitoring Wagner in Ukraine’, stating that as of 7 October 2022, at least 5 000 mercenaries linked to Wagner group were operating alongside the Russian armed forces in Ukraine.³²⁶

On 11 November 2022, the head of the Wagner Group announced that the group started training civilians in Belgorod and Kursk regions of Russia to create a militia at the border with

³¹⁶ Al Jazeera, Mapping the occupied Ukrainian regions Russia is formally annexing, 21 September 2022, [url](#)

³¹⁷ Le Monde, The hunt for ‘volunteers,’ a priority for the Russian army to hang on in Ukraine, 25 July 2022, [url](#)

³¹⁸ Russia, Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, n.d., [url](#)

³¹⁹ TSC, Special report, foreign fighters, volunteers, and mercenaries, Non-state actors and narratives in Ukraine, 4 April 2022, [url](#), p. 4

³²⁰ ICCT, Foreign Fighters, Foreign Volunteers and Mercenaries in the Ukrainian Armed Conflict, 11 July 2022, [url](#); Al Jazeera, Ukraine: Why is Russia encouraging foreign fighters to join?, 23 March 2022, [url](#)

³²¹ BBC, Ukraine war: Putin seeks foreign volunteers to fight in Ukraine, 11 March 2022, [url](#)

³²² ISW, Russian offensive campaign assessment, 13 March 2022, [url](#), p. 3

³²³ ISW, Russian offensive campaign assessment, 17 March 2022, [url](#), pp. 1-2

³²⁴ ISW, Russian offensive campaign assessment, 20 April 2020, [url](#), p. 5

³²⁵ ISW, Russian offensive campaign assessment, 20 April 2022, [url](#), p. 5; Pradva, Ukrainian defenders in Popasna kill a detachment of fighters from Libya and Syria – Danilov, 21 April 2022, [url](#)

³²⁶ CNN, Morale is plummeting in Putin’s private army as Russia’s war in Ukraine falters, 7 October 2022, [url](#)





Ukraine.³²⁷ The Wagner group has been present in Ukraine since 2014. As of October 2022, reportedly 1 000 of its mercenaries supported pro-Russian fighters in Luhansk and Donetsk.³²⁸

3.4. Recruitment of prison inmates

Since spring and, on a large scale, since summer 2022,³²⁹ convicts from prison facilities have been exposed to recruitment efforts by private military companies (PMCs), among them primarily the Wagner Group, Russia's largest PMC (hereafter "Wagner"),³³⁰ along with a few smaller companies such as Redoubt.³³¹ Following their example and approach, the Russian Ministry of Defence has begun to recruit prisoners in late September 2022, offering money and early release from prison in exchange for participation in the war in Ukraine.³³² According to Vladimir Osechkin, founder of the human rights project Gulagu.net, Russian judges have been instructed to no longer grant parole but instead to refer the prisoners to the PMCs and the regular forces.³³³ In an interview on 21 October 2022, Olga Romanova from the prisoner advocacy organisation Russia Behind Bars (RBB) estimated that a total of more than 20 000 inmates had been recruited since the beginning of the war,³³⁴ an estimate that corresponds to data from other human rights organisations.³³⁵

As of September 2022, Wagner employees alone had visited at least 44 penitentiaries across the country,³³⁶ some more than once,³³⁷ recruiting on average 20 % of the population of each colony affected, as estimated by RBB in August 2022.³³⁸ According to reports from inmates and human rights activists, Wagner is particularly interested in prisoners convicted for murder,

³²⁷ RFI, Wagner mercenaries say forming border militia, 11 November 2022, [url](#)

³²⁸ BBC, What is Russia's Wagner mercenary group in Ukraine?, 3 October 2022, [url](#)

³²⁹ Verstka, Новые солдаты российской армии: ЧВК Вагнера завербовала больше тысячи заключённых в 17 колониях страны [New Russian army soldiers: PMC Wagner recruits more than a thousand prisoners in 17 colonies], 5 August 2022, [url](#); The Moscow Times, Video shows Prigozhin recruiting Russian prisoners for Ukraine fight, 16 September 2022, [url](#); The Moscow Times, Russia recruits prisoners en masse for Ukraine deployment – NGO, 11 July 2022, [url](#)

³³⁰ Doxsee, C., Putin's Proxies: Examining Russia's Use of Private Military Companies, CSIS, 21 September 2022, [url](#)

³³¹ Novaya Gazeta Europe, Зона поражения. Российские заключённые – новое топливо войны в Украине [Zone of defeat: Russian prisoners – The new fuel for the war in Ukraine], 10 November 2022, [url](#). For further examples see Romanova (@o0oromanova), [Telegram], posted on: 11 October 2022, [url](#)

³³² Important Stories, Минобороны России теперь тоже вербует эзков на фронт [The Russian Defence Ministry now also recruits convicts to the front], 11 October 2022, [url](#); Meduza, The Wagner Group's 'best practices' go mainstream, 11 October 2022, [url](#)

³³³ We can explain, Отказавшихся воевать заключенных могут просто расстрелять. Владимир Осечкин. Gulagu.net [Prisoners who refuse to fight can simply be shot. Vladimir Osechkin. Gulagu.net], Youtube, 28 October 2022, [url](#)

³³⁴ Agency.News, [Telegram], posted on: 21 October 2022, [url](#)

³³⁵ Avtozak Live, [Telegram], posted on: 13 October 2022, [url](#); Agency.News, [Telegram], posted on: 21 October 2022, [url](#)

³³⁶ Russia Behind Bars and European Prison Litigation Network, Submissions concerning the recruitment and participation of the Russian convicted prisoners in the war in Ukraine, September 2022, [url](#), p. 2

³³⁷ Russia Behind Bars and European Prison Litigation Network, Submissions concerning the recruitment and participation of the Russian convicted prisoners in the war in Ukraine, September 2022, [url](#), p. 4; The Insider, Wagner PMC recruited a cannibal in a Russian prison, head of Russia Behind Bars reports, 15 September 2022, [url](#)

³³⁸ DW, Ольга Романова: Заключенных россиян бросают в бой первыми [Olga Romanova: Russian prisoners are thrown into battle first], 12 August 2022, [url](#); Verstka, Новые солдаты российской армии: ЧВК Вагнера завербовала больше тысячи заключённых в 17 колониях страны [New Russian army soldiers: PMC Wagner recruits more than a thousand prisoners in 17 colonies], 5 August 2022, [url](#)



grievous bodily harm, and robbery.³³⁹ Further reports indicate that the PMC also contracts inmates suffering from diseases like HIV and hepatitis C,³⁴⁰ the former being particularly widespread in Russian prisons,³⁴¹ as well as inmates holding the nationality of other CIS countries like Belarus and Tajikistan.³⁴² However, certain criteria tend to disqualify for recruitment, notably advanced age,³⁴³ Ukrainian citizenship,³⁴⁴ and a conviction for terrorism or extremism.³⁴⁵ Some sources noted that persons convicted of sexual and drug offences were also recruited.³⁴⁶

Based on various reports from inmates and their relatives published by independent Russian media and on the Telegram channel of Gulagu.net, prisoner recruitment at Wagner usually follows a set pattern which includes the following steps: a small group of armed Wagner employees, among them on occasion the PMC's head himself, Yevgeny Prigozhin,³⁴⁷ enters the prison (sometimes via helicopter)³⁴⁸ accompanied by members of the Federal Penitentiary Service (FSIN) and the FSB.³⁴⁹ During a subsequent speech by representatives of the PMC in the courtyard, prisoners are offered a military service contract with the company and demanded to 'defend the motherland' in return for which they are promised a monthly salary of 100 000 to 200 000 roubles [1 635 – 3 272 EUR] (plus a compensation of 5 million roubles

³³⁹ DW, Ольга Романова: Заключение россиян бросают в бой первыми [Olga Romanova: Russian prisoners are thrown into battle first], 12 August 2022, [url](#); SOTA, Telegram, 17 September 2022, [url](#); Disinfo, Убийства, порнография, разбой. За что сидели отправленные на войну российские зэки [Murder, pornography, robbery. What Russian convicts sent to war were imprisoned for], 26 October 2022, [url](#)

³⁴⁰ Ukraine, Defence Intelligence of the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, Wagner Group recruits large number of prisoners with HIV and hepatitis, 25 October 2022, [url](#); Gulagu.net (@ NetGulagu), 12 October 2022, [url](#); Gulagu.net (@ NetGulagu), 17 October 2022, [url](#)

³⁴¹ Strzelecki, J., Russia behind bars: the peculiarities of the Russian prison system, OSW, 7 February 2019, [url](#)

³⁴² Agency.News, Telegram, 21 October 2022, [url](#)

³⁴³ DW, Ольга Романова: Заключение россиян бросают в бой первыми [Olga Romanova: Russian prisoners are thrown into battle first], 12 August 2022, [url](#); Verstka, Новые солдаты российской армии: ЧВК Вагнера завербовала больше тысячи заключённых в 17 колониях страны [New Russian army soldiers: PMC Wagner recruits more than a thousand prisoners in 17 colonies], 5 August 2022, [url](#)

³⁴⁴ DW, Ольга Романова: Заключение россиян бросают в бой первыми [Olga Romanova: Russian prisoners are thrown into battle first], 12 August 2022, [url](#)

³⁴⁵ CNN, Russia dangles freedom to prisoners if they fight in Ukraine. Many are taking the deadly gamble, 9 August 2022, [url](#); BBC News, "Из них такое поперло, что никто не ожидал". Как заключенные реагируют на призывы вступить в "ЧВК Вагнера" ["It came out of them in a way that no one had expected." How prisoners react to calls to join the "PMC Wagner"], 17 September 2022, [url](#)

³⁴⁶ BBC News, "Из них такое поперло, что никто не ожидал". Как заключенные реагируют на призывы вступить в "ЧВК Вагнера" ["It came out of them in a way that no one had expected." How prisoners react to calls to join the "PMC Wagner"], 17 September 2022, [url](#); Verstka, Секс с малолетней и групповое изнасилование. За какие преступления сидели заключённые, которых ЧВК Вагнера завербовала для войны в Украине [Sex with a minor and gang rape. What crimes were the prisoners that the Wagner PMC recruited for the war in Ukraine imprisoned for?], 16 September 2022, [url](#)

³⁴⁷ Verstka, Новые солдаты российской армии: ЧВК Вагнера завербовала больше тысячи заключённых в 17 колониях страны [New Russian army soldiers: PMC Wagner recruits more than a thousand prisoners in 17 colonies], 5 August 2022, [url](#); Mediazona, "We are most interested in murderers and bandits. You'll like it in our squad.", 10 August 2022, [url](#)

³⁴⁸ Important Stories, "Нужны добровольцы на грязную работу: убивать по приказу, не задавая вопросов" ["We need volunteers for the dirty work: to kill on command, without asking questions."], 20 July 2022, [url](#); Mediazona, "We are most interested in murderers and bandits. You'll like it in our squad.", 10 August 2022, [url](#)

³⁴⁹ Important Stories, "Нужны добровольцы на грязную работу: убивать по приказу, не задавая вопросов" ["We need volunteers for the dirty work: to kill on command, without asking questions."], 20 July 2022, [url](#); Verstka, Новые солдаты российской армии: ЧВК Вагнера завербовала больше тысячи заключённых в 17 колониях страны [New Russian army soldiers: PMC Wagner recruits more than a thousand prisoners in 17 colonies], 5 August 2022, [url](#)



