

**Refugee Review Tribunal  
AUSTRALIA**

**RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE**

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**Country:** Russian Federation  
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**Questions**

- 1. Are there any reports of people having been killed or otherwise seriously harmed by Satanists in Russia?**
- 2. What protection is available to those in Russia who experience extortion or to businesspeople who experience other types of harm?**

**RESPONSE**

**1. Are there any reports of people having been killed or otherwise seriously harmed by Satanists in Russia?**

Several reports indicate that people have been killed or otherwise seriously harmed by Satanists in Russia in connection with one or other Satanist cult. The strength of the cult has been on the rise in the country and some devotees, chiefly young people, were killed or died under suspicious circumstances.

A 2001 report comments that a member of ‘Black Satanists’, Balakirev of Pushkino, killed his friend who had left the cult and informed the authorities of its existence. The incident happened in Voznesensky in Tsarskoe Selo in Russia (Mokhel, Margarita 2001, ‘Reporter investigates satanists in Petersburg suburbs: AMAZONS OF THE DEVIL’, *Moskovskii komsomolets*, 7 August <http://www.stetson.edu/~psteeves/relnews/0108f.html> - Accessed 30 July 2008 – Attachment 1).

*Church Life*, a periodical by ‘the Russian Orthodox Church outside of Russia’ in the Diocese of Chicago and Detroit, reports that a satanist killed three monks: Hieromonk Basil, monk Therapont, and monk Trofim. This happened on Pascha after the service and the festal meal (Archbishop Alypy 2006, ‘Archpastoral Epistle from Archbishop Alypy of Chicago and Detroit to the Participants of the Diocesan Conference in Oklahoma City’, The Russian Orthodox Church outside of Russia, *Church Life*, 2 November <http://www.synod.com/synod/eng2006/11enabpalypyposlan.html> - Accessed 30 July 2008 – Attachment 2).

Seemingly referring to the same incident, Nikolai Mitrokhin states that:

Russian contemporary history knows at least one case when a Satanist (an Afghan War veteran) killed three monks in a large monastery, was detained and declared insane (Mitrokhin, Nikolai 2006, 'Non-Islamic Extremism in Today's Russia', *Russia in Global Affairs*, Vol. 4 No. 4, October – December 2006  
<http://www.columbia.edu/~rh11/Russia%20in%20Global%20Affairs.Oct-Dec06.pdf> - Accessed 30 July 2008 – Attachment 3).

An undated *Russia Today* article states that William Cocks, a British Satanist was arrested in Russia on suspicion of slaying his Russian wife and her grandmother ('British 'satanist' slays Russian wife and grandmother' (undated), *Russia Today* <http://en.russiatoday.com/bestvideos/?id=12> - Accessed 30 July 2008 – Attachment 4).

Commenting on the same report, *The Sun* reports that:

A satan worshipper butchered his Russian bride and her gran in a sickening ritual, police revealed last night.  
Brit William Cocks, 52, stabbed pole dancer wife Irina 40 times.  
He also killed her 82-year-old gran by knifing her in the neck four times before attempting to commit suicide by stabbing himself and slashing his wrist.  
Russian cops called to the women's one-bedroom flat in Udomlya, 130 miles north-west of Moscow, found the 'devil's number' 666 scrawled on boards. They also discovered an inverted five-pointed star, books on the occult and a sinister-looking cloak.  
Reports in Russia have described the double murder as "a ritual killing" (O'SHEA, GARY 2007, 'Satanist slayed Russian bride', *The Sun*, 15 December  
<http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/article587186.ece> - Accessed 30 July 2008 – Attachment 5).

Mayhem.net website comments that Satanist cult members, whose ages range from under 20 to 80, stood trial in the city of Donskoi for two ritual murders in 1998 ('THE CULTS 'R US HIT LIST - Russian Satanist' (undated), mayhem.net website <http://www.mayhem.net/Crime/cults1.html> - Accessed 30 July 2008 – Attachment 6; See also 'Russian Satanist' (undated), Metareligion.com website, [http://www.meta-religion.com/New\\_religious\\_groups/crime\\_religion/Satanism/russian\\_satanist.htm](http://www.meta-religion.com/New_religious_groups/crime_religion/Satanism/russian_satanist.htm) – Accessed 17 November 2006 – Attachment 7).

The same mayhem.net website also states that:

In March, 1997, Russian police announced that they were searching for the ringleaders of a Satanic cult in western Siberia. The cult is believed to be from the city of Tyumen, 1,400 miles east of Moscow, where five young people have been found hanged to death in what, at first, authorities thought were suicides. Later, the discovery of cabalistic jottings in the belongings of the dead youths revealed their involvement in a seven-stage initiation ceremony that culminated in ritual suffocation ('THE CULTS 'R US HIT LIST - Siberian Satanist Cult' (undated), mayhem.net website <http://www.mayhem.net/Crime/cults1.html> - Accessed 30 July 2008 – Attachment 8).

