

2026

THE CRIME OF BEING

INDIGENOUS



INTERNATIONAL INDIGENOUS FUND FOR DEVELOPMENT AND SOLIDARITY "BATANI"
THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF RUSSIA (ICIPR)
OLGA PODOPLELOVA, ATTORNEY-AT-LAW

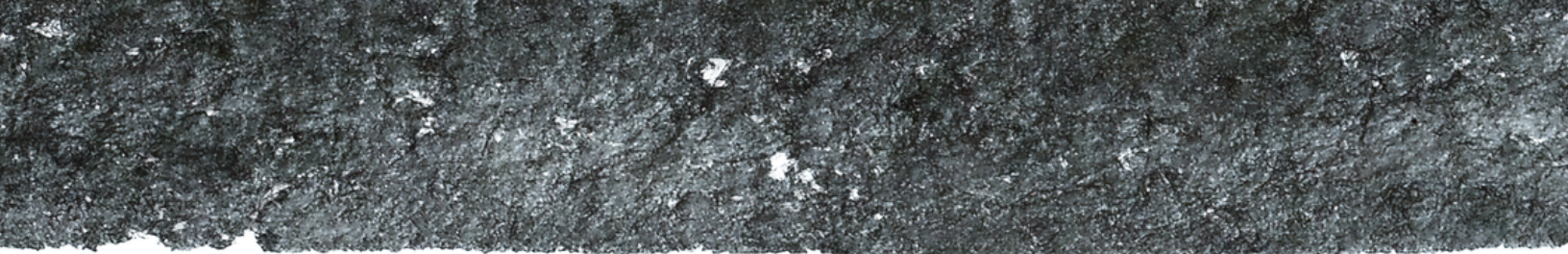
SUMMARY

This report analyzes cases of repression and pressure by the Russian authorities against leaders of small-numbered Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East. In this report, Indigenous leaders are understood as activists, journalists, community figures and human rights defenders from these communities who publicly advocate for their peoples' rights. This includes the protection of traditional lands, cultural practices, languages and the environment, as well as opposition to industrial exploitation, repressive legislation and political reforms that threaten their survival. Because of their role in mobilizing communities and drawing attention to systemic issues, these individuals are frequently targeted for persecution.

This report examines cases of persecution of representatives of Indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East, taking into account their heightened vulnerability to state pressure. Unlike Indigenous Peoples who form the majority populations in national Republics, these communities have significantly fewer demographic, institutional and media resources to defend their rights.

In this context, even targeted repression against individual activists can have disproportionately devastating consequences for entire communities, including the loss of representation, the erosion of cultural transmission and further marginalization. The report's methodology is based on the collection and analysis of open sources, including court decisions, publications by human rights organizations, established media outlets and independent media projects. We rely on verified information from these sources to reconstruct the sequence of events, without claiming to provide exhaustive statistics. In some cases, the report also draws on information obtained through direct engagement with persecuted human rights defenders, which has been further verified.

A full picture of repression against Indigenous Peoples in Russia is impossible to obtain. Official data on such incidents are neither collected nor published, and many cases go unreported due to fear of retaliation and censorship. The report therefore focuses on emblematic cases that highlight patterns of pressure. It covers the period since 2019, when a study by Arctic Consult and the International Indigenous Fund for Development and Solidarity "Batani" identified early signs of systematic violations of Indigenous rights. [1](#) This makes it possible to trace the evolution of repression against the backdrop of broader political transformations in Russia.



Since 2019, there has been a continued trend of systematic “clearing” of the space for Indigenous activists and human rights initiatives. During this period, the dismantling of independent Indigenous human rights infrastructure was largely completed through the use of “foreign agents” and “undesirable organizations” legislation. Following Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, a major shift occurred: repression escalated to a new level in both scale and intensity. It became a systematic campaign to criminalize the full spectrum of Indigenous human rights activity – from grassroots activism to political leadership, and from journalism to sustained international advocacy.

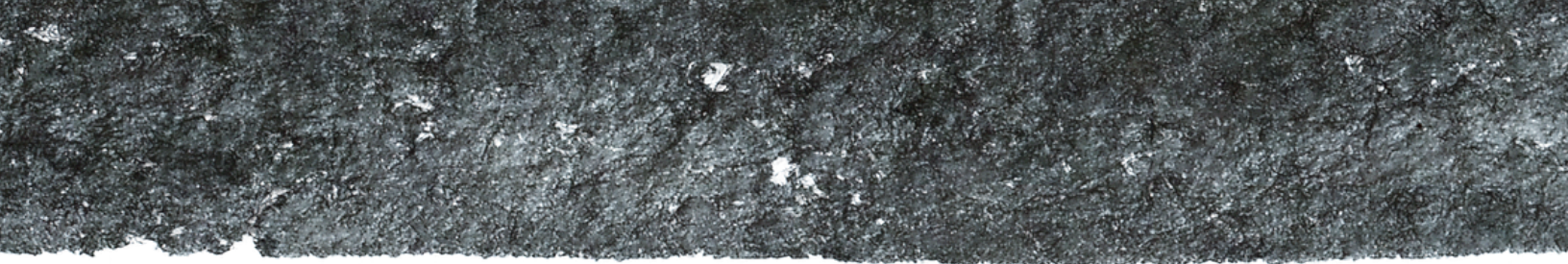
While pressure had previously been largely limited to administrative fines, short-term arrests and ‘preventive’ searches and detentions, after February 2022 the authorities sharply expanded their use of criminal law, introducing new Criminal Code provisions on ‘military censorship’.

By 2025, this had effectively marked a shift from general political pressure to targeted, deliberate repression against Indigenous Peoples in Russia. Whereas the prosecution of Indigenous activists had previously been framed in terms of anti-war or broader opposition activity, it is now specifically directed against Indigenous communities themselves. This shift has been enabled by the arbitrary and expansive application of anti-terrorism and anti-extremism legislation, which allows the authorities to artificially link virtually any form of independent Indigenous activism to non-existent or fabricated “separatist” and “terrorist” structures.

A key mechanism has been a series of rulings by the Russian Supreme Court. In June 2024, it designated the non-existent “Anti-Russian Separatist Movement” as extremist. The Ministry of Justice then classified 55 Indigenous organizations – including ‘Aborigin Forum’ and the International Committee of Indigenous Peoples of Russia (ICIPR) – as its ‘entities’. In November 2024, the Supreme Court went further, declaring the “Forum of Free States of Post-Russia” a terrorist organization. This time, 172 entities were listed as its “subdivisions,” including not only fictitious groups but also networks of Indigenous activists, as well as environmental and cultural initiatives.

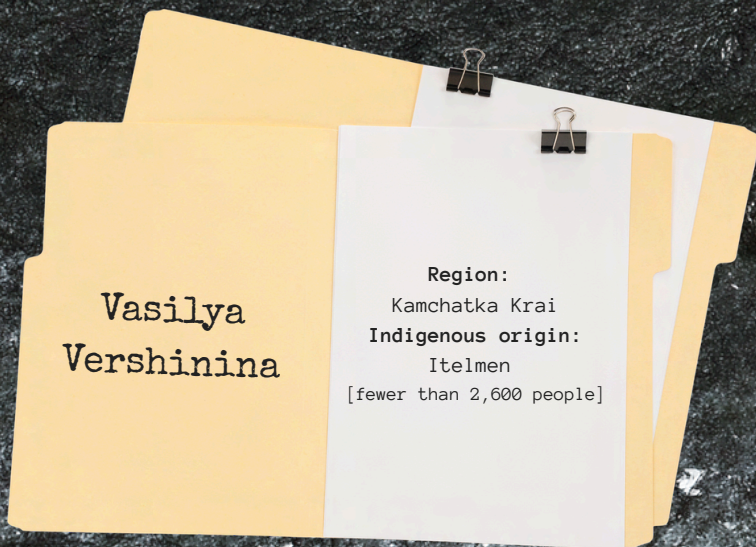
As a result, in December 2025 the Federal Security Service carried out arrests and mass searches targeting at least 17 activists across the Republic of Altai, the Republic of Sakha, the Kemerovo, Murmansk and Tomsk regions, as well as in Moscow and St. Petersburg, on charges of “participation in a terrorist organization.”

In Moscow, Darya Egereva and Natalia Leongardt were detained and placed in pre-trial detention. Under Part 2 of Article 205.5, of the Russian Criminal Code, they face sentences of 10 to 20 years in prison.



As a consequence, Indigenous human rights work has effectively been outlawed: many activists have been forced into exile, driven underground, or compelled to abandon public activity altogether and fall silent, while entire peoples are left without a voice both within the country and at the international level.

The report moves from the analysis of specific cases to the underlying systemic mechanisms of repression. The first section presents individual cases of persecution of Indigenous representatives between 2019 and 2025 and identifies key patterns of pressure in practice. It then examines the dismantling of independent Indigenous human rights and institutional infrastructure and analyzes the shift toward their systematic criminalization through the use of anti-extremism and anti-terrorism legislation. The final section focuses on the case of “Aborigen Forum” as the most illustrative example of the combined application of these mechanisms.



Vasilya Vershinina is a Russian language teacher from Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky. She has openly and consistently expressed her civic stance: for example, she opposed pension reform and the raising of the retirement age and criticized the President of Russia. Vershinina has participated in public protest activities at the regional level. For instance, she repeatedly held solo pickets against Kamchatka Krai Governor Vladimir Solodov, collected signatures against him, and demanded fair elections.²

As in a number of other cases, her persecution began after she expressed her civic stance, which involved criticizing Russia's war against Ukraine.