[81 800 EUR] for their families in case of death) and a presidential pardon after six months of service. Those who volunteer have to pass a personal interview, i.e., about their motivation to go to war, a physical fitness test and a polygraph test to assess their political attitude and inclination to desert.³⁵⁰ After the selection process, admitted prisoners are separated from their fellow inmates.³⁵¹ RBB noted that their lawyers were not allowed to visit persons they knew had been drafted. The drafted convicts were reportedly transferred to the Rostov region.³⁵² Rostov's penal colony IK-2 has reportedly been converted into a military training camp for recruited convicts.³⁵³

Due to the difficult prison conditions in Russia, characterised by violence and a lack of perspective, there is a strong willingness among prisoners to join Wagner and other military actors, according to Olga Romanova from RBB.³⁵⁴ However, there are also reports suggesting that prisoners who decline the offer are sometimes exposed to pressure, reprisals such as solitary confinement and to forced deployment. Thus, a September 2022 joint NGO report states that inmates collaborating with the prison administration (so-called 'activists') 'were pressuring' those who had not volunteered into signing a contract in penal colonies IK-6 and IK-7 in Leningrad region, following a visit by Wagner.³⁵⁵ An inmate from another penitentiary reported in a similar case that the prison administration itself had threatened non-volunteers with 'shuddering and suffering'.³⁵⁶

According to an article published by the independent Russian news portal Verstka on 5 August 2022, prisoners who did not take the deal were sent to solitary confinement in at least two facilities, namely penal colonies IK-7 (Republic of Karelia) and IK-19 (Komi Republic). After initially expressing their willingness to join the fight, they had eventually decided not to sign the contract.³⁵⁷ In another case of inmates changing their mind, which occurred in IK-2 in Yaroslavl region shortly before the volunteers were transferred from the colony, the two

³⁵⁰ Verstka, Новые солдаты российской армии: ЧВК Вагнера завербовала больше тысячи заключённых в 17 колониях страны [New Russian army soldiers: PMC Wagner recruits more than a thousand prisoners in 17 colonies], 5 August 2022, [url](#); Important Stories, «Нужны добровольцы на грязную работу: убивать по приказу, не задавая вопросов» ["We need volunteers for the dirty work: to kill on command, without asking questions."], 20 July 2022, [url](#); Mediazona, "We are most interested in murderers and bandits. You'll like it in our squad.", 10 August 2022, [url](#); Gulagu.net (@ NetGulagu), Telegram, 10 October 2022, [url](#)

³⁵¹ Novaya Gazeta Europe, Convicts in arms, 12 November 2022, [url](#); Gulagu.net (@ NetGulagu), posted on: 12 October 2022, [url](#)

³⁵² Verstka, Новые солдаты российской армии: ЧВК Вагнера завербовала больше тысячи заключённых в 17 колониях страны [New Russian army soldiers: PMC Wagner recruits more than a thousand prisoners in 17 colonies], 5 August 2022, [url](#)

³⁵³ Russia Behind Bars and European Prison Litigation Network, Submissions concerning the recruitment and participation of the Russian convicted prisoners in the war in Ukraine, September 2022, [url](#), p. 9; Neue Züricher Zeitung, Courting people from the margins of society: How prisoners are being recruited for the war in Ukraine, 23 August 2022, [url](#)

³⁵⁴ Neue Züricher Zeitung, Courting people from the margins of society: How prisoners are being recruited for the war in Ukraine, 23 August 2022, [url](#); The Insider, Wagner PMC recruited a cannibal in a Russian prison, head of Russia Behind Bars reports, 15 September 2022, [url](#)

³⁵⁵ Russia Behind Bars and European Prison Litigation Network, Submissions concerning the recruitment and participation of the Russian convicted prisoners in the war in Ukraine, September 2022, [url](#), p. 4

³⁵⁶ Gulagu.net (@ NetGulagu), Telegram, 10 October 2022, [url](#)

³⁵⁷ Verstka, Новые солдаты российской армии: ЧВК Вагнера завербовала больше тысячи заключённых в 17 колониях страны [New Russian army soldiers: PMC Wagner recruits more than a thousand prisoners in 17 colonies], 5 August 2022, [url](#)





inmates concerned were beaten up by the prison staff.³⁵⁸ Finally, in terms of forced deployment, the independent news outlet SOTA reported on 17 September 2022 that Wagner had begun to recruit and relocate murderers and other violent offenders from penal colony IK-4 (Mari El Republic) against their will.³⁵⁹ Within the time constraints for drafting this report, no further accounts of actions taken against convicted inmates unwilling to join Wagner were found in the sources consulted.

Compared to Wagner, fewer details are known about the recruitment campaign of the MoD, which was not launched until late September 2022. Depending on the source, the ministry mainly³⁶⁰ or exclusively³⁶¹ recruits in so-called 'red' penal colonies, where former members of the law enforcement and security agencies serve their sentences.³⁶² As of 2020, there were 21 such colonies in Russia.³⁶³ The prisoners are offered a six-month contract with the ministry and afterwards a presidential pardon if they join the Storm battalion, a newly created unit of enlisted convicts.³⁶⁴ According to a prisoner's account published on Gulagu.net, inmates of 'red' penal colony IK-11 in Nizhny Novgorod region were put under pressure by ministry staff to join the battalion under threat of forced recruitment and solitary confinement for the rest of their prison term.³⁶⁵ No information could be found among the sources consulted on whether the ministry has put these threats into practice.

³⁵⁸ Gulagu.net (@ NetGulagu), Telegram, September 2022, [url](#)

³⁵⁹ SOTA, Telegram, 17 September 2022, [url](#)

³⁶⁰ Novaya Gazeta Europe, Convicts in arms, 12 November 2022, [url](#)

³⁶¹ Important Stories, Минобороны России теперь тоже вербует эзков на фронт [The Russian Defence Ministry now also recruits convicts to the front], 11 October 2022, [url](#)

³⁶² Important Stories, Минобороны России теперь тоже вербует эзков на фронт [The Russian Defence Ministry now also recruits convicts to the front], 11 October 2022, [url](#)

³⁶³ Russia, Federal Penitentiary Service (FSIN): Как отбывают наказание бывшие сотрудники - силовики, правоохранители [How former employees - law enforcement officers, law enforcement officers - serve their sentences], 24 March 2020, [url](#)

³⁶⁴ Important Stories, Минобороны России теперь тоже вербует эзков на фронт [The Russian Defence Ministry now also recruits convicts to the front], 11 October 2022, [url](#); Novaya Gazeta Europe, Convicts in arms, 12 November 2022, [url](#)

³⁶⁵ Gulagu.net (@ NetGulagu), Telegram, 4 October 2022, [url](#)





4. Conscription and military recruitment in Chechnya

4.1. Conditions of conscription and use of Chechen fighters in Ukraine

The situation of conscription and military recruitment in Chechnya (officially, the Chechen Republic) is partly different from the rest of the Russian Federation. Conscription into obligatory military service of young Chechens was suspended after the fall of the Soviet Union³⁶⁶ due to the armed conflict between the Chechen separatists and the Russian Federation.³⁶⁷ Following several failed attempts of conscription, especially in 2001 and 2007,³⁶⁸ military service was reinstated in Chechnya in 2014,³⁶⁹ after an agreement between the head of the Chechen Republic, Ramzan Kadyrov, and Russian MoD was reached for drafting 500 conscripts per year.³⁷⁰

Chechnya has a large security force of about 30 000 men, mainly attached to the Russian National Guard (Rosgvardia) and the Ministry of Internal Affairs.³⁷¹ In practice, some units answer directly to Ramzan Kadyrov, and are usually referred to as *Kadyrovites (kadyrovtsy)*.³⁷² The *Kadyrovites*, who are accused of numerous abuses committed with complete impunity,³⁷³

³⁶⁶ Aliyev, H., Russian Army Increases Numbers of North Caucasian Conscripts, The Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst, 11 November 2014, [url](#); Vatchagaev, M., Chechnya's Exclusion from Military Conscription Shows Moscow's Weak Hold over Region, Jamestown Foundation, 4 October 2013, [url](#)

³⁶⁷ Aliyev, H., Russian Army Increases Numbers of North Caucasian Conscripts, The Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst, 11 November 2014, [url](#)

³⁶⁸ Vatchagaev, M., Chechnya's Exclusion from Military Conscription Shows Moscow's Weak Hold over Region, Jamestown Foundation, 4 October 2013, [url](#); Kavkazskiy Uzel, Чеченские призывники будут служить только в Чечне [Chechens conscripts will serve only in Chechnya], 4 June 2008, [url](#)

³⁶⁹ Vatchagaev, M., Kadyrov Succeeds in Pressuring Moscow to Renew the Military Draft in Chechnya, The Jamestown Foundation, Eurasia Daily Monitor, Vol. 11, Issue 169, 25 September 2014, [url](#); Kavkazskiy Uzel, Первые призывники отправлены в армию из Чечни [The first conscripts from Chechnya were sent to the army], 18 October 2017, [url](#)

³⁷⁰ Vatchagaev, M., Kadyrov Succeeds in Pressuring Moscow to Renew the Military Draft in Chechnya, The Jamestown Foundation, Eurasia Daily Monitor, Vol. 11, Issue 169, 25 September 2014, [url](#); RFE/RL, Russian Army Drafting Men From Chechnya For First Time In 20 Years, 1 October 2014, [url](#); Kavkazskiy Uzel, Первые призывники отправлены в армию из Чечни [The first conscripts from Chechnya were sent to the army], 18 October 2017, [url](#)

³⁷¹ Denmark, DIS, Security and human rights in Chechnya and the situation of Chechens in the Russian Federation – residence registration, racism and false accusations, January 2015, p. 32, [url](#); Belgium, CGVS, Tchetchenie: Situation sécuritaire, 24 July 2019, p. 11-13, [url](#)

³⁷² Belgium, CGVS, Tchetchenie: Situation sécuritaire, 24 July 2019, p. 11-13, [url](#); Newline institute for strategy and policy, The Kadyrovtsy: Putin's Force Multiplier or Propaganda Tool?, 4 March 2022, [url](#); Chambers H., One month on in the Ukraine war: what role for the kadyrovtsy?, Fondation pour la recherche stratégique, 6 April 2022, [url](#)

³⁷³ Belgium, CGVS, Tchetchenie: Situation sécuritaire, 24/07/2019, p. 11-13, [url](#); Novaya Gazeta, Я служил в чеченской полиции и не хотел убивать людей [I served in Chechen police and I didn't want to kill peoples], 15 March 2021, [url](#); Newline institute for strategy and policy, The Kadyrovtsy: Putin's Force Multiplier or Propaganda Tool?, 4 March 2022, [url](#)



such as arbitrary detentions, torture or extrajudicial executions,³⁷⁴ were the first units deployed from Chechnya to Ukraine, especially within the troops of the National Guard.³⁷⁵

