



Russia Country Report January 2023

As dominant nation in the Soviet Union, Russia ensured that political groups were not included as protected groups in the definition of genocide in the Genocide Convention. If they had been included, Stalin's [political purges](#) would have been genocides. From Ivan III in 1478, [the Russian Empire was built on genocide](#). [Conquests of indigenous peoples of Siberia](#) were genocidal. The Soviet Union continued Russia's history of genocide. [Russia is now committing genocide in Ukraine](#).

In 1932 the [Holodomor](#) famine in Ukraine starved 3.5 million Ukrainians and suppressed the Ukrainian independence movement. In 1931-33 Stalin also mandated collectivization in Kazakhstan, compelling peasants to turn over their food production to the Soviet Union. The resultant famine starved [1.5 million Kazakhs](#). Russia denies these genocides.

During the 1979-89 Soviet invasion of [Afghanistan](#) one million Afghan civilians were killed, due to shelling, rocket strikes, and bombing campaigns. The Soviet army killed thousands of civilians in mass executions in retaliation for resistance.

In the 1990s, Russia assisted the breakaway region of Abkhazia in [genocidal massacres](#) against ethnic Georgians, killing at least 5,738 and forcing 200,000 from their homes. Russia provided military support to the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in the 2008 Russo-Georgia war. Russia used [cluster munitions](#), burned Georgian dwellings, and forcibly displaced civilians from their homes under [death threats](#).

In Syria, the Russian military has kept the brutal Assad regime in power since 2015, and prevented rebel forces from overthrowing the government, solidifying Russian regional interests. A UN investigation concluded that Russian airstrikes during the seven years of conflict have constituted [war crimes](#), because civilian zones were bombed at random with no military objective and targets were often hit repeatedly in order to kill [rescue workers](#). Russian bombing has resulted in thousands of casualties. Russian destruction of Syrian cities has resulted in 700,000 refugees.

In 2014, Russia illegally invaded Ukraine and annexed the Crimean Peninsula. On February 24th, 2022, Russian forces [invaded eastern and southern Ukraine](#). This crime of aggression was [condemned by 141 members of the United Nations](#) General Assembly. Russia continues to carry out [massive missile and drone strikes](#) on civilian targets. Russian forces have committed [mass murder](#), [torture](#), [mass rape](#), and [genocidal massacres](#) of Ukrainians in occupied areas. [Putin](#) denies the right for the Ukrainian nationality to exist. Russian propaganda dehumanizes and [demonizes](#) Ukrainians as "Nazis." This is genocidal "mirroring" in which Putin accuses Ukrainians of the very crimes Russian forces commit. Putin's threat of nuclear war is a bluff. Putin knows that first use will result in massive retaliation against Russia itself.

Since 2014, the Russian mercenary organization, the Wagner Group, has fought in support of Russian interests in many nations, including Ukraine, Syria, Libya, the [Central African Republic](#), and Mali. The group has targeted and executed hundreds of civilians in [Mali](#). In other conflicts, including in the CAR and Syria, the Wagner mercenaries have sexually assaulted, robbed, tortured, and murdered thousands of civilians. The Wagner Group is funded by gold and gem mines it controls and by the Russian Ministry of Defense. The Wagner Group operates with no accountability for its crimes.

Throughout Vladimir Putin's presidency, the Russian FSB secret police have intimidated, imprisoned, murdered and repressed dissidents. In 2020, opposition leader Alexei Navalny was [poisoned](#) and then [imprisoned](#) upon his return to Russia. Putin has [cracked down](#) on all protests, arrested journalists and human rights defenders, and suppressed free speech and journalism. Putin imposed a [law](#) banning homosexual "propaganda," further limiting LGBTQ+ rights. [Freedom House](#) has classified Russian elections as non-democratic and authoritarian.

Due to Russia's genocide denial, its occupation of Georgian and Ukrainian territory, its genocide in Ukraine, its war crimes in Syria, its crimes against humanity by the Wagner Group, and its authoritarian repression, Genocide Watch considers Russia to be at Stage 4: **Dehumanization**, Stage 8: **Persecution**, Stage 9: **Extermination**, and Stage 10: **Denial**.

Genocide Watch Recommends:

- Russia must withdraw its forces and stop its attacks on Ukraine and withdraw from South Ossetia and Abkhazia.
- The US and NATO must supply Ukraine with heavy battle tanks, artillery, and ammunition to defeat Russia.
- The US and NATO should supply Ukraine with cruise missiles and jets to destroy Russian missile and air bases.
- Vladimir Putin must be removed as the President of Russia. Putin's imperialist aggression must be controlled.
- **The US and NATO should abandon their gradualist approach and fully support Ukraine now.**