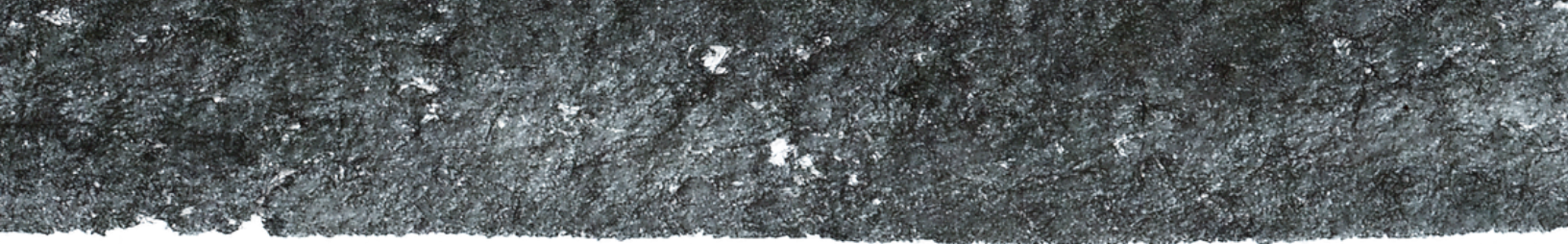
In September 2023, Vasilya Vershinina was detained at her school during a class and held for two days in a temporary detention facility.³

A report was filed against her for disobeying “the lawful demands of police officers to proceed to the [Center for Countering Extremism] to provide explanations regarding the materials of an investigation conducted against her,” and the court fined her 2,000 rubles.⁴ Subsequently, Vasilya

Vershinina was also fined 30,000 rubles for “discrediting the army.”

The court found that she had committed an offense under Part 1 of Article 20.3.3 of the Code of Administrative Offenses of the Russian Federation:⁵

“ [Vershinina posted on social media] a message expressing disagreement with the Russian Federation’s special operation aimed at maintaining international peace and security in the territories of the DPR and LPR, while [Vershinina] distorted the meaning of the special operation and its objectives. The author of the post indicates that the special operation is pointless; the context of the post suggests an attempt to discredit the state authority that initiated the special operation—the President of the Russian Federation and the command of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation. The very content of the publication indicates an incitement of an unspecified group of individuals to obstruct the actions of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, as well as the actions of



the President of the Russian Federation in conducting a special operation aimed at maintaining international peace and security. ”

Following this, in **February 2024**, she was dismissed from the school on the grounds of “committing an immoral offense,” and at the same time, she was handed a summons at the school to appear at the police station that same day.

There, she was questioned regarding two additional posts in which instances of discrediting the army and insulting law enforcement officers had been allegedly found.⁶

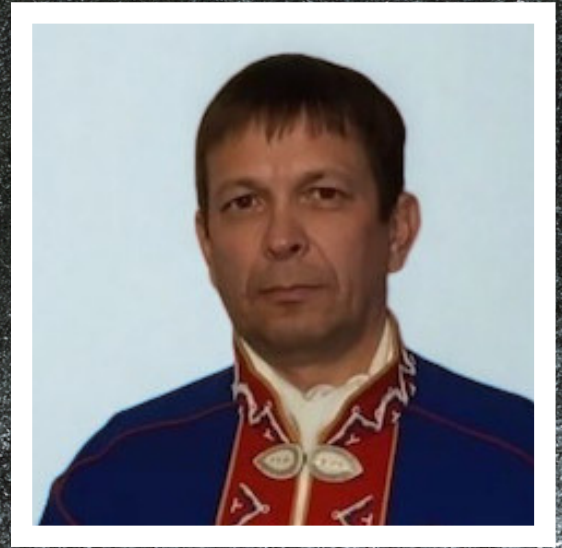
Also, in July 2025, Vershinina was fined 10,000 rubles under Article 20.3.1 of the Code of Administrative Offenses of the Russian Federation (inciting hatred or enmity, as well as humiliating the dignity of a person or group of persons).⁷ The reason for this was a post published in December 2024, in which she commented on a court ruling in the case of a police officer accused of sexual violence against a child, criticizing the Russian judicial system, and sharply criticizing the Russian President and government officials.⁸

In **September 2025**, Vasilya Vershinina was taken into custody as a defendant in a criminal case involving participation in the activities of the “Volya” party, which is recognized as an extremist organization. Security forces believe she held discussions and distributed leaflets in support of the organization.⁹

Subsequently, the activist’s pretrial detention was changed to house arrest. However, in **October 2025**, a new criminal case was opened

against her. The reason was posts made on her Telegram channel containing the songs “The Internationale” and “The Warsaw Song.”¹⁰

According to the investigation, the lyrics and video materials of these works allegedly contain calls for the violent overthrow of the government. In connection with this, a case has been opened under Part 2 of Article 205.2 of the Russian Criminal Code (public calls for terrorist activity); however, human rights activists point out that the interpretation of these videos as promoting terrorism is unfounded.¹¹



Andrey Danilov is an activist from the Murmansk Region and director of the Sami Heritage and Development Foundation.

Among Andrei's notable cases is his defense of Sami reindeer pastures in the Murmansk Oblast, which the regional government decided to lease to a hunting club. The case gained attention after the Foundation he heads appealed to the UN.¹² Immediately after the Foundation submitted this appeal, the General Prosecutor's Office and the Murmansk Regional Office of the Russian Ministry of Justice initiated investigations into the Foundation itself in the summer and fall of 2019.^{13,14} However, the case ultimately ended in victory in the fight against hunting grounds on Sámi lands.¹⁵

Andrey Danilov also defended the right to hunt, arguing that Danilov lives in a city, has a steady job and a stable income, so hunting is not a matter of survival for him, and the benefits granted to Indigenous Minority Peoples do not apply to him.

Danilov appealed to the Constitutional Court of Russia ¹⁶ and secured a ruling in 2021 recognizing that regions are obligated to

ensure that representatives of Indigenous Peoples have the opportunity to engage in traditional hunting without quantitative restrictions, regardless of place of residence or economic need—as a means of preserving their identity and culture.¹⁷ This set an important precedent for the protection of Indigenous Peoples' rights at the constitutional level.

Andrey was also one of the active participants in the confrontation with the authorities over the industrial development of the "Fedorova Tundra" platinum deposit, located on lands sacred to the Sami. Andrey Danilov sought to ensure that good-faith consultations were held with the local population and the Sami, and that the principle of free, prior, and informed consent was implemented.¹⁸

In **August 2021**, Andrei Danilov was arrested at a public festival in Monchegorsk. Police officers approached him and decided to search the contents of his backpack. He refused to allow them to search his belongings without witnesses. After that, police officers removed Danilov from the festival grounds and called in a police unit to

carry out the arrest.¹⁹ The court sentenced Andrei Danilov to five days of administrative detention.²⁰

In **March 2022**, due to ongoing pressure, Andrei was forced to leave Russia.²¹



Igor Ranav is a Chukchi public figure, entrepreneur, and environmental activist. He is known as an active promoter of northern tourism, traditional Chukchi culture, and the region's natural environment. Igor has repeatedly raised issues regarding the protection of Indigenous Peoples' rights, the environment from industrial expansion and territorial pollution, as well as social problems in the tundra and coastal areas.

Ranav has repeatedly faced persecution for his civic stance.

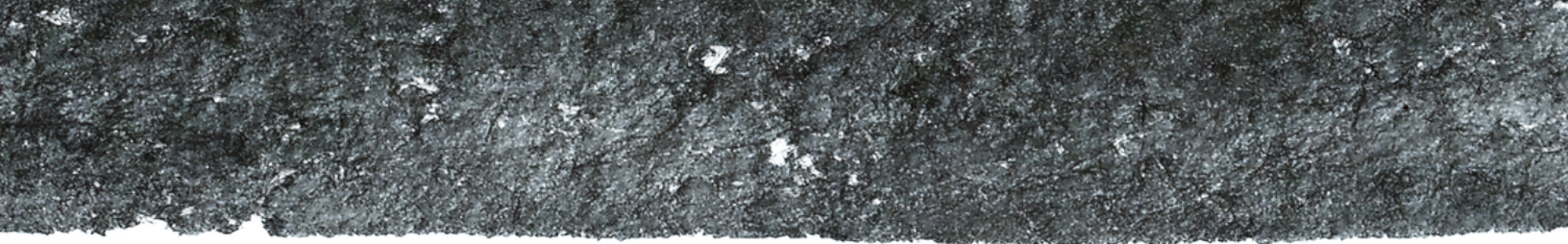
In **May 2022**, Igor Ranav was charged with an administrative offense for "discrediting" the Russian Armed Forces under Part 1 of Article 20.3.3 of the Code of Administrative Offenses of the Russian Federation. He was fined 30,000 rubles. The court deemed it a discrediting of the army that in the "Chukotka, Our Life" group of 125 people on WhatsApp, Igor wrote "No to war," "Peace to the world," and "I am against the war with Ukraine." In addition, the activist was charged with personal correspondence with one of the users, in which he claimed that "They are not telling us the whole truth; the media is hiding all the information from us; they have shut down other TV channels that

that were telling the truth," and when asked which Ukrainian cities Russia was bombing, he replied, "Kyiv, Mariupol, Kharkiv." ²²