In April 2022, Ramzan Kadyrov announced his plan to recruit³⁷⁶ and train 200 volunteers per week.³⁷⁷ The latter, from Chechnya, other Russian regions³⁷⁸ or CIS countries,³⁷⁹ reportedly receive a few days' training in the Russian Special Forces University in Gudermes (Chechnya), established in April 2022,³⁸⁰ before being deployed to Ukraine.³⁸¹ At the beginning of the conflict, according to several sources, volunteers were promised a commitment bonus of up to 300 000 roubles [4 930 EUR],³⁸² plus usual remunerations established by the Russian MoD for contract soldiers.³⁸³ According to RFE/RL's service Kavkaz.Realii, they were assigned a monthly salary ranging from 200 000 to 300 000 roubles³⁸⁴ [3 172 to 4 930 EUR]. They were also promised a payment of 50 000 to 300 000 roubles [820 to 4 930 EUR] for each combat vehicle destroyed.³⁸⁵ Reportedly, the promises of salaries were not always kept³⁸⁶ and there

³⁷⁴ Memorial, Северный Кавказ и Украина: 20 недель 'специальной военной операции' [North Caucasus and Ukraine: 20 weeks of 'special military operation'], 15 July 2022, p. 16, [url](#)

³⁷⁵ Memorial, Северный Кавказ и Украина: 20 недель 'специальной военной операции' [North Caucasus and Ukraine: 20 weeks of 'special military operation'], 15 July 2022, p. 17, [url](#); Ratelle, J.-F., The North Caucasus and the Russian War in Ukraine, Ponars Eurasia, 12 October 2022, [url](#)

³⁷⁶ Kavkaz.Realii, В Чечне неработающих местных жителей заставляют объяснять отказ от службы в армии [In Chechnya, unemployed locals are forced to explain their refusal to serve in the army], 26 July 2022, [url](#)

³⁷⁷ Meduza, 'Anything but a hawk' Elena Milashina has been writing about Chechnya for years - and thinks that Ramzan Kadyrov is trying to protect it from the worst, 4 October 2022, [url](#)

³⁷⁸ Memorial, Северный Кавказ и Украина: 20 недель 'специальной военной операции' [North Caucasus and Ukraine: 20 weeks of 'special military operation'], 15 July 2022, pp. 18, 21 and 24, [url](#)

³⁷⁹ Memorial, Северный Кавказ и Украина: 20 недель 'специальной военной операции' [North Caucasus and Ukraine: 20 weeks of 'special military operation'], 15 July 2022, pp. 18, 21 and 24, [url](#)

³⁸⁰ Meduza, 'Anything but a hawk' Elena Milashina has been writing about Chechnya for years — and thinks that Ramzan Kadyrov is trying to protect it from the worst, 4 October 2022, [url](#)

³⁸¹ Memorial, Северный Кавказ и Украина: 20 недель 'специальной военной операции' [North Caucasus and Ukraine: 20 weeks of 'special military operation'], 15 July 2022, p. 18, [url](#); Meduza, 'Anything but a hawk' Elena Milashina has been writing about Chechnya for years — and thinks that Ramzan Kadyrov is trying to protect it from the worst, 4 October 2022, [url](#)

³⁸² Memorial, Северный Кавказ и Украина: 20 недель 'специальной военной операции' [North Caucasus and Ukraine: 20 weeks of 'special military operation'], 15 July 2022, p. 18-19, [url](#); Radio Ozodi, Глава Чечни пообещал 300 тысяч рублей каждому, кто поедет воевать в Украину [The head of Chechnya has promised 300,000 roubles to anyone who goes to fight in Ukraine], 20 April 2022, [url](#); Aliyev H., Email correspondence with EUAA, 14 November 2022; Perild, "They gave 300 thousand from Ramzan's pocket." "Important stories" told how volunteers were recruited in Chechnya for the war with Ukraine, 12 October 2022, [url](#)

³⁸³ Memorial, Северный Кавказ и Украина: 20 недель 'специальной военной операции' [North Caucasus and Ukraine: 20 weeks of 'special military operation'], 15 July 2022, p. 18-19, [url](#); Aliyev H., Email correspondence with EUAA, 14 November 2022; Perild, "They gave 300 thousand from Ramzan's pocket." "Important stories" told how volunteers were recruited in Chechnya for the war with Ukraine, 12 October 2022, [url](#)

³⁸⁴ Kavkaz.Realii, За оружием и деньгами: зачем из Чечни едут воевать в Украину [For weapons and money: why people go from Chechnya to fight in Ukraine], 8 June 2022, [url](#)

³⁸⁵ Memorial, Северный Кавказ и Украина: 20 недель 'специальной военной операции' [North Caucasus and Ukraine: 20 weeks of 'special military operation'], 15 July 2022, p. 18-19, [url](#); Kavkaz.Realii, За оружием и деньгами: зачем из Чечни едут воевать в Украину [For weapons and money: why people go from Chechnya to fight in Ukraine], 8 June 2022, [url](#); Perild, 'They gave 300 thousand from Ramzan's pocket.' 'Important stories' told how volunteers were recruited in Chechnya for the war with Ukraine, 12 October 2022, [url](#)

³⁸⁶ Aliyev H., Email correspondence with EUAA, 14 November 2022



were reports of relatives complaining that they had not received the promised financial support and medical care after their male relatives were injured³⁸⁷ or killed in Ukraine.³⁸⁸

The legal status of these volunteers is unclear. Some sources reported that initially they had been deployed without a contract,³⁸⁹ whereas other sources mentioned that volunteers had been mainly deployed within the Chechen volunteer battalion Akhmat,³⁹⁰ attached to the MoD.³⁹¹ From June 2022, volunteers became attached to military units,³⁹² to private military companies such as Wagner, or to the National Guard on short contracts, sometimes signed retrospectively in their absence.³⁹³ For information on volunteer fighters in Ukraine, please see chapter [3.3 Volunteer battalions and mercenaries](#).

On 26 June 2022, Ramzan Kadyrov announced the establishment of four exclusively Chechen volunteers' battalions attached to the MoD: South-Akhmat, North-Akhmat, West-Akhmat and East Akhmat.³⁹⁴ However, facing the lack of recruits, men of these regiments come mainly from the Chechen police forces and the National Guard³⁹⁵ and, according to Ramzan Kadyrov, they all already had received combat experience in the Donbass.³⁹⁶ At the same time, Kadyrov

³⁸⁷ Kavkazskiy Uzel, Аналитики спрогнозировали лояльное отношение к добровольцам после жалобы Кадырову [Analysts predict loyal attitude towards volunteers after complaint to Kadyrov], 15 June 2022, [url](#)

³⁸⁸ Insider (The), 'Threatening mothers and sisters.' How Chechen 'volunteers' are forcibly sent to fight in Ukraine, 15 June 2022, [url](#); Kavkaz.Realii, За оружием и деньгами: зачем из Чечни едут воевать в Украину [For weapons and money: why people go from Chechnya to fight in Ukraine], 8 June 2022, [url](#)

³⁸⁹ Memorial, Северный Кавказ и Украина: 20 недель 'специальной военной операции' [North Caucasus and Ukraine: 20 weeks of 'special military operation'], 15 July 2022, p. 17-22, [url](#); Perild, "They gave 300 thousand from Ramzan's pocket." "Important stories" told how volunteers were recruited in Chechnya for the war with Ukraine, 12 October 2022, [url](#)

³⁹⁰ Novaya Gazeta Europe, To war or to prison?, 12 August 2022, [url](#); Meduza, 'Anything but a hawk' Elena Milashina has been writing about Chechnya for years - and thinks that Ramzan Kadyrov is trying to protect it from the worst, 4 October 2022, [url](#); Aliyev H., Email correspondence with EUAA, 14 November 2022.

³⁹¹ Aliyev H., Email correspondence with EUAA, 14 November 2022.

³⁹² Memorial, Северный Кавказ и Украина: 20 недель 'специальной военной операции' [North Caucasus and Ukraine: 20 weeks of 'special military operation'], 15 July 2022, p. 17-22, [url](#); Perild, "They gave 300 thousand from Ramzan's pocket." "Important stories" told how volunteers were recruited in Chechnya for the war with Ukraine, 12 October 2022, [url](#)

³⁹³ Perild, "They gave 300 thousand from Ramzan's pocket." "Important stories" told how volunteers were recruited in Chechnya for the war with Ukraine, 12 October 2022, [url](#)

³⁹⁴ Ramzan Kadyrov (@RKadyrov_95), Telegram, 26 June 2022 [url](#); Memorial, Северный Кавказ и Украина: 20 недель 'специальной военной операции' [North Caucasus and Ukraine: 20 weeks of 'special military operation'], 15 July 2022, p. 22, [url](#); Kavkazskiy Uzel, Кадыров анонсировал формирование четырех военных батальонов [Kadyrov announced the formation of four military bataillons], 27 June 2022, [url](#)

³⁹⁵ Meduza, 'Anything but a hawk' Elena Milashina has been writing about Chechnya for years - and thinks that Ramzan Kadyrov is trying to protect it from the worst, 4 October 2022, [url](#); Kavkaz.Realii, В Чечне неработающих местных жителей заставляют объяснять отказ от службы в армии [In Chechnya, unemployed locals are forced to explain their refusal to serve in the army], 26 July 2022, [url](#)

³⁹⁶ Meduza, 'Anything but a hawk' Elena Milashina has been writing about Chechnya for years - and thinks that Ramzan Kadyrov is trying to protect it from the worst, 4 October 2022, [url](#); Ramzan Kadyrov (@RKadyrov_95), Telegram, 10 September 2022, [url](#)





launched a wave of recruitment among the republic's security forces.³⁹⁷ The first servicemen from these battalions were deployed to Ukraine in September 2022.³⁹⁸

In mid-September, Ramzan Kadyrov signed a conscription order for men aged 18 to 27, which triggered demonstrations in Grozny.³⁹⁹ On 23 September, Kadyrov stated that a 'partial mobilisation,' ordered by President Putin, would not be applied in Chechnya, as the republic had already exceeded the quota for personnel to be drafted.⁴⁰⁰ According to the Chechen authorities, Chechnya has already deployed more than 20 000 troops since the beginning of the hostilities and around 9 030 Chechens were reportedly fighting in Ukraine as of 15 November 2022.⁴⁰¹ According to Huseyn Aliyev, the numbers of Chechen fighters deployed to Ukraine, which are officially communicated by Chechen authorities, 'are likely to be inflated'.⁴⁰² In October 2022, the Chechen authorities announced that 500 volunteer medical workers would be sent to Ukraine.⁴⁰³

Poorly equipped for artillery combat,⁴⁰⁴ the Kadyrovites were mainly employed for urban combat,⁴⁰⁵ securing Russian occupied territories,⁴⁰⁶ guarding prisoners of war,⁴⁰⁷ and preventing the desertion of Russian soldiers.⁴⁰⁸ The Kadyrovites suffered heavy losses in northern Ukraine in February and early March 2022, and, according to Ukrainian intelligence, withdrew from the region in mid-March.⁴⁰⁹ In March 2022, according to the Chechen

³⁹⁷ Meduza, 'Anything but a hawk' Elena Milashina has been writing about Chechnya for years - and thinks that Ramzan Kadyrov is trying to protect it from the worst, 4 October 2022, [url](#); Kavkaz.Realii, В Чечне неработающих местных жителей заставляют объяснять отказ от службы в армии [In Chechnya, unemployed locals are forced to explain their refusal to serve in the army], 26 July 2022, [url](#)

³⁹⁸ Meduza, 'Anything but a hawk' Elena Milashina has been writing about Chechnya for years - and thinks that Ramzan Kadyrov is trying to protect it from the worst, 4 October 2022, [url](#); Kavkazskiy Uzel, Кадыров отчитался об отправке в Донбасс бойцов 'Юг-Ахмата' и добровольцев [Kadyrov reports sending lug-Akhmat fighters and volunteers to Donbass], 27 September 2022, [url](#)

³⁹⁹ Meduza, 'Anything but a hawk' Elena Milashina has been writing about Chechnya for years - and thinks that Ramzan Kadyrov is trying to protect it from the worst, 4 October 2022, [url](#); RFE/RL, Russia's Chechnya Gets Ready For 'Fall Mobilization' As Moscow Faces Major Setback In Ukraine War, 15 September 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁰⁰ Ratelle J.-F, The North Caucasus and the Russian War in Ukraine, Ponars Eurasia, 12 October 2022, [url](#); Meduza, 'Anything but a hawk' Elena Milashina has been writing about Chechnya for years - and thinks that Ramzan Kadyrov is trying to protect it from the worst, 4 October 2022, [url](#); Novaya Gazeta Europe, Kadyrov: no mobilisation in Chechnya, 23 September 2022, [url](#); ISW, Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, 23 September 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁰¹ Caucasian Knot, Daudov announces participation of 9000 fighters from Chechnya in battles in Ukraine, 15 November 2022, [url](#);

⁴⁰² Aliyev H., Email correspondence with EUAA, 14 November 2022.

⁴⁰³ Caucasian Knot, Kadyrov confirms predictions about sending medical workers from Chechnya to Donbass, 11 October 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁰⁴ Memorial, Северный Кавказ и Украина: 20 недель 'специальной военной операции' [North Caucasus and Ukraine: 20 weeks of 'special military operation'], 15 July 2022, p. 25-26, [url](#);

⁴⁰⁵ Memorial, Северный Кавказ и Украина: 20 недель 'специальной военной операции' [North Caucasus and Ukraine: 20 weeks of 'special military operation'], 15 July 2022, p. 25-26, [url](#);

⁴⁰⁶ Memorial, Северный Кавказ и Украина: 20 недель 'специальной военной операции' [North Caucasus and Ukraine: 20 weeks of 'special military operation'], 15 July 2022, p. 25-26, [url](#);

⁴⁰⁷ Kavkaz Realii, За оружием и деньгами: зачем из Чечни едут воевать в Украину [For weapons and money: why people go from Chechnya to fight in Ukraine], 8 June 2022, [url](#);

⁴⁰⁸ Memorial, Северный Кавказ и Украина: 20 недель 'специальной военной операции' [North Caucasus and Ukraine: 20 weeks of 'special military operation'], 15 July 2022, p. 25-26, [url](#); Chambers H., One month on in the Ukraine war: what role for the kadyrovtsy?, Fondation pour la recherche stratégique, 6 April 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁰⁹ Memorial, Северный Кавказ и Украина: 20 недель 'специальной военной операции' [North Caucasus and Ukraine: 20 weeks of 'special military operation'], 15 July 2022, p. 26-27, [url](#); Kyiv Independent (The), The destruction of a convoy of Chechen special forces near Hostomel on Feb. 26 officially confirmed by the President's Office., 27 February 2022, [url](#)





authorities, the Kadyrovites were also present in the Donetsk region, notably in Mariupol, as well as in the Zaporizhzhia, Kharkiv, Luhansk and Kherson regions.⁴¹⁰ Between March and June, they participated in urban battles for the capture of Rubizhne, Sieverodonetsk and Lysychansk in the Luhansk region.⁴¹¹ In September 2022, according to the Ukrainian army and the Warsaw institute, up to 1 300⁴¹² or 1 500⁴¹³ troops from Chechnya were sent to Kherson region.⁴¹⁴

According to both researcher Huseyn Aliyev, and human rights lawyer interviewed by EUAA in November 2022, no NGOs working to help drafted persons were present in Chechnya.⁴¹⁵

Moreover, as noted by the human rights lawyer, there were ‘no signs of anyone talking [about military drafting and deployment] and complaining’.⁴¹⁶

4.2. Methods of recruitment

In Chechnya, recruitment of fighters for warfare against Ukraine was reported to have been organised in a general atmosphere of coercion and in violation of human rights standards.⁴¹⁷ Ramzan Kadyrov has regularly reported on deployments of volunteers to Ukraine.⁴¹⁸ Similarly, the president of Chechen Parliament Magomet Daudov also reported the same.⁴¹⁹ In June 2022, upon inquiry by RFR/RL’s service Kavkaz.Realii, employees of Chechen enlistment offices stated that only volunteers were accepted for deployment to Ukraine.⁴²⁰ In July, as reported by Caucasian Knot, the Chechen leader said on air of the state TV Grozny that anyone who would refuse to go to Ukraine ‘will get into the hell’.⁴²¹ At the end of August 2022, Kadyrov reportedly ‘called the refuseniks [people who refused deployment] parasites’ and

⁴¹⁰ Chambers, H., One month on in the Ukraine war: what role for the kadyrovtsy?, Fondation pour la recherche stratégique, 6 April 2022, [url](#)

⁴¹¹ Memorial, Северный Кавказ и Украина: 20 недель ‘специальной военной операции’ [North Caucasus and Ukraine: 20 weeks of ‘special military operation’], 15 July 2022, p. 28, [url](#); Rarelle J.-F., The North Caucasus and the Russian War in Ukraine, Ponars Eurasia, 12 October 2022, [url](#)

⁴¹² RFE/RL, Russia's Chechnya Gets Ready For 'Fall Mobilization' As Moscow Faces Major Setback In Ukraine War, 15 September 2022, [url](#)

⁴¹³ Warsaw institute, Why Ukraine War Matters For Chechnya’s Kadyrov, 20 September 2022, [url](#);

⁴¹⁴ RFE/RL, Russia's Chechnya Gets Ready For 'Fall Mobilization' As Moscow Faces Major Setback In Ukraine War, 15 September 2022, [url](#); Warsaw institute, Why Ukraine War Matters For Chechnya’s Kadyrov, 20 September 2022, [url](#)

⁴¹⁵ Aliyev H., Email correspondence with EUAA, 14 November 2022; Human rights lawyer, Online interview with EUAA, 11 November 2022

⁴¹⁶ Human rights lawyer, Online interview with EUAA, 11 November 2022

⁴¹⁷ Insider (The), “Threatening mothers and sisters.” How Chechen “volunteers” are forcibly sent to fight in Ukraine, 15 June 2022, [url](#); RFR/RL, Authorities In Chechnya Use Aggressive Shaming To Boost Number Of Volunteers For Russia's Ukraine War, 10 November 2022, [url](#)

⁴¹⁸ Caucasian Knot, New group of volunteers leaves Chechnya for Ukraine, 1 October 2022, [url](#); Caucasian Knot, Kadyrov announces dispatch of another detachment of volunteers to Ukraine, 21 October 2022, [url](#)

⁴¹⁹ Kavkaz.Realii, В Чечне назвали число отправленных на войну против Украины жителей республики [Chechnya names number of Chechens sent to war against Ukraine], 7 June 2022, [url](#)

⁴²⁰ Kavkaz.Realii, В Украине убит похищенный кадывовцами и насильно отправленный на войну житель Чечни [Chechen man kidnapped by Kadyrov and forcibly sent to war killed in Ukraine], 11 June 2022, [url](#)

⁴²¹ Caucasian Knot, Recruitment to Chechen battalions goes amid Kadyrov's threats of hell for those who refuse to go to Ukraine, 18 July 2022, [url](#)



stated that low-income families whose young members would refuse the enrolment in the Chechen military units should be denied social benefits.⁴²²

During the reference period, media sources, human rights activists and bloggers — referring to the statements of Chechen men and their relatives — have reported on numerous instances of forced recruitment.⁴²³ The methods used for forced recruitment included inducement,⁴²⁴ threats,⁴²⁵ and kidnapping.⁴²⁶ The Europe-based human rights NGO Vaifond, reported in May 2022 that, among the people who were forced to volunteer, were people with disabilities as well as people who had no previous connection to the state- or low enforcement-bodies. According to the source, some civil servants were also forced to apply to join the volunteer battalions.⁴²⁷ During the same month, Kavkaz.Realii reported that, based on the information of the opposition movement 1ADAT, around 130 people were kidnapped and detained to force them to volunteer for the units.⁴²⁸ On 15 June, an independent media outlet The Insider, reported that a brother of a Chechen opposition blogger Khasan Khalitov was abducted by the Chechen security forces and taken to Ukraine.⁴²⁹ In some instances, men were reported to have had to pay a high ransom to avoid recruitment⁴³⁰ or to choose between signing a contract to be deployed to Ukraine and facing made-up criminal proceedings.⁴³¹

As noted by the chairman of the Civil Assistance Committee (*Grazhsanskoe sodeystvie*) Svetlana Gannushkina, persons refusing to take part in the hostilities in Ukraine, as well as their family members, could face persecution by the authorities.⁴³² Based on information from human rights NGOs, The Insider noted on the use of family members for recruitment purposes. The source reported on instances involving threats to abduct and detain relatives,

⁴²² Caucasian Knot, Kadyrov orders not to pay social allowance to families of those who refused to serve, 26 August 2022, [url](#)

⁴²³ Kavkaz.Realii, Жителей Чечни массово задерживают для отправки "добровольцами" в Украину – правозащитники [Chechen residents detained en masse to be sent as "volunteers" to Ukraine - human rights activists], 17 May 2022 2022, [url](#); Insider (The), "Threatening mothers and sisters." How Chechen „volunteers“ are forcibly sent to fight in Ukraine, 15 June 2022, [url](#)

⁴²⁴ Insider (The) "Threatening mothers and sisters." How Chechen "volunteers" are forcibly sent to fight in Ukraine, 15 June 2022, [url](#); Kavkazskiy Uzel, Родственники контрактников из Чечни рассказали об уловках рекрутеров [Relatives of Chechen contract servicemen told of recruiters' tricks], 28 July 2022, [url](#)

⁴²⁵ RFI, Une ONG dénonce des recrutements forcés en Tchétchénie pour la guerre en Ukraine, 20 July 2022, [url](#); Kavkaz.Realii, За оружием и деньгами: зачем из Чечни едут воевать в Украину [For Weapons and Money: Why Chechens are Coming to Fight in Ukraine], 8 June 2022, [url](#)

⁴²⁶ RFI, Une ONG dénonce des recrutements forcés en Tchétchénie pour la guerre en Ukraine, 20 July 2022, [url](#); Insider (The), "Threatening mothers and sisters." How Chechen "volunteers" are forcibly sent to fight in Ukraine, 15 June 2022, [url](#)

⁴²⁷ Kavkaz.Realii, В Чечне мужчин похищают на войну против Украины: как Кадыров ищет солдат для Путина [Men kidnapped in Chechnya for war against Ukraine: How Kadyrov is looking for soldiers for Putin], 25 May 2022, [url](#)

⁴²⁸ Kavkaz.Realii, Жителей Чечни массово задерживают для отправки "добровольцами" в Украину – правозащитники [Chechen residents detained en masse to be sent as "volunteers" to Ukraine - human rights activists], 17 May 2022 2022, [url](#)