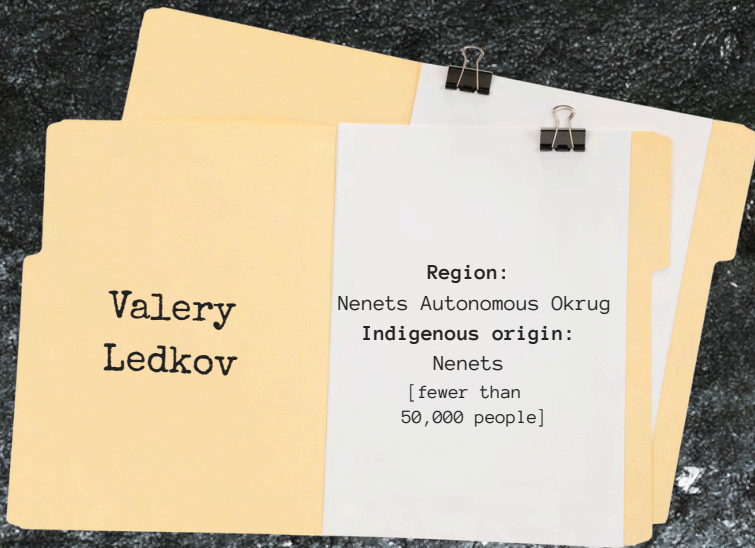
In **March 2025**, a report on extremism was filed against Igor for a social media post about the death of Alexei Navalny.²³ The police deemed the mention of the politician's name to be extremist content; however, the court twice returned the reports to the police to address deficiencies in the preparation of the case materials regarding the administrative offense. ²⁴

However, the following month, the court imposed two administrative fines of 1,500 rubles each on Igor Ranav for two posts on the social network "Facebook"—one captioned "Freedom for Navalny" in 2021 and one captioned "Glory to Ukraine." ^{25, 26}

In **February 2026**, Igor Ranav was sentenced by the Moscow City Court to two years in a penal colony and a four-year ban on administering internet resources under Part 4 of Article 354.1 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation (desecration of a symbol of Russia's military glory—rehabilitation of Nazism). The criminal case was initiated in August 2025. The reason was that Ranav



posted on his page “an image of a banner with a St. George’s Ribbon on a blue background with a profanity superimposed on it,” thereby desecrating a symbol of Russia’s military glory.²⁷ Igor Ranav’s current place of imprisonment is unknown.²⁸



Valery
Ledkov

Region:
Nenets Autonomous Okrug
Indigenous origin:
Nenets
[fewer than
50,000 people]



Valery Ledkov is a specialist in the folklore of the Ob-Ugric Peoples, a bard-performer, and the father of Konstantin Ledkov, who has also been persecuted for his civic stance. At various times, he worked as a history teacher, served as director of a cultural center, and worked as a librarian, methodologist, and educator in leisure activities. Since 2015, he has worked in Khanty-Mansiysk at the “Sun” Theater of the Ob-Ugric Peoples.²⁹

Valery Ledkov has repeatedly come to the attention of law enforcement agencies.

On **April 22, 2021**, Valery Ledkov was fined 10,000 rubles under Part 5 of Article 20.2 of the Code of Administrative Offenses of the Russian Federation for participating in a march in support of Alexei Navalny that had not been “approved” by the authorities. The court based its decision, in part, on the following:³⁰

“During the court hearing, V.K. Ledkov did not admit his guilt in the alleged offense and stated that, in his opinion, the requirement to coordinate public events with the authorities contradicts the Constitution of the

Russian Federation, as it hinders the direct expression of the people’s will. At the same time, V.K. Ledkov admitted that he did indeed participate in an unauthorized public march in support of Alexei Navalny and knew that this march had not been approved by the Khanty-Mansiysk City Administration.”

On **April 8, 2022**, Valery Ledkov was prosecuted for anti-war comments on the social network “VKontakte.”³¹ The court imposed an administrative fine of 35,000 rubles on him for posting a comment “about anti-war actions taking place on the territory of the Russian Federation in various groups” and “posting the silhouette ‘NO TO WAR’ on his social media page.”

On **December 24, 2024**, a criminal case was opened against Valery Ledkov—by which time his son was already in custody. Ledkov was accused of financing extremist activities due to a 300-ruble donation to the Anti-Corruption Foundation.³² He was placed under house arrest.

On **April 1, 2025**, the investigation expanded

the charges and accused Valery of another transfer to the Anti-Corruption Foundation—in the amount of 1,800 rubles.³³

On **July 30, 2025**, the court found Valery Ledkov guilty but, taking into account his personal circumstances, sentenced him to a penalty below the minimum threshold established by Article 282.3 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation—a fine of 120,000 rubles, after which the man was released.³⁴

However, the prosecutor's office filed an appeal against the sentence, deeming it excessively lenient and requesting a sentence of four years' imprisonment for Valery Ledkov.³⁵

On **September 18, 2025**, the Court of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug – Yugra overturned the sentence, imposed a three-year term of imprisonment, and ordered Ledkov's immediate detention in the courtroom.³⁶ In its appellate ruling, the court stated:

“... the court of first instance took into account the nature of the crime committed by V.K. Ledkov, which falls under Article 15 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation as a serious offense; the personality of the defendant, who is characterized positively, is socially adapted, and has received awards and multiple commendations for conscientious

work and public activities in the fields of culture, art, sports for people with disabilities, and the development of the culture of Finno-Ugric Peoples; he is the author (poet and composer) of well-known works; he had not been held administratively liable at the time of the crime; he is a non-working pensioner; he suffers from serious illnesses; and he is a person with a Category 2 disability. The court reasonably found no aggravating circumstances in the case of V.K. Ledkov.

The court rightly recognized, in accordance with Part 2 of Article 61 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, the defendant's partial admission of guilt, advanced age, and poor health (Category 2 visual disability) as mitigating circumstances.

The court of first instance recognized the totality of the information regarding V.K. Ledkov's personal circumstances and the mitigating factors as exceptional, applied the provisions of Article 64 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, and imposed on Ledkov a penalty below the lower limit established by the sanction of Part 1 of Article 282.3 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, in the form of a fine.

The Judicial Panel disagrees with the court's decision regarding the type of punishment imposed on the convicted V.K. Ledkov and the procedure for imposing it, with the application of the provisions of Article 64 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, and finds it unfounded.

<...>

As follows from the contested judgment, by ignoring the principles of social justice and the individualization of sentencing, the court unilaterally relied solely on information regarding Ledkov's personal circumstances and mitigating factors as exceptional, without comparing them to the public danger posed by the crime committed, thereby allowing for the imposition of an unjust, excessively lenient sentence.”

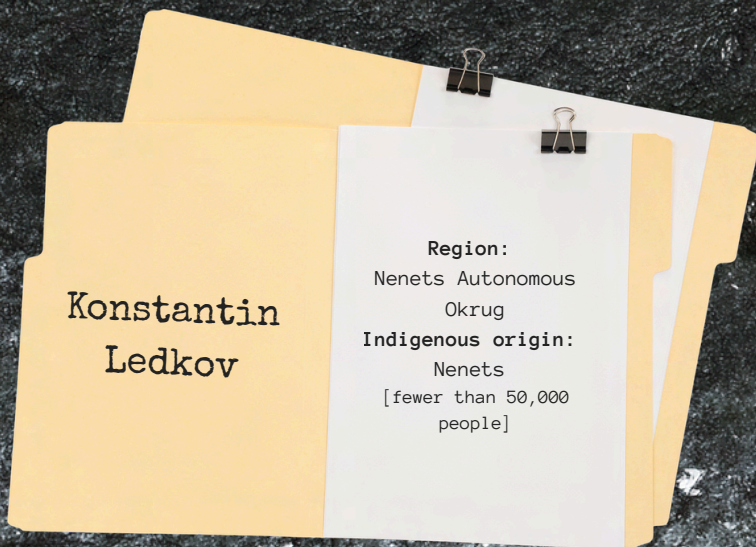
The Memorial Human Rights Center recognized Valery Ledkov as a political prisoner.³⁷ In November 2025, it became known that at the Correctional Colony No. 29 in Perm Krai, where Valery was sent to serve his sentence, he was subjected to pressure: immediately upon arrival, and was placed in solitary confinement for five days. ³⁸

According to the case file on the Khanty-Mansi District Court's website, the prosecutor's office appealed the verdict to the court of cassation, seeking a harsher sentence.³⁹

However, on **February 25, 2026**, the Seventh Court of Cassation of General Jurisdiction commuted Valery Ledkov's sentence, replacing three years in a general-regime correctional colony with a three-year suspended prison sentence.⁴⁰

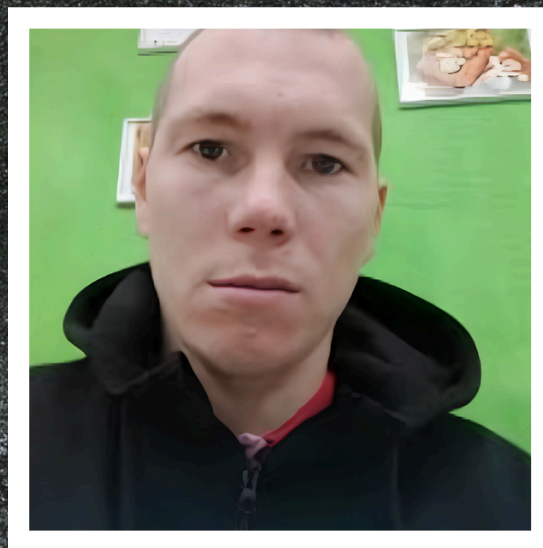
On **March 5, 2026**, Valery Ledkov was released after a certified copy of the court ruling was received by the penal colony.⁴¹

However, Valery Ledkov's situation remains extremely difficult: until his criminal record is expunged, he will remain on Rosfinmonitoring's list of extremists and terrorists, which prevents him from freely managing his finances, obtaining official employment, and applying for benefits.