⁴²⁹ Insider (The), "Threatening mothers and sisters." How Chechen "volunteers" are forcibly sent to fight in Ukraine, 15 June 2022, [url](#)

⁴³⁰ RFI, Une ONG dénonce des recrutements forcés en Tchétchénie pour la guerre en Ukraine, 20 July 2022, [url](#)

⁴³¹ Kavkaz.Realii, От чеченских наемников до ростовских чиновников: как изменилась "скрытая мобилизация" [From Chechen mercenaries to Rostov officials: how "covert mobilisation" has changed], 30 June 2022, [url](#); Kavkaz.Realii, За оружием и деньгами: зачем из Чечни едут воевать в Украину [For Weapons and Money: Why Chechens are Coming to Fight in Ukraine], 8 June 2022, [url](#)

⁴³² Kavkazskiy Uzel, Слова о тысяче добровольцев на Украине вызвали сомнения в правдивости Кадырова [Words about a thousand volunteers in Ukraine have raised doubts about Kadyrov's veracity], 21 March 2022, [url](#)



threats to abduct a young man who refused to go to Ukraine addressed to his parents, and threats with molestation of female relatives. According to the Insider, state actors use kidnappings for extortion.⁴³³

Persons persecuted by law enforcement and convicted prisoners were also reported to be among the involuntary recruits.⁴³⁴ Human rights activists reported that interned men who refused their deployment to Ukraine were threatened with contrived criminal proceedings.⁴³⁵ Among recruited personnel there were also alleged criminals and prison inmates who preferred deployment to Ukraine to criminal proceedings and prison detention.⁴³⁶ Persuasive methods were also reportedly used: these methods did not use coercion directly but attempted to gain persons' consent to the deployment, for instance, by 'reminding' people about their past criminal records⁴³⁷ and threatening with imprisonment.⁴³⁸

In September 2022, there were reports on recruitment of male relatives of women who protested against the 'partial mobilisation' order.⁴³⁹ For example, male relatives of women who wanted to hold a protest rally against mobilisation measures were reportedly taken to the Russian Special Troops University in Gudermes for the training prior to their deployment to Ukraine. After the case attracted public attention, law enforcement authorities reportedly demanded that a family of a man deployed to Ukraine would deny that his deployment was forced on camera.⁴⁴⁰

On 10 October 2022, Kadyrov announced an additional deployment of medical personnel, comprising more than 500 volunteers with medical training, to Donbass. The deployment was preceded by an apology by a nurse who was publicly reprimanded by the Minister of Health in

⁴³³ Insider (The), "Threatening mothers and sisters." How Chechen "volunteers" are forcibly sent to fight in Ukraine, 15 June 2022, [url](#)

⁴³⁴ Kavkaz.Realii, Жителей Чечни массово задерживают для отправки "добровольцами" в Украину – правозащитники [Chechen residents detained en masse for sending "volunteers" to Ukraine - human rights activists], 17 May 2022, [url](#)

⁴³⁵ Kavkaz.Realii, От чеченских наемников до ростовских чиновников: как изменилась "скрытая мобилизация" [From Chechen mercenaries to Rostov officials: how "covert mobilisation" has changed], 30 June 2022, [url](#); Insider (The), "Threatening mothers and sisters." How Chechen "volunteers" are forcibly sent to fight in Ukraine, 15 June 2022, [url](#); Kavkaz.Realii, В Украине убит похищенный кадировцами и насильно отправленный на войну житель Чечни [Chechen man kidnapped by Kadyrov and forcibly sent to war killed in Ukraine], 11 June 2022, [url](#)

⁴³⁶ Kavkaz.Realii, В Украине убит похищенный кадировцами и насильно отправленный на войну житель Чечни [Chechen man kidnapped by Kadyrov and forcibly sent to war killed in Ukraine], 11 June 2022, [url](#); Kavkaz.Realii, За оружием и деньгами: зачем из Чечни едут воевать в Украину [For Weapons and Money: Why Chechens are Coming to Fight in Ukraine], 8 June 2022, [url](#)

⁴³⁷ Kavkazskiy Uzel, Родственники контрактников из Чечни рассказали об уловках рекрутеров [Relatives of Chechen contract servicemen told of recruiters' tricks], 28 July 2022, [url](#); Insider (The) "Threatening mothers and sisters." How Chechen "volunteers" are forcibly sent to fight in Ukraine, 15 June 2022, [url](#)

⁴³⁸ Insider (The) "Threatening mothers and sisters." How Chechen "volunteers" are forcibly sent to fight in Ukraine, 15 June 2022, [url](#)

⁴³⁹ Caucasian Knot, Eyewitnesses report details of suppressing rally against mobilization in Grozny, 22 September 2022, [url](#); Kavkazskiy Uzel, Очевидцы сообщили подробности срыва митинга против мобилизации в Грозном [Eyewitnesses give details of the disruption of a rally against mobilisation in Grozny], 22 September 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁴⁰ Caucasian Knot, Grozny protester's husband dies after sending their son to Ukraine, 4 October 2022, [url](#); Kavkazskiy Uzel, Муж участницы протестов в Грозном умер после отправки сына на Украину [The husband of a female protester in Grozny died after sending his son to Ukraine], 4 October 2022, [url](#)





Chechnya for an audio recording in which she spoke about a mobilisation of medical personal in Chechnya and expressed to go to Ukraine voluntarily.⁴⁴¹

⁴⁴¹ Caucasian Knot, Kadyrov confirms predictions about sending medical workers from Chechnya to Donbass, 11 October 2022, [url](#); Kavkazskiy Uzel, Кадыров подтвердил прогнозы об отправке в Донбасс медработников из Чечни [Kadyrov confirmed forecasts of Chechen medical workers being sent to the Donbass], 10 October 2022, [url](#)





5. Draft evasion, desertion, and violation of order

5.1. Criminal Code

‘Crimes against the established order of military service’ are outlined in Chapter 33 ‘Crimes against military service’ of the Criminal Code of the Russia Federation⁴⁴² (Articles 331 – 352.1).⁴⁴³ The Criminal Code was amended on 24 September 2022⁴⁴⁴ to include concepts like ‘mobilisation,’ ‘martial law,’ and ‘wartime’ as well as to administer punishments committed under those circumstances.⁴⁴⁵ For the text of relevant parts of the Criminal Code prior to the amendments of 24 September 2022, see [EUAA COI query Treatment of military deserters by state authorities since the February 2022 invasion of Ukraine](#).

The newly introduced articles are the following:

- Article 352.1 ‘Voluntary surrender’, which stipulates punishment of 3 to 10 years in prison, ‘if there are no signs of treason.’⁴⁴⁶ A serviceman who has committed this crime for the first time ‘may be exempted from criminal liability if he took measures for his release, returned to his unit or place of service and did not commit other crimes while in captivity.’⁴⁴⁷
- Article 356.1 ‘Looting’, which stipulates a punishment of up to 15 years in prison.⁴⁴⁸

Desertion and abandonment of a military unit

On 24 September 2022, Article 337 ‘Unauthorised abandonment of a military unit or a place of military service’ was amended. Under the new legislation, unauthorised abandonment of a military unit for a period between 2 and 10 days is punishable by up to 5 years in prison; abandonment for a period of 10 days to 1 month is punishable by up to 7 years in prison;

⁴⁴² Russia, The Criminal Code of the Russian Federation No. 63-FZ of June 13, 1996, IMOLIN, 28 December 2004, [url](#)

⁴⁴³ Russia, Уголовный кодекс Российской Федерации от 13.06.1996 N 63-ФЗ (ред. от 24.09.2022) [Criminal Code of the Russian Federation of 13.06.1996 N 63-FZ (version 24.09.2022)], 24 September 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁴⁴ Russia, Федеральный закон от 24.09.2022 № 365-ФЗ "О внесении изменений в Уголовный кодекс Российской Федерации и статью 151 Уголовно-процессуального кодекса Российской Федерации" [Federal Law No. 365-FZ of 24.09.2022 on Amendments to the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation and to Article 151 of the Code of Criminal Procedure of the Russian Federation], 24 September 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁴⁵ Moscow Times (The), Russia Introduces Harsh Punishments for Wartime Desertion, Refusal to Serve, 24 September 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁴⁶ Perild, Putin approved “military” amendments to the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation. Now for desertion and voluntary surrender will be imprisoned for up to 10 years, 24 September 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁴⁷ Moscow Times (The), Russia Introduces Harsh Punishments for Wartime Desertion, Refusal to Serve, 24 September 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁴⁸ Russia, Федеральный закон от 24.09.2022 № 365-ФЗ "О внесении изменений в Уголовный кодекс Российской Федерации и статью 151 Уголовно-процессуального кодекса Российской Федерации" [Federal Law No. 365-FZ of 24.09.2022 on Amendments to the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation and to Article 151 of the Code of Criminal Procedure of the Russian Federation], 24 September 2022, [url](#)





abandonment for a period of more than 1 month is punishable by 5 to 10 years in prison.⁴⁴⁹ The law specifies that these punishments are applicable to conscripts or contract soldiers who are fulfilling their duties during the period of mobilisation or martial law as well as during wartime and in conditions of an armed conflict or combat operations.⁴⁵⁰ The amended Article further explains that the first-time offenders [informal translation] ‘may be exempted from criminal liability if such unauthorised absence from his unit or place of service, or failure to report for duty without valid reasons, were the consequence of a combination of exceptional circumstances.’⁴⁵¹

Article 338 ‘Desertion’ was also amended to specify that desertion by a single person or a group of persons committed during mobilisation or martial law period as well as during wartime or in conditions of an armed conflict or combat operations would be punishable by a prison term of 5 to 15 years. An exemption from criminal liability can be applied if the action of desertion was committed for the first time and was ‘a consequence [informal translation] of a combination of exceptional circumstances’.⁴⁵²

Failure to execute an order and resistance to a superior

Article 332 ‘Failure to execute an order’ was amended to stipulate that failure to comply with the order by a superior during the period of martial law, wartime, or in conditions of an armed conflict or combat operations, as well as refusal to participate in military or combat operations is punished by a prison term of two to three years.⁴⁵³ In case if failure to comply with a superior’s order, under the conditions described above, was committed by a group of people or caused severe consequences, it is punishable by a prison term from 3 to 10 years.

Article 333 ‘Resistance to a superior or forcing him to violate his duties of military service’ as well as Article 334 ‘Violent actions against a superior’ were similarly amended to include the mentioning of the circumstances of mobilisation, martial law, wartime, armed conflict or

⁴⁴⁹ Perild, Putin approved “military” amendments to the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation. Now for desertion and voluntary surrender will be imprisoned for up to 10 years, 24 September 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁵⁰ Russia, Федеральный закон от 24.09.2022 № 365-ФЗ "О внесении изменений в Уголовный кодекс Российской Федерации и статью 151 Уголовно-процессуального кодекса Российской Федерации" [Federal Law No. 365-FZ of 24.09.2022 on Amendments to the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation and to Article 151 of the Code of Criminal Procedure of the Russian Federation], 24 September 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁵¹ Ivar’s Blog, Russian Soldiers Worried As Putin Signs Law Which Frowns Against Desertion And Surrender, 24 September 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁵² Russia, Федеральный закон от 24.09.2022 № 365-ФЗ "О внесении изменений в Уголовный кодекс Российской Федерации и статью 151 Уголовно-процессуального кодекса Российской Федерации" [Federal Law No. 365-FZ of 24.09.2022 on Amendments to the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation and to Article 151 of the Code of Criminal Procedure of the Russian Federation], 24 September 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁵³ Perild, Putin approved “military” amendments to the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation. Now for desertion and voluntary surrender will be imprisoned for up to 10 years, 24 September 2022, [url](#); Russia, Федеральный закон от 24.09.2022 № 365-ФЗ "О внесении изменений в Уголовный кодекс Российской Федерации и статью 151 Уголовно-процессуального кодекса Российской Федерации" [Federal Law No. 365-FZ of 24.09.2022 on Amendments to the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation and to Article 151 of the Code of Criminal Procedure of the Russian Federation], 24 September 2022, [url](#)





combat operations. Under these circumstances, the punishment for breaching the law is a prison term for a period from 5 to 15 years.⁴⁵⁴

Article 286.1 'Failure to execute an order by a worker of a body of Internal Affairs', applied for personnel employed outside the RAF, e.g., Rosgvardia,⁴⁵⁵ was not amended under the presidential bill of 24 September. The maximum punishment under Article 286.1 is a prison term for up to two years for individuals and up to five years for 'a group of people in preliminary collusion' or in cases when such action 'has entailed grave consequences.'⁴⁵⁶

5.2. Punishments under the law

On 25 November, in email communication with EUAA, a human rights lawyer noted that the implementation of legislation amended on 24 September 2022 was 'still very rare and consisted of several individual cases'.⁴⁵⁷

5.2.1. Evasion of mobilisation

On 5 October a first criminal case for evading conscription under the mobilisation order was initiated in Penza. The charges under Article 328 of the Criminal Code were initiated against a 32-year-old man who refused to sign a draft notice and was detained by the OMON (Special Purpose Mobile Unit) police forces.⁴⁵⁸ On 7 October, it was reported that the Prosecutor's office in Penza region refused to initiate the criminal proceedings.⁴⁵⁹ As reported by independent media, based on the opinion by Pavel Chikov, Article 328 should apply 'only to citizens who evade conscription for military service,' as was previously clarified by the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation.⁴⁶⁰

On 6 October, a regional military commissioner of Chelyabinsk region noted that 15-20 instances of desertion and draft evasion during the mobilisation period were being 'checked' in the region.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁵⁴ Russia, Федеральный закон от 24.09.2022 № 365-ФЗ "О внесении изменений в Уголовный кодекс Российской Федерации и статью 151 Уголовно-процессуального кодекса Российской Федерации" [Federal Law No. 365-FZ of 24.09.2022 on Amendments to the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation and to Article 151 of the Code of Criminal Procedure of the Russian Federation], 24 September 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁵⁵ EUAA, COI query – Russian Federation, Treatment of military deserters by state authorities since the February 2022 invasion of Ukraine (1 February 2022 – 4 April 2022), 5 April 2022, [url](#), p. 13

⁴⁵⁶ Russia, Федеральный закон от 24.09.2022 № 365-ФЗ "О внесении изменений в Уголовный кодекс Российской Федерации и статью 151 Уголовно-процессуального кодекса Российской Федерации" [Federal Law No. 365-FZ of 24.09.2022 on Amendments to the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation and to Article 151 of the Code of Criminal Procedure of the Russian Federation], 24 September 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁵⁷ Human rights lawyer, Email communication with EUAA, 25 November 2022

⁴⁵⁸ Pavel Chikov, Telegram, 5 October 2022, [url](#); Russian Free Press, In Penza opened the first criminal case for evading mobilization, 5 October 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁵⁹ Novaya Gazeta Europe, Prosecutor's office of Russia's Penza drops first criminal charges in Russia for dodging mobilisation, 7 October 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁶⁰ Russian Free Press, In Penza opened the first criminal case for evading mobilization, 5 October 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁶¹ 74.RU, Военком рассказал, сколько на Южном Урале уклонистов и дезертиров [Military commander reveals how many deserters and evaders there are in the South Urals], 6 October 2022, [url](#)



For the information on punishments for draft evasion in case of obligatory military service, see chapter [1.2.1. Conscription and conditions of military service](#)

5.2.2. Desertion and abandonment of a military unit

In August 2022, privately-owned TV station RTVi reported that, based on data from garrison courts, the number of persons charged under Article 337 'Unauthorised abandonment of a military unit or a place of military service' in Russia during the period from February 2022 to August 2022 showed a 45 % increase compared to the same period in 2021 (343 and 227 cases respectively). According to lawyer Maksim Grebenyuk interviewed by RTVi, servicemen's decision not to return to their military units after a taken leave might have been related to their intention to avoid deployment to Ukraine. According to RTVi, the initiation of court cases related to desertion remained rather rare: 8 persons were charged under Article 338 'Desertion' in Russia between February and August 2022 compared to 10 persons in the same period in 2021.⁴⁶²

On 14 June 2022, RFE/RL's service Kavkaz.Realii reported that a dozen of criminal cases, initiated under 'Articles on abandonment of a military unit,' was pending in garrison courts in the southern regions of Russia. Two of these cases were instigated on the grounds of desertion. It was unknown whether these cases were related to the Russia's invasion in Ukraine.⁴⁶³

According to a report of NGO Agora and the project Setevye Svobody (Net Freedoms), the first case of desertion after the Russia's invasion in Ukraine was reported at the end of March 2022.⁴⁶⁴ This desertion case involved a 25-year-old contract soldier stationed at a military unit at the Russia-Ukraine border in Belgorod region. Meduza reported that this person left his place of service due to beatings by a senior official. Afterwards, he reportedly filled in a resignation report while in hospital, in which he indicated as the reasons for the abandonment of his unit both the beatings as well as the fact that the fighting in Ukraine contradicted his personal convictions.⁴⁶⁵

Ukrainian sources have published numerous reports on instances of desertion by Russian servicemen.⁴⁶⁶ For instance, on 6 May, the Ukrainian Defence Intelligence reported that 15

⁴⁶² RTVi, В России после начала вооруженного конфликта на Украине военных стали чаще судить за самоволку [After the start of the armed conflict in Ukraine, servicemen in Russia started being more frequently charged for AWOL], 26 August 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁶³ Kavkaz.Realii, "Не знают, за что воюют". Как на Кавказе и Юге заводят дела о дезертирстве ["They don't know what they are fighting for". On desertion cases in the Caucasus and the South], 14 June 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁶⁴ Agora and Setevye Svobody, Россия: права человека на военном положении [Russia: Human Rights under the Martial Law: The first month of the armed conflict in Ukraine], March 2022, [url](#), p. 15

⁴⁶⁵ Meduza, «Никто не понимал, что происходит. Мы думали — учения». «Медуза» рассказывает историю Альберта Сахибгареева — российского контрактника, который дезертировал с войны в Украине ["No one understood what was happening. We thought these were drills." Meduza tells a story of Albert Sakhibgareev, a Russian contract soldier who deserted from the war in Ukraine], 23 March 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁶⁶ Unian, В российской армии стало больше дезертиров – Генштаб [The number of deserters in the Russian army increased - General Staff], 5 April 2022, [url](#); ZN,UA, Все больше военных РФ становятся дезертирами – разведка [Increasing number of Russia's military personnel is defecting - intelligence], 6 May 2022, [url](#); ZN, UA, Дезертиров и пьяниц в рядах российской армии становится все больше – Генштаб [The number of deserters and drunks in the Russian army is increasing - General Staff], 13 July 2022, [url](#)



Russian soldiers deserted in a village in Kherson region.⁴⁶⁷ In June, 60 servicemen reportedly deserted from their quarters in a village in Zaporizhzhia.⁴⁶⁸ In July, Ukrainian Defence Intelligence reported on instances of desertion in Kherson region, in which deserters were trying to reach Crimea.⁴⁶⁹ On 4 October, a 'Ukraine intelligence spokesperson' stated that the number of calls received by the Ukrainian hotline 'I want to live' — a hotline for Russian servicemen who consider surrendering to the AFU, launched on 19 September 2022⁴⁷⁰— had increased since the start of the mobilisation on 21 September, with more than 2 000 calls received.⁴⁷¹

The amended Article 337 (Part 3.1) was used to initiate a criminal case against a resident of Yakutia, who had been drafted under the mobilisation order and left his military unit in Buryatia for a period of under one month.⁴⁷²

5.2.3. Refusals of deployment to Ukraine

As reported by BBC News on 3 June 2022, there was an instance when a commander in northern Russia requested the initiation of criminal proceedings against his subordinate who had refused to return to the frontlines. However, a military prosecutor refused this request. Human rights activist Sergei Krivenko, interviewed by BBC News, told he was 'not aware of any prosecutions of those refusing to return to the front.'⁴⁷³

On 6 June, a garrison military court in Grozny (Chechnya) sentenced 'an employee of the military commandant's office' to ten days of arrest because of his refusal to go on a mission 'to the area where special tasks are being performed'. The court documents did not mention Ukraine as a specific country of the mission.⁴⁷⁴

International and independent Russian media sources have reported on numerous instances when contract soldiers refused deployment to Ukraine or left Ukraine to return to their military units on the territory of the RF.⁴⁷⁵ At the end of March, 300 contract soldiers from Dagestan are reported to have returned from the self-proclaimed region of DNR to their military base in Buynaksk, where they initiated the procedures to terminate their contracts. Reportedly, they were met in their town as 'deserters' and, due to the pressure from their families and local

⁴⁶⁷ Ukraine, Golovne upravlinnya pozvidki MO Ukraini, Telegram, 6 May 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁶⁸ 24 Kanal, Из общежития на Запорожье сбежали 60 российских военных [Sixty Russian soldiers run away from a hostel in Zaporozhye], 18 June 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁶⁹ Ukraine, Defence Intelligence of the MoD of Ukraine, Invaders Try to Flee from the Site of Hostilities to Crimea through Arabat Spit, 1 July 2022, [url](#); General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, Facebook, 19 July 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁷⁰ Ukraine, National resistance center, A 24-hour hotline has been launched for Russian soldiers who want to surrender, 19 September 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁷¹ Kyiv Post, Over 2,000 Russian Conscripts Seek Surrender – Intelligence, 5 October 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁷² Pavel Chikov, Telegram, 26 October 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁷³ BBC, The Russian soldiers refusing to fight in Ukraine, 3 June 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁷⁴ Caucasian Knot, Court in Chechnya arrests contractor for his refusal to go on business trip, 6 June 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁷⁵ See for instance, DW, Russian soldiers being jailed in occupied Donbas, 8 April 2022, [url](#); BBC, The Russian soldiers refusing to fight in Ukraine, 3 June 2022, [url](#); Mediazona, «Никто не подписывался быть мясом». Автор публика «Военный омбудсмен» — о том, как в России отказываются воевать (таких случаев уже сотни) ["No one signed up to be cannon food". Social media project "Military Ombudsman" on how Russians are refusing to fight (there are hundreds of such cases already)], 6 April 2022, [url](#)



authorities, some of them returned to Ukraine.⁴⁷⁶ At the same time, ‘some’ contract soldiers from self-proclaimed South Ossetia are reported to have left the frontlines and returned to their unit.⁴⁷⁷ On 6 April, a local media source reported that around 60 servicemen from Pskov refused deployment to Ukraine. According to the source, the majority of them faced dismissal from service but some were threatened with criminal proceedings.⁴⁷⁸ In July, around 150 soldiers from Buryatia reportedly returned to the republic after refusing to fight in Ukraine.⁴⁷⁹ Free Buryatia Foundation stated that some of them were kept in a camp located in a territory of the self-proclaimed LNR and were threatened with criminal prosecution.⁴⁸⁰