Konstantin
Ledkov

Region:
Nenets Autonomous
Okrug
Indigenous origin:
Nenets
[fewer than 50,000
people]



Konstantin Ledkov worked as a librarian in the village of Krasnoye in the Arctic. He is the son of Valery Ledkov, who is also being persecuted for his civic stance.

In **May 2021**, the Naryan-Mar City Court fined him 35,000 rubles under Part 2 of Article 20.3.2 of the Code of Administrative Offenses of the Russian Federation (public calls to violate the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation).⁴² The reason for the fine was an online image showing the outline of Crimea against the backdrop of the Ukrainian flag with the caption “Crimea is Ukraine,” as well as the comment: “Going to occupied Crimea... That’s a disaster, holy shit!” In court, he explained that he considers Crimea to be a temporarily occupied territory.

In **September 2022**, he was fined again—50,000 rubles—under Part 1 of Article 20.3.3 of the Code of Administrative Offenses of the Russian Federation (discrediting the Russian army).⁴³

The reason was the inscription “No to War” painted on the wall of a utility building on his property. Residents of the village testified against Konstantin in court.

In **January 2024**, another administrative fine followed—2,000 rubles under Part 1 of Article 20.3 of the Code of Administrative Offenses of the Russian Federation (propaganda or public display of Nazi symbols).⁴⁴ According to the court, Ledkov posted a photo from a music video by the singer Shaman on social media, accompanying it with Nazi symbols. At the hearing, he explained that the materials were taken from historical websites and were used exclusively for educational purposes, since “he creates historical content and has a negative attitude toward war and fascism.” However, the court noted that “the use of Nazi paraphernalia (symbols) in and of itself, as well as paraphernalia (symbols) similar to Nazi paraphernalia (symbols) to the point of confusion, — regardless of its origin — can cause suffering to people whose relatives died during the Great Patriotic War.”

On **June 26, 2024**, following a search of Konstantin Ledkov’s home, he was detained and taken into custody. He was charged under three counts of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation.

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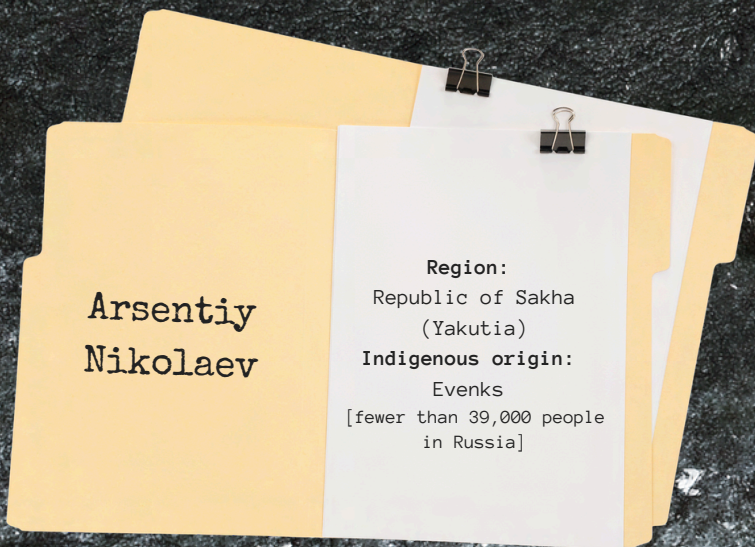
- Part 1 of Article 282.4 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation (repeated promotion of Nazi symbols) – for allegedly shouting the slogan “Glory to Ukraine! – Glory to the Heroes!” in a bar in the village of Krasnoye;
- Part 1 of Article 280.3 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation (repeated public discrediting of the use of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation) – for reposting a video titled “How Nazism Was Reincarnated in Russia”;
- Subparagraph “c” of Part 2 of Article 280.4 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation (public calls for activities directed against state security, committed using the internet) – for publishing a video interview by Ukrainian blogger Volodymyr Zolkin with a Russian pilot who hijacked a Mi-8 helicopter into Ukrainian territory. Grigory Zhdanov, a teacher at a local college, reported this publication to the FSB.

The basis for the charge under the article on the promotion of Nazi symbols was the words “Glory to Ukraine! – Glory to the heroes!” Testimony regarding this was provided by several local residents who beat Konstantin Ledkov that day. Medical personnel documented multiple head injuries, a black eye, and a split lip. Afterward, Konstantin filed a police report regarding the beating;

however, under pressure—due to persuasion and threats of potential confiscation of his hunting rifles—he withdrew his statement. A few weeks later, the same individuals involved in the conflict and their associates (including the head of the settlement, Leontiy Chuprov) began actively testifying against Ledkov. Their statements are virtually identical: Ledkov “supports the actions of Ukrainian military personnel,” “opposes the current government,” and “publicly calls for the discrediting of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation.”⁴⁵

This testimony formed the basis of a criminal case under political charges. On **May 29, 2025**, the court found Konstantin Ledkov guilty on all three counts and sentenced him to 5 years and 6 months in a general-regime penal colony.^{46,47}

“Memorial” recognized Konstantin Ledkov as a political prisoner.⁴⁸ Konstantin is currently serving his sentence at FKU IK-14 of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia in the Arkhangelsk Region.



**Arsentiy
Nikolaev**

Region:
Republic of Sakha
(Yakutia)
Indigenous origin:
Evenks
[fewer than 39,000 people
in Russia]



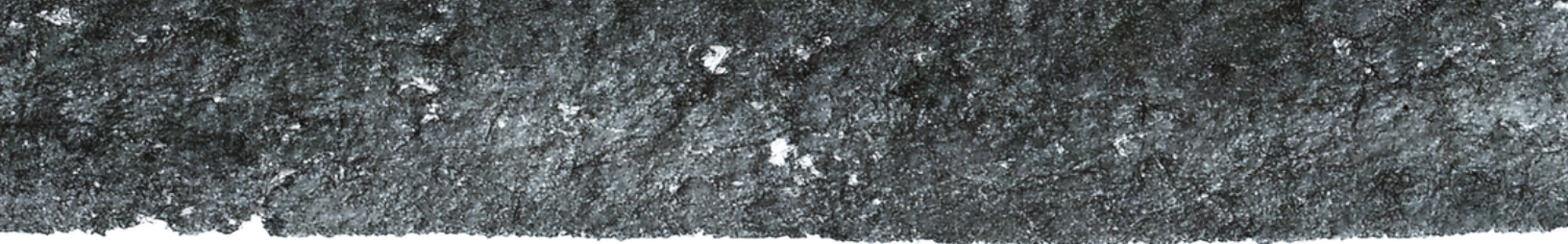
Arsentiy Nikolaev is an Evenki community leader, head of the “Tanya” clan community, and a deputy in the State Assembly (Il Tumen) of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia). He has been actively involved in defending the traditional territories of Indigenous Peoples and has spoken out against industrial development of these lands without regard for their interests.

The persecution of Nikolaev began amid a conflict between his community and the gold mining company “Neryungri-Metallic.” The company was mining in the traditional natural resource use territories of the Evenki community, which prompted protests from the community. Community members claimed that this was causing environmental damage and threatening their traditional way of life. As community leader and deputy, Nikolaev demanded that the interests of the Indigenous Population be taken into account and sought compensation for the use of the lands.

In **August 2020**, a criminal case was opened against Nikolaev under Part 8 of Article 204 of the Russian Criminal Code (commercial bribery on an especially large scale), after which he was detained. [49](#)

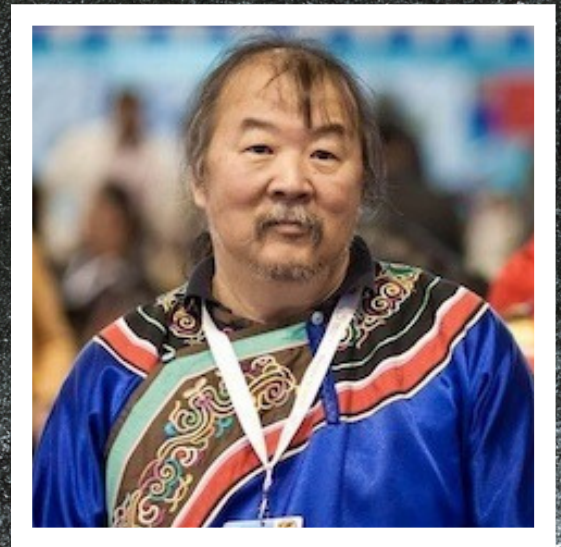
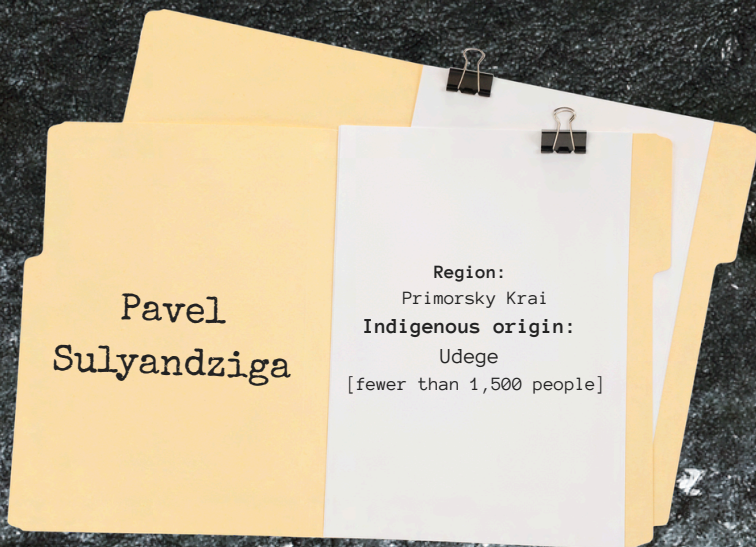
According to media reports, it was company representatives who filed a complaint against him with law enforcement agencies. Investigators alleged that Nikolaev had pressured the company to enter into a contract with an affiliated carrier and to secure financial benefits.[50](#)

On **November 10, 2021**, Arsentiy Nikolaev died in the hospital while under investigation. Nearly three years later, the Yakutsk City Court of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) found Nikolaev guilty and dismissed the case due to his death.[51](#) The trial was marred by serious procedural violations. For instance, key representatives of the mining company were not questioned either during the investigation or in court. The prosecution’s case was based on the claim of an alleged threat to block the “Khani-Tabornoe” road, which in fact is not in use—a fact confirmed by the company’s own representatives—yet the defense was denied the opportunity to verify these circumstances on site. At the same time, the “Ikabya-Tabornoe” road, which is actually in use, lacked legal status due to the absence of a construction permit; however, it was precisely the blocking of this road that was attributed to Nikolaev. The charge of



extortion” was also based on the company representative’s fears of a possible roadblock by a herd of reindeer, without any evidence.⁵²

The case of Arsentiy Nikolaev should be viewed as an example of pressure being exerted on Indigenous Community Leaders who oppose the uncontrolled industrial exploitation of traditional territories without respect for the principle of free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous Peoples’ Communities.



Pavel Sulyandziga is one of the most well-known and influential Russian activists for the rights of Indigenous Small-Numbered Peoples of the North, Siberia, and the Far East. From 2006 to 2014, he served as vice president of the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia, and the Far East (RAIPON). He was elected a member of the Public Chamber of Russia (2006–2014) and also served as a member of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (2005–2010) and a member of the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights (2011–2018). In January 2026, Pavel Sulyandziga joined the Platform of Russian Democratic Forces at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) in Strasbourg—a new opposition structure in exile.

In 2004, he founded and has since headed the Batani International Indigenous Fund. In 2016, this fund was designated a “foreign agent” in Russia in Russia through court proceedings following a lawsuit filed by the Russian Ministry of Justice.^{53,54}

Subsequently, the Batani Fund managed to resume its work by registering in the United

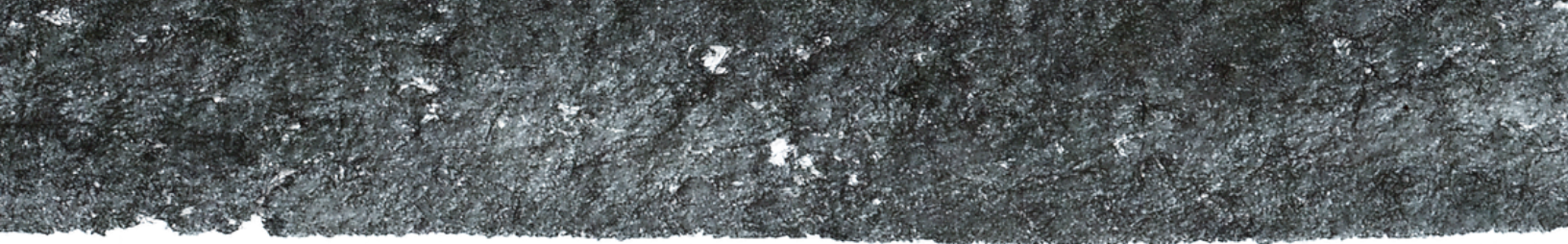
States.

In 2017, Pavel Sulyandziga left Russia due to pressure from law enforcement agencies.

On **July 21, 2023**, the Russian Ministry of Justice added him to the “foreign agents” registry. Violations of the “foreign agents” legislation are subject to administrative and criminal liability, including imprisonment for up to two years.⁵⁵

Violations of the “foreign agents” legislation are subject to administrative and criminal liability, including imprisonment for up to two years.⁵⁶

According to available information, in **November 2023**, a criminal case was initiated against Pavel Sulyandziga under Part 1 of Article 207.3 of the Russian Criminal Code (regarding so-called “fakes” about the Russian army) due to a video broadcast on YouTube featuring him titled “Pavel Sulyandziga. How the Fake News Empire Oppresses Small Numbered Indigenous Peoples.” He faces up to five years in prison on this charge.⁵⁷



In April 2025, the “Batani” Foundation served as one of the co-organizers of a conference of representatives of the Small Numbered Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia, and the Far East, as well as Russian civil society. The conference resulted in the Orcas Island Declaration, aimed at establishing a dialogue between Indigenous Peoples and the Russian democratic movement. Subsequently, **in May 2025**, the Russian Prosecutor General’s Office designated the “Batani” Foundation, registered in the U.S., as an “undesirable organization.” ⁵⁸

According to the Prosecutor General’s Office, the foundation’s activities are aimed “at supporting and preparing for anti-Russian statements at international events, including those held under the auspices of the UN.”⁵⁹

For leading an “undesirable organization,” Part 3 of Article 284.1 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation provides for punishment in the form of imprisonment for up to 6 years.⁶⁰



Eiko Serotetto is a well-known Yamal social activist, reindeer herder, and blogger living in the village of Panaevsk in the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug; he is the informal leader of the Yamal nomads. He was a member of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation and was actively involved in social and political activities, including through social media (the public page “Voice of the Tundra” on VKontakte and other platforms), where he raised issues concerning the Indigenous Small-Numbered Peoples of the North, including the rights of reindeer herders, access to traditional fishing, environmental threats from industrial projects, and incidents of violence against tundra dwellers.

On **April 14, 2019**, law enforcement officials came to Eiko Serotetto’s home in Panaevsk. They questioned him regarding a meeting of nomadic reindeer herders and fishermen that took place on March 27, 2019, in the tundra. At this meeting, attended by about 30 people, Indigenous residents discussed pressing issues in the region and put forward four demands to the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug authorities. These included special oversight of the of the

into the murder of reindeer herder Nikolai Khorotetto (Serotetto’s brother-in-law), “so that the case is not allowed to drag on,” as well as issues regarding quotas for whitefish catches and the construction of a gas pipeline in the Ob Bay. Following the questioning regarding Serotetto, an administrative report was drawn up under Part 2 of Article 20.2 of the Code of Administrative Offenses of the Russian Federation (“violating the procedure established for conducting a public event”). The police classified the meeting in the tundra as an “unauthorized public event.” The complaint to the police was filed by Valery Khudi, chairman of the Yamal regional public movement of the Indigenous Peoples of the North.⁶¹

Serotetto categorically denied any wrongdoing, stating that he was not the organizer of the gathering: he merely posted an invitation online at the request of other participants and was himself a guest. He noted the absurdity of the requirement to notify the authorities about a gathering in the vast tundra, where there are no settlements, and it is impossible to identify the “authority” to which the notification

should be submitted.

He explained his position as an attempt by law enforcement agencies and regional authorities to exert pressure and intimidate him in order to restrict his social and political activism. Serotetto refused to testify, citing Article 51 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation (the right not to testify against oneself).⁶²

Subsequently, on May 14, 2019, the Yamal District Court dismissed the case due to the absence of an administrative offense. The court found that the gathering did not meet the criteria for a public event (it was not open and accessible to an unlimited number of people, took place outside populated areas, in the tundra, 3 km from the nearest road, and did not violate anyone's rights or interests), and there was no evidence that Serotetto was the organizer of the event.⁶³

Had Eiko Serotetto's guilt been proven, he would have faced a fine of up to 30,000 rubles or up to 50 hours of community service. Serotetto commented on the court's decision with the phrase: " We have been gathering all our lives and will continue to gather."⁶⁴ This incident became one of the most high-profile examples of pressure on Indigenous activists in the North.

Despite a reduction in public activity, Eiko Serotetto remains a prominent figure in the region's public life.

THE DISMANTLING OF THE INDEPENDENT HUMAN RIGHTS INFRASTRUCTURE OF THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF THE NORTH

Since the early 2010s, Russian authorities have been systematically building a system of institutional control over Indigenous Peoples, in which the suppression of independent leadership and autonomous representation plays a key role. Thus, as early as 2013, full state control was established over the Russian Association of Indigenous Small Peoples of the North, Siberia, and the Far East (RAIPON)—the largest nationwide association of Indigenous Peoples. Through the imposition of a loyal leadership and the subsequent reorganization of regional structures, the possibility of independent human rights and political activism was effectively eliminated.⁶⁵

At the same time, there was a systematic pushout of independent organizations using the “foreign agent” legislation, adopted in 2012 and subsequently significantly expanded and tightened. The application of this mechanism became the first stage in dismantling the institutional foundation of the Indigenous Peoples’ movement.

Among the key organizations subjected to such pressure was the Center for Support of Indigenous Peoples of the North, CSIPN which played a central role in defending the rights of Indigenous Peoples at the federal level. The organization was included in the “foreign agents” registry in 2015, and was subsequently dissolved by court order at the request of the Ministry of Justice in 2019.^{66, 67}

Similarly affected was the International Fund for the Development of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia, and the Far East “Batani,” which supports Indigenous initiatives and international cooperation. The fund was designated a “foreign agent” in 2016 and, a year later, was also dissolved by court order.^{68, 69}

The inclusion of these organizations in the “foreign agent” registry and their subsequent dissolution led to the effective dismantling of key elements of the independent human rights infrastructure of Indigenous Peoples.