At the end of October 2022, the Investigative Committee of Russia initiated a first criminal case against a contract soldier who had refused to go on a work mission to participate in a combat operation under Article 332 (Part 2.1) of the amended Criminal Code.⁴⁸¹

5.2.4. The National Guard

A human rights defender, contacted by EUAA in March 2022, noted in email correspondence that Chapter 33 of the Russian Criminal Code would not be applied to the National Guard (Rosgvardia) members because of their status as police force, adding that Rosgvardia officers may be charged under the Article 286.1 ‘Failure to execute an order by a worker of a body of Internal Affairs’ of the Russian Criminal Code.⁴⁸²

At the end of March 2022, media sources reported that some members of Rosgvardia and police forces refused deployment to Ukraine.⁴⁸³ The first group for which refusal became public⁴⁸⁴ was a group of 12 guardsmen from an OMON group of Rosgvardia in Krasnodar.⁴⁸⁵ According to their lawyer Mikhail Benyash, the group was stationed in Crimea and was to be sent to Ukraine on 25 February, which they refused. After a review procedure, their contracts were terminated ‘due to their failure to carry out orders’ which they decided to challenge in a court. As was explained by Benyash, in the situation of ‘special military operation’ the

⁴⁷⁶ Moscow Times (The), Сотни дагестанцев сложили оружие и отказались воевать в Украине [Hundreds of Dagestanis laid down their weapons and refused to fight in Ukraine], 18 July 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁷⁷ Mediazona, «Это не пушечное мясо, нас и так мало». Часть военнослужащих из Южной Осетии отказались участвовать в войне с Украиной и вернулись домой [“Not cannon fodder, there are already few of us”. Some servicemen from South Ossetia refused to take part in the war with Ukraine and returned home], 31 March 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁷⁸ Pskovskaya gubernia, Telegram, 6 April 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁷⁹ Agenstvo.Novosti, Telegram, 11 July 2022, [url](#); Moscow Times (The), 150 Siberian Soldiers Refuse Ukraine Deployment, Activist Says, 12 July 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁸⁰ Agenstvo.Novosti, Telegram, 11 July 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁸¹ Pavel Chikov, Telegram, 27 October 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁸² A human rights defender in Russia, email, 19 March 2022 in EUAA, COI Query – Russian Federation, Query, Treatment of military deserters by state authorities since the February 2022 invasion of Ukraine, 5 April 2022, [url](#), p. 13

⁴⁸³ Kavkaz.Realii, Сотни военных обратились за помощью после отказа росгвардейцев из Краснодара отправиться в Украину [Hundreds of servicemen appealed for help after the Krasnodar Russian Guard refused to go to Ukraine], 25 March 2022, [url](#); FT, Sacking of Russian guardsmen reveals dissent over going to fight in Ukraine, 2 April 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁸⁴ Kavkaz.Realii, Сотни военных обратились за помощью после отказа росгвардейцев из Краснодара отправиться в Украину [Hundreds of servicemen appealed for help after the Krasnodar Russian Guard refused to go to Ukraine], 25 March 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁸⁵ Kavkaz.Realii, Большинство отказавшихся ехать в Украину росгвардейцев из Краснодара передумали судиться с начальством [Most of the Krasnodar Russian Guard officers who refused to go to Ukraine have changed their minds to sue their superiors], 29 March 2022, [url](#)



changing of a contract of Rosgvardia officers to send them outside Russia was not permitted by the law.⁴⁸⁶ After this first public case, other employees of Rosgvardia and the MoD reportedly asked for legal aid in similar circumstances. According to a source of Kavkaz.Realii, several appeals were received from the Southern Military District, including the republics of the North Caucasus.⁴⁸⁷ On 4 April, Novy Fokus, an online media source published in Khakassia, reported on the refusal of 11 members of OMON of Rosgvardia of Khakassia to take part in the 'special operation'. According to the source, they were facing dismissal from the service.⁴⁸⁸

On 25 May, a court in Nalchik, the capital of Kabardino-Balkaria, rejected the lawsuit of 115 Rosgvardia members, who challenged their dismissal from service after refusing to participate in hostilities in Ukraine and returned to a duty station. According to the court decision, as quoted by the Guardian, they were 'rightfully fired for "refusing to perform an official assignment" to fight in Ukraine'.⁴⁸⁹ Associated Press (AP) referred to this case as 'the first official confirmation' of servicemen refusing to participate in the war.⁴⁹⁰

On 25 November 2022, the human rights lawyer has clarified in an email communication with EUAA that 'all known court cases' where Rosgvardia was involved 'ended with decisions that their dismissal was legal.' He also explained that 'one case went through the appeal instance, and two more are still waiting for the second instance to be reviewed.'⁴⁹¹

5.3. Treatment of deserters by Russian forces in Ukraine

In April 2022, DW reported on instances of alleged 'unlawful detention, torture, and inhumane treatment' in Russian controlled areas of Ukraine of contract soldiers who had refused to fight and expressed their wish to leave Ukraine. These cases were reported on the territory of LNR, including in the towns of Popasna, Alchevsk, Stakhanov, and Krasny Luch, as well as 'near the frontline in Svitlodar'.⁴⁹²

On 12 March, the Ukrainian Defence Intelligence claimed that a captured Russian soldier 'spoke about the use of "execution squads"' to eliminate deserters in the midst of rising unrest in the Russian military.⁴⁹³ In July 2022, Ukrainian media outlet Obozrevatel reported that

⁴⁸⁶ Meduza, 'Refusing to kill people isn't a crime' The Russian National Guard is firing officers who refuse to join the war in Ukraine, 30 March 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁸⁷ Kavkaz.Realii, Сотни военных обратились за помощью после отказа росгвардейцев из Краснодарского края отправиться в Украину [Hundreds of servicemen appealed for help after the Krasnodar Russian Guard refused to go to Ukraine], 25 March 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁸⁸ Novy Fokus, «Отказники» или почему 11 бойцов ОМОНа Росгвардии по Хакасии отказались от участия в «спецоперации» в Украине ["Refuseniks" or why 11 OMON riot policemen of Rosgvardiya in Khakassia refused to participate in a "special operation" in Ukraine], 4 April 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁸⁹ Guardian (The), 115 Russian national guard soldiers sacked for refusing to fight in Ukraine, 27 May 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁹⁰ Moscow Times (The), Russia Confirms Sacking 100 Servicemen for Refusing to Fight in Ukraine, 26 May 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁹¹ Human rights lawyer, Email communication with EUAA, 25 November 2022

⁴⁹² DW, Russian soldiers being jailed in occupied Donbas, 8 April 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁹³ Interfax-Ukraine, SBU: Riots kick off among Russian military, army leadership uses tactics of 'firing squads', 12 March 2022, [url](#)





Russian soldiers opened fire at around 30 members of their military unit attempting desertion.⁴⁹⁴ On 4 November, UK Ministry of Defence noted via its official Twitter account that — based on UK Defence Intelligence — ‘Russian forces have probably started deploying “barrier troops” or “blocking units” to Ukraine’. According to the source ‘[t]hese units threaten to shoot their own retreating soldiers in order to compel offensives and have been used in previous conflicts by Russian forces.’⁴⁹⁵

⁴⁹⁴ Obozrevatel, В российской армии начали расстреливать дезертиров: панику вызвал страх "бесшумной смерти" [Russian army starts shooting deserters: fear of "silent death" causes panic], 11 July 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁹⁵ UK, Ministry of Defence, Twitter, 4 November 2022, [url](#)





6. Violations of humanitarian and international human rights law by Russian military forces in Ukraine

On 24 February 2022, Russia attacked Ukraine from north, east and south shelling several missiles and air strikes on Ukrainian cities.⁴⁹⁶ On 25 February 2022, it was reported that Russian forces advanced ‘on four primary axes’ including ‘Kyiv Axis’, ‘Northeast Axis’, ‘Donbas Axis’, and ‘Crimea Axis’⁴⁹⁷ and ‘Russian ground forces entered regions across Ukraine, bombs fell on major cities’⁴⁹⁸ including ‘heavy artillery against central Kharkiv’ as of 28 February 2022.⁴⁹⁹ As of March 2022, over 150 000 Russian troops were reportedly ‘involved in the war in Ukraine’. Air strikes reportedly targeted civilian infrastructure in Ukrainian cities, including in residential buildings, hospitals, and schools.⁵⁰⁰

On 26 March 2022, UN OHCHR stated that the Russian attacks against Ukraine ‘led to a grave deterioration in the human rights situation across the country’.⁵⁰¹ On 2 September 2022, the Ukrainian authorities stated that they had documented over 22 000 Russian attacks in the country impacting over 24 000 civilian targets, killing 7 000 civilians and injuring other 5 500 since the start of the Russia’s invasion in Ukraine.⁵⁰² The UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine at UN OHCHR reported that 6 557 civilians were killed and 10 074 were injured in the period from 24 February to 14 November 2022.⁵⁰³ UN OHCHR has reportedly verified these cases and ‘believes that the actual figures are considerably higher’.⁵⁰⁴

On 3 March, the International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecutor launched an investigation into possible war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide, committed by any part in Ukraine from 21 November 2013 [the start of the Maidan protest movement⁵⁰⁵] onwards.⁵⁰⁶ Between 1 April and 25 June 2022, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

⁴⁹⁶ Guardian (The), War in Ukraine: where has Russia attacked?, 24 February 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁹⁷ ISW, Ukraine, conflict update, 25 February 2022, [url](#), p. 1; UC Louvain, Europe.Russie.DEBATS, Russia’s war in Ukraine: A short assessment from the perspective of ‘principle of war’, 24 February 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁹⁸ NEWS, Ukraine attacked: Map of sites targeted by Russia’s invasion, 25 February 2022, [url](#)

⁴⁹⁹ ISW, Ukraine, conflict update, 28 February 2022, [url](#), p. 1

⁵⁰⁰ New York Times (The), As Russian troop deaths climb, morale becomes an issue, officials say, 16 March 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁰¹ UN OHCHR, Update on human rights situation in Ukraine, 26 March 2022, [url](#), p. 1

⁵⁰² Ukrainska Pravda, Ukraine’s Interior Ministry reveals number of civilians killed or injured by Russians, 2 September 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁰³ UN OHCHR, Ukraine: civilian casualty update 14 November 2022, 14 November 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁰⁴ UN OHCHR, Ukraine, civilian casualty update, 7 November 2022, 7 November 2022, [url](#)