These repressive measures have also affected certain regional organizations that directly represent the rights of specific Indigenous Peoples. One example, in particular, is “Tuba Kalyk”—an association of Tubalars in the Altai Republic, also designated a “foreign agent” in 2023.⁷⁰ Thus, pressure is spreading from the federal level to local structures, undermining the self-organization of Indigenous Peoples at all levels.



At the same time, there was a crackdown on partner and independent information infrastructure—primarily environmental organizations and media outlets covering environmental issues. For instance, since 2012, 38 environmental organizations have been added to the “foreign agent” registry, of which 35 had ceased operations as of the end of February 2026.⁷¹ In addition, in July 2022, the Indigenous Russia website was blocked—one of the few resources systematically covering the situation of Indigenous Peoples and their interaction with international mechanisms.⁷² The “foreign agent” status was also assigned to two specialized environmental media outlets—“Kedr.Media” and “Smola.”^{73, 74}

To neutralize the activities of international environmental organizations working, among other things, on issues related to the traditional territories of Indigenous Peoples, another tool was employed: declaring their activities “undesirable on the territory of the Russian Federation.” In 2023, the Norwegian environmental foundation “Bellona,”⁷⁵ Greenpeace International,⁷⁶ the Worldwide Fund for Nature,⁷⁷ as well as the Estonian Center for the Development of Indigenous Peoples “URALIC,”⁷⁸ were designated as “undesirable organizations” due to their active involvement in protecting the natural environment and the rights of Indigenous Peoples in regions of intensive resource exploitation. In 2025, a similar status was granted to an international organization associated with Indigenous Peoples—the International Indigenous Fund for Development and Solidarity “Batani.”⁷⁹ The organisation traces its origins to the aforementioned International Fund for the Development and Solidarity of Indigenous Peoples “Batani,” which was designated a “foreign agent” and subsequently dissolved. These decisions effectively criminalized international cooperation and deprived Indigenous Peoples and their communities of their most important external partners.

Thus, by the mid-2020s, the independent human rights infrastructure of Russia’s Small Numbered Indigenous Peoples had been almost completely dismantled—from federal organizations and regional associations to environmental and international partners, as well as specialized media. The systematic application of the “foreign agent” and “undesirable organization” mechanisms led not only to the elimination of the movement’s institutional base but also to its isolation at the national and international levels. As a result, Indigenous Peoples have been deprived of sustainable channels for representation, the protection of their rights, and interaction with government authorities and international bodies, which has created the conditions for a transition to the next stage—targeted repression against Russia’s Indigenous Peoples and the direct criminalization of their leaders and activists.

By 2024, the suppression of the Indigenous movement had entered a fundamentally new phase, marked systematic criminalization of Indigenous Peoples’ movements. As shown in

CRIMINALIZATION OF THE INDIGENOUS MOVEMENT THROUGH ANTI-EXTREMIST AND ANTI-TERRORISM LEGISLATION

previous sections of this report, during the preceding period, the key instruments of repression were legislation on “foreign agents,” “undesirable organizations,” as well as universal criminal and administrative measures that were generally applied in the persecution of the political opposition figures, and, since 2022, anti-war activists as well. However, at this stage, the state has shifted to the systematic use of criminal law mechanisms specifically targeting representatives of Indigenous Peoples and their organizations.

This stage of escalation involves the direct criminalization of civic and human rights activities through anti-extremist and anti-terrorism legislation.

In **April 2024**, the Russian Ministry of Justice filed a lawsuit with the Supreme Court demanding that a certain “Anti-Russian Separatist Movement” and its “structural units” be recognized as an “extremist organization” and that their activities be banned. In the lawsuit, it was described as “an international public movement aimed at undermining the multinational unity and territorial integrity of Russia.” ⁸⁰

On **June 7, 2024**, the Supreme Court granted the Ministry of Justice’s request, though at that time it was not disclosed which specific groups were classified as “structural units” of the banned “movement.”⁸¹ This became known only nearly two months later—on July 26, 2024—when the Ministry of Justice added 55 initiatives to the registry of “extremist organizations.”⁸² Most of them had been operating outside Russia prior to its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, and after it began, they spoke out against the war.

The designation of the “anti-Russian separatist movement” and the classification of its “structural units” as extremist have created risks of prosecution not only for those advocating the violent secession of certain regions from the Russian Federation, but also for participants in peaceful discussions regarding the status of various territories, including issues related to expanding the rights of Peoples residing in those areas.

This has paved the way for prosecution under articles related to participation in the activities of an extremist organization and its financing: Article 282.2 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation (up to 6 years’ imprisonment for participation and up to 10 years for organizing activities), Article 282.3 of the Criminal Code (up to 8 years’ imprisonment for financing), as well as Article 282.4 of the Criminal Code (up to 4 years’ imprisonment

for repeated “propaganda” or display of symbols of an “extremist organization” for individuals who have been administratively punished under Article 20.3 of the Code of Administrative Offenses for a similar violation). Taken together, this allows for the prosecution of a significantly broader range of individuals, regardless of their actual involvement in any prohibited organizations, the presence of calls for violence, or a real threat to public safety.

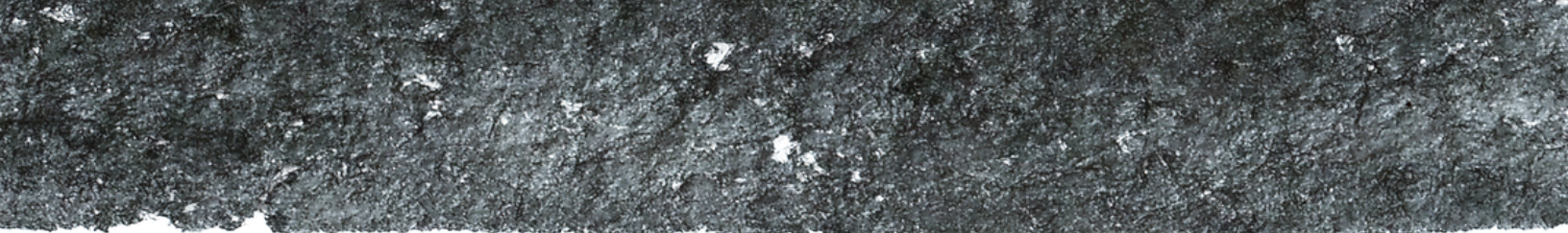
Further tightening of repressive measures occurred as early as November 2024. On November 22, 2024, the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation, upon a claim by the General Prosecutor’s Office, recognized the “Free Nations of Post-Russia Forum” as a terrorist organization along with 172 “structural units.”⁸³ Although such an organization does exist, and includes leaders of a number of national organizations of the Peoples of Russia, as well as foreign experts on decolonization and security issues, it has no “structural units.” At the same time, as in the case of the “Anti-Russian Separatist Movement,” neither the case materials on which the court decision was based, nor the decision itself, are publically available. On December 28, 2024, the Russian FSB updated its registry of terrorist organizations, adding the “Forum” and 172 of its “structural units”.

The composition of the organizations included in the “terrorist” list as part of the “Free Nations of Post-Russia Forum” case demonstrates its arbitrary nature. As noted by the Sova Research Center, the list includes associations of fundamentally different types, ranging from paramilitary groups participating in combat operations on the side of Ukraine to peaceful human rights, cultural, and regional initiatives advocating for the expansion of the rights of the constituent entities and Peoples of the Russian Federation. Moreover, the list includes groups that lack a stable organizational structure or do not exist in practice.⁸⁴

The list also includes some organizations that had previously been subjected to persecution in the context of the “Anti-Russian Separatist Movement” case, including “Aborigen Forum,” the “International Committee of Indigenous Peoples of Russia,” and others.

Thus, in December 2024 key networks and initiatives of Indigenous Peoples, which engaged in human rights and international advocacy, were labeled as “terrorist organizations”. This indicates a deliberate shift from general repressive practices toward the criminalization of the Indigenous movement itself.

The designation of the “Free Nations of Post-Russia Forum” as a terrorist organization and the arbitrary inclusion of a wide range of “structural units” under it effectively created a legal basis for the criminalization of any form of civic activism, regardless of actual goals and methods of operation.



This decision opened the door to the broad application of anti-terrorism legislation provisions that provide for particularly severe penalties, including Article 205.5 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation (up to 20 years' imprisonment for participating in the activities of a "terrorist organization," as well as up to 20 years or life imprisonment for organizing such activities), and provisions on the financing and facilitation of terrorist activities. As a result, criminal liability may arise regardless of the use of violence, the intent to commit it, or even calls for it, and without establishing any actual connection to a banned organization.

Therefore, not only actions but also forms of peaceful expression of opinion, association, and participation in human rights activities may be subject to criminal liability.



The criminalization of Indigenous leaders in modern Russia has taken on a systematic and phased character. First, the institutional foundations of the movement were dismantled through legislation on "foreign agents". Then, international ties were severed by declaring certain organizations "undesirable." Subsequently, through anti-extremism and counterterrorism legislation, even mere membership in initiatives not controlled by the state has been criminalized. Taken together, these measures led to the destruction of independent leadership among Indigenous Peoples and the effective silencing of their voices both domestically and internationally.

The most striking manifestation of this phase was the persecution of the human rights network "Aborigen Forum," in which these mechanisms were applied in combination for the first time—from designating the organization as "extremist" to subsequently adding it to the registry of "terrorist" groups. This case demonstrates the transition from the creation of a legal framework for criminalization to its practical application against specific representatives of the Indigenous movement.

The following section examines the "Aborigen Forum" case and the related criminal prosecutions in greater detail.

THE “ABORIGINAL FORUM” CASE

“Aborigen Forum” was an informal network of human rights defenders, experts, and activists from Russia’s Indigenous Peoples, united by the goal of protecting the rights of Indigenous communities. It functioned as a horizontal platform for information exchange, monitoring legislative initiatives, coordinating advocacy efforts, and providing mutual support.

The network’s activities focused on analyzing legislation, documenting violations of Indigenous Peoples’ rights, protecting cultural rights, land rights, and traditional land use, as well as addressing environmental safety issues in regions of traditional residence. A significant part of the work involved international advocacy, including engagement with United Nations mechanisms and other international institutions dealing with the rights of Indigenous Peoples. At the same time, network members carried out independent activities in the regions—including communication, educational, and human rights advocacy efforts—acting as independent voices for their communities.

All activities of the “Aborigen Forum” were exclusively peaceful and human rights-oriented, carried out by nonviolent means, and did not include calls for violence or separatism. Nevertheless, in July 2024, after the Supreme Court recognized the “Anti-Russian Separatist Movement” and its “structural units” as extremist, the Russian Ministry of Justice added the association to the list of “extremist organizations”. Following this, the network’s members decided to dissolve it and cease its activities.

Despite this, in December 2024, the “Aborigen Forum” was included in the list of terrorist organizations under the auspices of the “Free Nations of Post-Russia Forum,” which signaled a further escalation of the persecution of its members.

A year later—on December 17, 2025—coordinated raids were conducted at the homes of 17 Indigenous activists in various regions of Russia. The raids took place in Moscow, St. Petersburg, the Republics of Altai and Sakha (Yakutia), the Altai and Krasnoyarsk Kray, as well as the Kemerovo, Murmansk and Tomsk Oblasts.⁸⁶

On that day, Daria Egereva and Natalia Leongardt were detained in Moscow on charges of participating in a “terrorist organization” (Part 2 of Article 205.5 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation). They are currently in custody and face up to 20 years in prison.



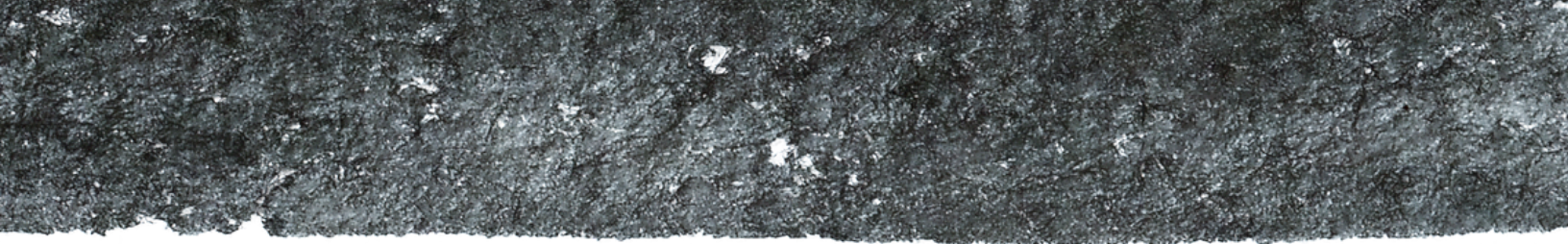
Daria Egereva is a representative of the Selkup Indigenous people—one of the smallest Indigenous groups in Russia. For over twenty years, she has been engaged in professional activities related to ensuring the participation of Indigenous Peoples in international processes. Her work has focused on climate policy and promoting dialogue between Indigenous Peoples and states within the framework of UN mechanisms.

She has served as an expert at various international forums. In particular, she held leadership positions in the Indigenous International Forum on Climate Change (IIPFCC), which facilitates the participation of Indigenous Peoples' representatives within the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. In this role, she participated in UNFCCC Conferences of the Parties, fostering dialogue between Indigenous Peoples and state delegations. In addition, she participated in the work of the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform (LCIPP), as well as in the activities of the UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP) and the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), where she provided expert assessments and participated in consultation processes.

In Russia, Daria Egereva has been working for many years to defend the rights of Indigenous Peoples, including her work with the Center for Support of Indigenous Peoples of the North (CSIPN) and the "Aborigin Forum" network. Her activities included monitoring violations of the rights of Indigenous Peoples, participating in human rights advocacy, and working to preserve the culture, language, and traditional way of life of Indigenous communities. She paid particular attention to the challenges facing her own people—the Selkups—including education and language preservation, highlighting the effective absence of Selkup language instruction despite its formal recognition.

Her work also included promoting social entrepreneurship among Indigenous women. Daria implemented projects aimed at supporting local initiatives, strengthening economic sustainability, and preserving traditional knowledge.

As a member of the "Aborigin Forum" until July 2024, when the organization was disbanded after being added to the list of "extremist organizations," she contributed to expert and analytical work on legislation and policies concerning the Indigenous small-numbered Peoples of the North, Siberia, and



the Far East, as well as in educational and human rights advocacy activities across various regions of Russia.

Thus, Daria Egereva's activities were systematic, professional, and exclusively peaceful in nature, spanning both the international and national levels. They were aimed at protecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples, strengthening their representation, preserving cultural heritage, and participating in policy development through official international mechanisms recognized by Russia. Her work was based on the principles of dialogue, cooperation, and non-violent engagement.

Nevertheless, she was detained on **December 17, 2025**—shortly after returning from the UNFCCC COP30 climate conference in Belém (Brazil)—and charged with participating in a “terrorist organization” in a case linked to the “Aborigin Forum.” In this context, her criminal prosecution demonstrates that under current conditions in Russia, not only protest or opposition activity is at risk of criminalization, but also the institutional, expert, and human rights work of Indigenous leaders and their engagement with UN mechanisms.



Natalia Leongardt has long been involved in defending the rights of the Indigenous small-numbered Peoples of the North, Siberia, and the Far East.

She worked with the Center for Support of Indigenous Peoples of the North—one of the key independent organizations dedicated to supporting Indigenous Peoples in Russia, which enjoyed high standing among human rights defenders and Indigenous Communities themselves. The organization was designated a foreign agent and subsequently dissolved by court order.^{87,88}

As part of this work, Natalia worked to promote expert initiatives aimed at protecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia, and the Far East, including issues related to access to traditional territories, cultural preservation, and participation in decision-making. She implemented educational programs for Indigenous activists and organizations, as well as fostered collaboration between Indigenous communities, human rights organizations, and international bodies.

Despite having no involvement in violent activities, on **December 17, 2025**, she was detained as part of the same criminal case as Daria Egereva and charged with participating in the “Aborigen Forum” as a “terrorist organization.”⁸⁹

Her prosecution demonstrates that activists working to strengthen Indigenous communities through human rights education and awareness-raising currently face criminal prosecution.



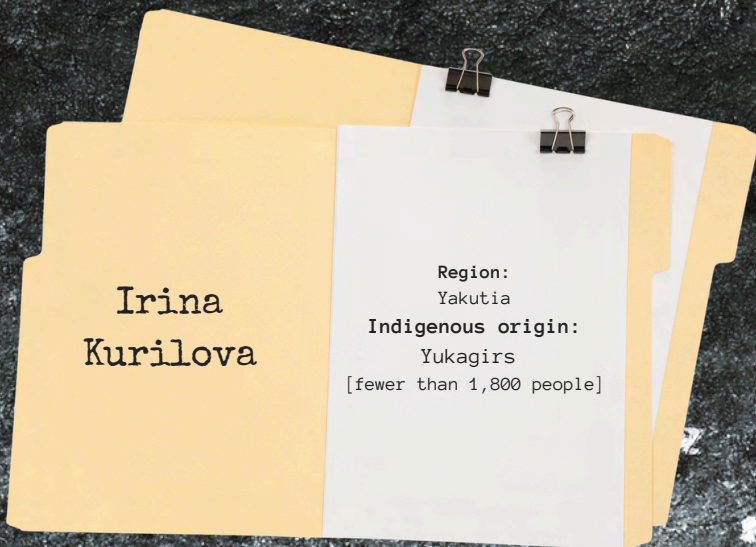
Olga Kostrova is a regional activist involved in defending the rights of Russia's Indigenous Peoples. From 2020 to 2023, she led one of the civil society organizations representing Russia's Small Numbered Indigenous Peoples and participated in international and expert forums, including those focused on sustainable natural resource management. In particular, she participated in the General Assembly of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), where she represented the interests of Russia's Indigenous Peoples as a member of the FSC's Permanent Indigenous Peoples Committee.

Olga Kostrova has also engaged in international advocacy, including speaking at the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. In her speeches, she raised issues regarding the socio-economic situation of the Chulym people, pointing to the lack of transparency in the distribution of budget funds, insufficient attention to education and healthcare, as well as the systematic disregard for the real needs of Indigenous Communities at the regional level. She paid particular attention to issues of traditional land use and environmental safety. In particular, she noted that a significant

portion of the Chulym people lack access to the territories necessary for maintaining their traditional way of life, and that pollution of the Ob River—including mercury contamination—poses a threat to the health of Indigenous Peoples and remains unaddressed by the authorities.