⁵⁰⁵ The Maidan protest movement (The Maidan revolution/uprising or Euromaidan) began 21 November 2013 when the Ukrainian government announced it was withdrawing plans to join the EU, causing three months of protests by Ukrainians and violent attacks on protesters by police that resulted in about 100 deaths mainly by police snipers. Then-President Yanukovich who was seen as responsible, was forced out and a new president elected. In the months afterwards, Russia seized Crimea and in April 2013, Donbas region broke out into fighting the support of Russian forces backing the ‘separatist’ movement there. Pifer, S., Ukraine: Looking forward, five years after the Maidan Revolution, Brookings Institute, 22 February 2019, [url](#)

⁵⁰⁶ ICC, Statement of ICC Prosecutor, Karim A.A. Khan QC, on the Situation in Ukraine: Receipt of Referrals from 39 States Parties and the Opening of an Investigation, 2 March 2022, [url](#)





conducted an investigative mission in Ukraine on potential violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Ukraine and reportedly found ‘clear patterns of serious violations’ of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) mostly attributed to RAF.⁵⁰⁷ In its October 2022 report, Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine attributed responsibility for the vast majority of the identified ‘war crimes, violations of human rights and international humanitarian law’ to RAF, in the initial phase of its investigation of events of late February and March 2022 in the regions of Kyiv, Chernihiv, Kharkiv, and Sumy.⁵⁰⁸

According to Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) data records, between the start of the war on 24 February 2022 and 3 November 2022, 2 454 incidents of the total 2 558 events recorded as targeting civilians were attributed to RAF.⁵⁰⁹ Associated Press (AP) and Frontline have set up a ‘war crimes tracker’ on Ukraine where evidence of potential war crimes in Ukraine are gathered, verified and documented.⁵¹⁰ As of 7 November 2022, 558 incidents of ‘potential’ war crimes in Ukraine have been documented by the source.⁵¹¹

Russia has reportedly used a wide range of weapons in Ukraine carrying out airstrikes⁵¹² using war planes⁵¹³ dropping cluster munitions⁵¹⁴ that are difficult to control⁵¹⁵ and have been banned in many parts of the world based on the Convention on Cluster Munitions⁵¹⁶ to which, however, Russia and Ukraine are not parties.⁵¹⁷ Russian forces have also used other explosive weapons such as rockets, missiles, artillery shells, aircraft bombs that are not prohibited, but which have been used in densely populated areas thereby affecting civilians.⁵¹⁸ In addition, Russian forces reportedly used weapons such as ‘the 2S19 Msta-s 152mm tracked self-propelled howitzer’,⁵¹⁹ ‘self-propelled 203-mm Peony and 152-mm Hyacinth and Acacia self-propelled howitzers’,⁵²⁰ S-300 missiles, Kalibr missile (cruise missiles launched from ships and submarines positioned in the Black Sea), KH-101 missile⁵²¹ and Iskander missiles (with ‘powerful warheads capable of destroying large buildings and some fortified facilities’).⁵²² Moreover, Russian forces used ‘loitering munitions’ such as the *KUB* and *Lancet*⁵²³ and Iranian drones (‘remote-controlled and programmable weapons’) including ‘Shahed-136

⁵⁰⁷ OSCE, ODIHR, Report on violation of International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law, war crimes and crimes against humanity, 14 July 2022, [url](#), p. 3

⁵⁰⁸ UN OHCHR, Report of Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, 18 October 2022, [url](#), p. 2

⁵⁰⁹ ACLED, Ukraine Crisis, events targeting civilians: perpetrators, data extracted on 14 November 2022, [url](#)

⁵¹⁰ AP and FRONTLINE, War Crimes Watch Ukraine Reporting Methodology, n.d., [url](#)

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⁵¹² Euronews, Ukraine war : What weapons are being used in Russia’s invasion?, 8 March 2022, [url](#)

⁵¹³ Euronews, Ukraine war : What weapons are being used in Russia’s invasion?, 8 March 2022, [url](#)

⁵¹⁴ UN OHCHR, Update on human rights situation in Ukraine, 26 March 2022, [url](#), para. 7

⁵¹⁵ Harvard University, Harvard Law Today, Russian forces are using weapons widely banned across the world, says Harvard Law expert, 3 March 2022, [url](#)

⁵¹⁶ Convention on cluster munitions, n.d., [url](#)

⁵¹⁷ HRW, Growing civilian toll from Russian Cluster Munition attacks, 25 August 2022, [url](#)

⁵¹⁸ Harvard University, Harvard Law Today, Russian forces are using weapons widely banned across the world, says Harvard Law expert, 3 March 2022, [url](#)

⁵¹⁹ Army Recognition Group, Russian army 2S19 Msta-S 152mm self-propelled howitzer is a nightmare for Ukrainian army, 4 July 2022, [url](#)

⁵²⁰ Euronews, Ukraine war : What weapons are being used in Russia’s invasion?, 8 March 2022, [url](#)

⁵²¹ BBC, War in Ukraine: Is Russia’s stock of weapons running low?, 14 October 2022, [url](#)

⁵²² Euronews, Ukraine war : What weapons are being used in Russia’s invasion?, 8 March 2022, [url](#)

⁵²³ CFR, Can Iranian Drones Turn Russia’s Fortunes in the Ukraine War?, 26 October 2022, [url](#)





drones'.⁵²⁴ According to the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), these Iranian drones are loitering munitions rather than kamikaze or suicide drones.⁵²⁵

Russian troops reportedly had 'shot civilians, indiscriminately shelled schools and apartment buildings and terrorised towns and villages they have occupied'.⁵²⁶ Since the beginning of the war, 'mass graves' have been reportedly uncovered in Bucha, Izium, and Mariupol.⁵²⁷ On 13 November 2022, Reuters cited the Ukrainian president stating that over 400 cases of war crimes were recorded during investigations in the city of Kherson after it was taken back from Russian occupation, including civilian dead bodies.⁵²⁸

The investigation by International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine revealed a 'pattern of summary executions in areas temporarily occupied by Russian armed forces in February and March 2022'. According to the source, many executions took place in Bucha, Kyiv region.⁵²⁹ In Bucha, eight bodies were discovered in the back yard of a house used as a base by Russian troops before their withdrawal from the town, and ten bodies of civilians on the street and five other bodies in a basement. Some of the dead bodies were reportedly discovered with hands tied in the back with signs of torture and gunshot wounds.⁵³⁰

On 3 April 2022, HRW reported on having documented 'several cases' of 'apparent war crimes' committed by Russian armed forces against civilians including 'a case of repeated rape and two cases of summary execution' in occupied areas of Chernihiv, Kharkiv, and Kyiv regions of Ukraine between 27 February and 14 March 2022. Russian soldiers were reportedly involved in 'looting civilian property' during the same period.⁵³¹ On 21 April 2022, HRW reported on 'summary executions, other unlawful killings, enforced disappearances, and torture' in Bucha during the occupation of the town between 4 and 31 March 2022. Researchers from the organisation reportedly discovered 278 dead bodies (mainly civilians) following the withdrawal of Russian forces from the town.⁵³²

AP referred to Ukrainian prosecutors saying that Russian soldiers responsible for 'the violence' at 144 Yablunska street in Bucha, where 40 dead bodies were found by the police, belonged to the Russian 76th Guards Airborne Assault Division.⁵³³ In August 2022, Al Jazeera cited [Ukrainian] survivors, police and rights groups reporting on the Chechen *Kadyrovtsy* fighters being involved in the 'killings of hundreds of civilians in Bucha, other Kyiv suburbs and occupied areas'.⁵³⁴

⁵²⁴ New York Times (The), The Iranian Drones in Ukraine's Already Crowded Skies, 19 October 2022, [url](#)

⁵²⁵ CFR, Can Iranian Drones Turn Russia's Fortunes in the Ukraine War?, 26 October 2022, [url](#)

⁵²⁶ NPR, Meet the Chechen battalion joining Ukraine to fight Russia – and fellow Chechens, 5 September 2022, [url](#)

⁵²⁷ BBC, Ukraine war: Russia guilty of war crimes in Kherson, says Zelensky, 14 November 2022, [url](#)

⁵²⁸ Reuters, Ukraine's Zelenskiy: More than 400 Russian war crimes in freed Kherson, 13 November 2022, [url](#)

⁵²⁹ UN OHCHR, Report of Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, 18 October 2022, [url](#), para. 65–66

⁵³⁰ UN OHCHR, Report of Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, 18 October 2022, [url](#), para. 66

⁵³¹ HRW, Apparent war crimes in Russian controlled areas, 3 April 2022, [url](#)

⁵³² HRW, Ukraine: Russian forces' trail of death in Bucha, 21 April 2022, [url](#)

⁵³³ AP, How Russian soldiers ran a 'cleansing' operation in Bucha, 3 November 2022, [url](#)

⁵³⁴ Al Jazeera, The real role of pro-Russian Chechen in Ukraine, 18 August 2022, [url](#)





According to HRW, Russian troops and other forces under their command reportedly subjected detained individuals to ‘electric shock, waterboarding, severe beatings, threats at gunpoint, and being forced to hold stress positions for extended periods’ in about seven locations in Iziium City (Kharkiv region) during the Russian occupation from March to early September 2022. Facilities in which such methods were used reportedly included schools, a private home, a police station, a railway polyclinic, an optical and mechanical plant and the Iziium Municipal Industrial Water Supply and Sewerage Company.⁵³⁵

During its investigation of events in Kyiv, Chernihiv, Kharkiv and Sumy regions in February and March 2022, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine received information of Russian soldiers subjecting girls and women to rape. The ages of the affected girls and women ranged from 4 to 80 years. According to the same source, Russian soldiers raped Ukrainian women in their homes or in unoccupied buildings. The source further indicated that there had been other cases of ‘sexual violence’ against girls, women and men.⁵³⁶ Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch also have reported on Russian forces subjecting civilian women to rape in Kyiv and in Malaya Rohan village of Kharkiv region.⁵³⁷

Amnesty International (AI) reported on ‘forcibly transferred and deported civilians from occupied areas of Ukraine’ by Russian forces, which according to AI ‘amounted to war crimes’.⁵³⁸

⁵³⁵ HRW, Russian forces tortured Iziium detainees, 19 October 2022, [url](#)

⁵³⁶ UN OHCHR, Report of Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, 18 October 2022, [url](#), para. 88

⁵³⁷ AI, Ukraine: Russian forces extrajudicially executing civilians in apparent war crimes – new testimony, 7 April 2022, [url](#); HRW, Apparent war crimes in Russian controlled areas, 3 April 2022, [url](#);

⁵³⁸ AI, Ukraine: Russia’s unlawful transfer of civilians a war crime and likely a crime against humanity – new report, 10 November 2022, [url](#)





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Annex 2: Terms of Reference

1. Compulsory military service and official conscription – legal framework and background on implementation

- Military and reserve service
- Exemptions from military service
- Conscientious objectors (including on religious grounds, e.g., Jehovah Witnesses)
- Conditions of military service

2. Contract military service

3. Recruitment during the reference period (methods of recruitment and regional differences, including in Chechnya)

4. Mobilisation

- Legal basis and implementation (including regional differences and reports on irregularities)

5. Deployment to Ukraine

- Deployment and duties of conscripts and reservists
- Deployment to Ukraine of conscripts, reservists, and contract servicemen
- Other groups deployed to Ukraine (including police forces, Rosgvardia, and volunteer fighters)

6. Consequences of draft evasion, military desertion, and defection

- Legislation per group and implementation

7. Human rights violations committed by Russian forces in Ukraine





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