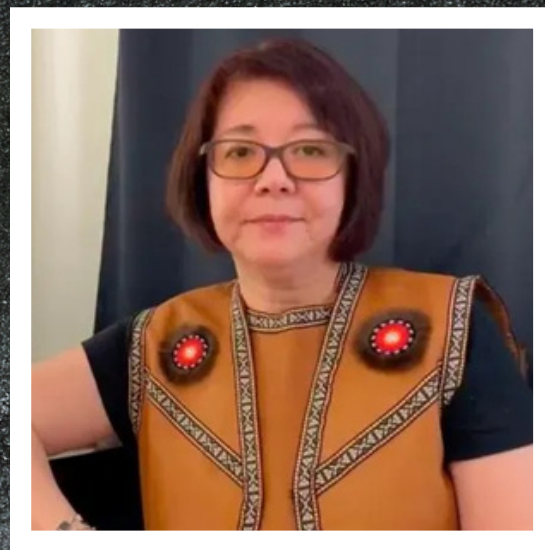
Thus, Olga Kostrova's activities were of a human rights and public nature, focused on the protection of the socio-economic, cultural, and environmental rights of Indigenous Peoples at the regional and international levels.

On **December 17, 2025**, a so-called "inspection of the premises" was conducted at Olga Kostrova's apartment, which in nature was effectively a search. During this operation, she was questioned about alleged ties to the "Aborigen Forum" network.



Irina
Kurilova

Region:
Yakutia
Indigenous origin:
Yukagirs
[fewer than 1,800 people]



Irina Kurilova is the deputy editor-in-chief of the multilingual portal “Ilken.” Content on the portal is published in Even, Evenki, Yukaghir, Dolgan, Chukchi, Yakut, Russian, and English.

She is also an expert in the field of protecting the rights and culture of the Indigenous Small-Numbered Peoples of the North and an activist with the Association of Indigenous Small-Numbered Peoples of the North of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia). Since 2019 Irina has served as Vice Chair of the Association of Yukagirs of Yakutia. In this capacity, she has repeatedly participated in sessions of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Global Biodiversity Forum, and other international forums.

In **2023**, after returning from an international event on the protection of Indigenous Peoples’ rights, Irina Kurilova was charged with an administrative offense under Part 1 of Article 20.3.3 of the Code of Administrative Offenses of the Russian Federation (“Discrediting the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation”). This was triggered

by Irina’s repost on her Facebook page of the article titled “Peoples on the Brink of Extinction,” published by the “Important Stories” portal. The article describes which Indigenous Peoples are on the brink of extinction and how Russia’s war in Ukraine has exacerbated their already dire situation.

The Yakutsk City Court, having reviewed the case, stated in its ruling dated May 19, 2023:[90](#)

“the content of the article [expresses] a negative attitude toward the special military operation and [suggests] a causal link between the operation and the decline in the population of Small Numbered Indigenous Peoples, as well as the deterioration of their quality of life.”

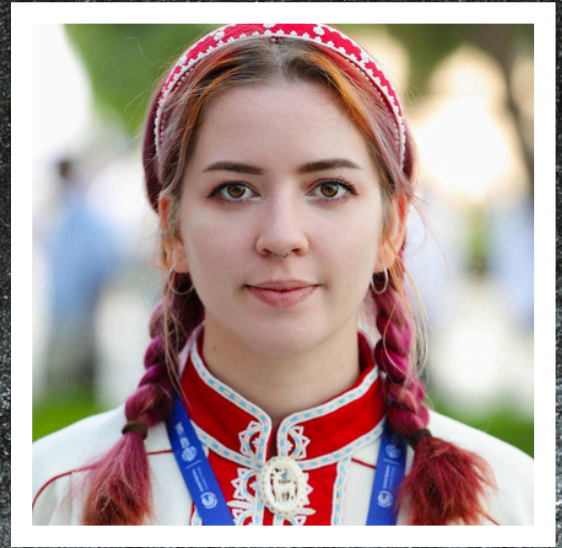
By this ruling, Irina Kurilova was found guilty of committing an administrative offense and was sentenced to a “warning”.

Later that year, immediately after Irina Kurilova returned from the 28th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework

Convention on Climate Change (COP28), held in the UAE from November 30 to December 13, 2023, she was charged with a second administrative offense. Once again, the charges were based on Irina's repost of an "Important Stories" publication about the plight of Indigenous Peoples, which had previously served as the basis for holding Irina accountable under Article 20.3.3 of the Code of Administrative Offenses of the Russian Federation (discrediting the Russian army). However, this time the charge was brought under Article 20.33 of the Code of Administrative Offenses and concerned "participation in the activities of an undesirable organization." This refers to the publication of "Important Stories" portal, whose founder—the IStories fond, registered in Latvia—was added to the Russian Ministry of Justice's register of undesirable organizations in March 2022.

Pursuant to a ruling by the Yakutsk City Court dated January 22, 2024, Irina Kurilova was issued another "warning".⁹¹

On **December 17, 2025**, Irina Kurilova's home was searched, and she was questioned about her ties to the "Aborigen Forum" network. Following the search and questioning by the FSB, Irina was pressured to resign and ultimately forced to do so.



Since 2018, Maria Michurova has been involved in community work as a Greenpeace volunteer, participating in environmental campaigns and public actions aimed at raising awareness of the consequences of oil spills in areas inhabited by Indigenous Peoples. As part of the “Clean Air” project, she collected and analyzed data on air pollution in St. Petersburg. After the Russian branch of Greenpeace was designated an “undesirable organization” in 2023, Maria was forced to cease these activities.

Since 2019, she has been a member of the Saami Nisson Forum—an independent network of Saami women active in Russia and Northern European countries. As part of this work, she engaged in educational activities, youth outreach, and the preparation of informational materials, and also participated in international initiatives related to the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

She also took part in international human rights events held as part of Barents Pride, where her work focused on supporting vulnerable groups, including Indigenous Peoples.

Since 2021, Maria has been involved in the “Aborigin Forum” network, which brought together Indigenous activists and addressed issues related to the protection of rights to traditional lands, natural resource use, and environmental safety. In addition, she engaged in informational and educational activities, including the administration of online platforms dedicated to the rights of Indigenous Peoples and international cooperation.

On **December 17, 2025**, Maria Michurova’s home was searched, and she herself was questioned about her ties to the “Aborigin Forum.”



Alexey Chispiyakov is a Shor activist and defender of the rights of Indigenous Peoples, the environment, and traditional territories in Mountain Shoria. He is known for his long-standing struggle against industrial expansion, which is destroying Shor lands, polluting rivers, and threatening the traditional way of life. Chispiyakov filmed videos and documentary footage about the problems in Shoria, participated in protests against coal mines, and criticized the authorities for ignoring the rights of Indigenous Peoples and for their colonial policies.

From 2020 to 2022, Alexei faced administrative persecution, detentions, and searches.⁹² For example, Chispiyakov was fined 10,000 rubles under Part 5 of Article 20.2 of the Code of Administrative Offenses of the Russian Federation for a rally on August 18, 2020.⁹³ On that day, environmental activists at a tent camp near the village of Cheremza recorded a video message to the owner of the “Kuznetsky Yuzhny” open-pit mine, demanding that violations of the law be prevented. The court stated:

“A.V. Chispiyakov participated in an unauthorized public event in the form of a rally with the aim of publicly expressing public opinion of a socio-political nature directed against the construction of the ‘Kuznetskaya’ coal-loading station, shouted slogans, actively communicated with participants in the unauthorized event, and, despite repeated warnings from police officers using sound amplification devices (megaphones) that this public event was unauthorized, failed to respond and ignored repeated demands from police officers to cease his unlawful actions...”

In **2022**, the Ministry of Culture and National Policy of the Kemerovo Region filed a lawsuit against him for criticizing the authorities.⁹⁴

Alexey Chispiyakov has repeatedly spoken at UN venues, where he criticized the

oppression of the Shors by Russian authorities. The last time was in April 2025 at the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

On **December 17, 2025**, FSB officers raided Alexei Chispiakov's home in Myski. He was detained as he was leaving the house. His computer, smartphones, and other devices were seized, and he was taken for questioning to the FSB office.⁹⁵ The main focus of the interrogation was his possible ties to the "Aborigen Forum."



Valentina
Sovkina

Region:
Murmansk Oblast
Indigenous origin:
Sami
[fewer than 1,700 people
in Russia]



Valentina Sovkina is a well-known Saami public figure and advocate for the rights of the Indigenous Peoples of the North. In 2008, she was elected chair of the Council of Sámi Representatives of the Murmansk Region (renamed Sám Sobvár (Sámi Assembly) in 2010) and served in this position until its dissolution in 2018.

Since January 2023, she has been a member of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Her term has been extended through 2028. In this capacity, Valentina actively advocates for the preservation of the Sámi language and traditional way of life, as well as for the protection of Indigenous Peoples' rights to land and traditional resource use.

In addition, she is a master of Sámi crafts, engages in educational activities, and promotes Sámi culture and heritage.

In **2014**, Valentina Sovkina was attacked before her departure for New York to attend the UN General Assembly's World Conference on Indigenous Peoples.⁹⁶

On **December 17, 2025**, Valentina Sovkina's home was searched in connection with her alleged ties to the "Aborigin Forum" network.⁹⁷

**AT PRESENT, THERE HAVE BEEN OTHER
INCIDENTS OF INTERROGATIONS AND
SEARCHES RELATED TO THE "ABORIGEN
FORUM" CASE.**

**HOWEVER, FOR SECURITY REASONS OR AT THE
ACTIVISTS' REQUEST, THEIR STORIES ARE NOT
INCLUDED IN THIS REPORT.**

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THE CRIME OF BEING

INDIGENOUS