Although it is not clear who was the perpetrator, a 2003 report from *The Scotsman* refers to the killing of one of the cult's followers in Moscow, resulting in the formation of a police special unit to investigate pseudo religious sects in Russia. It states that in the wake of the killing of

Elizaveta Kuzmina, 19, the daughter of a popular Russian rock singer, Vladimir Kuzmin, and a follower of the cult, worried officials from Russia's interior ministry admitted they have been forced to set up a special unit to investigate the activities of devil-worshipping sects ('Russians take action to combat Satanist crime' 2003, *The Scotsman*, 8 February <http://www.wwrn.org/article.php?idd=6919&sec=39&cont=7> - Accessed 16 Oct 2006 – Attachment 9; See also 'Russian Police investigates activity of Satanist sects Background Public Administration & Government Religion Religion - General Social Groups Social Groups - General9969991012101610201023' 2003, *WorldWide Religious News*, 4 February <http://www.wwrn.org/article.php?idd=6920&sec=39&cont> - Accessed on 16 Oct 2006 – Attachment 10).

Referring to a killing of a rector of the Russian Orthodox Church, *Radio Free Europe* states that:

On July 16 [1999], unknown assailants strangled Archpriest Boris Ponomaryov, rector of the Church of St. Elijah the Prophet in the Mozhaisk district and stole icons, books, and money. Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Aleksii II suggested that a satanist sect might have been responsible ('RUSSIAN ORTHODOX PRIEST MURDERED, CHAPEL BURNED' 1999, *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, Vol. 1, No. 27, 22 July – Attachment 11).

A 2006 RRT Research Response addressing Satanic cult and availability or otherwise of state protection for the victims of the cult in Russia is attached (RRT Country Research 2006, *Research Response RUS30933*, 17 November – Attachment 12).

## **2. What protection is available to those in Russia who experience extortion or to businesspeople who experience other types of harm?**

Extortion and threat to businesspeople to extort money have been a serious problem in Russia although reports vary as to its extent. While the law provides protection for citizenry, its effectiveness is in serious doubt as corruption permeates the police and judiciary. The government's attempts to cleanse its bureaucracy of corruption have been often frustrated.

One of the most recent reports, the 2008 US Department of State *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Russia* describes the extent of crimes and the difficulties involved in attempts to address them as follows:

The national police force, which falls under the Ministry of Internal Affairs, is organized on federal, regional, and local levels. Although regulations and national laws prohibit corrupt activities, corruption was widespread, and there were few crackdowns on illegal police activity. There have been some significant prosecutions of corrupt police officers. For example, prosecutors continue to pursue the "Werewolves in Uniform," a case involving police officers within the Ministry of Internal Affairs who used their official positions to engage in criminal activity. In 2006 the leader of the group and six other officers were convicted of charges that included extortion, bribery, and trafficking in drugs and weapons. They were sentenced to terms ranging from 15 to 20 years. Four other members of the group were still being tried. According to the Moscow prosecutor's office, 77 police officers were prosecuted and 1,692 disciplined in Moscow during the first six months of the year. According to the internal security department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the number of police officers prosecuted and or disciplined increased by approximately 15 percent. The most common crimes committed by police officers were abuse of authority, exceeding authority, bribery, and fraud.

Although government agencies such as the Ministry of Internal Affairs continued to educate officers about safeguarding human rights, the security forces remained largely unreformed (US Department of State 2008, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Russia*, 11 March. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100581.htm> – Attachment 13).

Referring to the depth of corruption in the country's judiciary, the reports continue that:

The law provides for an independent judiciary; however the judicial branch did not consistently act as an effective counterweight to other branches of the government...

In 2006 the government increased judges' salaries by nearly 40 percent in an effort to combat corruption. However, there were continued reports of judges being bribed by officials and others. During the first six months of 2006, the Supreme Qualifying Collegium of Judges reported that 39 judges were removed from the bench and 151 were given warnings. Authorities did not provide adequate protection from intimidation or threats from powerful criminal defendants (US Department of State 2008, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Russia*, 11 March. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100581.htm> – Attachment 13).

As to the extent of corruption and difficulties to fight it in the country, the US Department of States notes that:

Corruption is a widespread problem in Russia and studies have found that it increased in the past year. The World Bank's worldwide governance indicators reflected that corruption was a severe problem. The government designated the fight against corruption and the enforcement of law as priorities, and while the law provides criminal penalties for official corruption, the government acknowledged that it has not implemented the law effectively, and officials frequently engaged in corrupt practices with impunity. Corruption was widespread throughout the executive, legislative, and judicial branches at all levels of government. Manifestations included bribery of officials, misuse of budgetary resources, theft of government property, kickbacks in the procurement process, and extortion. The NGO INDEM (Information Science for Democracy) reports that other official institutions, such as the higher education system, health care, the military draft system, and the municipal apartment distribution system were also corrupt.

Overall, initiatives to address the problem, either through regulation, administrative reform, or government-sponsored voluntary codes of conduct, have made little headway in countering endemic corruption. While there were prosecutions related to bribery, the lack of enforcement in general remained a problem. In addition, bribery and other corruption issues are investigated by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Federal Security Service, both of which were widely perceived as corrupt...

From January to October, according to Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Yakovenko, more than 37,000 corruption crimes, including bribery and corrupt business practices, were detected by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. From January to November, there were 11,119 cases of bribery of government and municipal officials alone, a six percent increase from the same period of last year. Of these cases 9,127 persons faced criminal investigations and 5,288 were sentenced, a 10.3 percent increase from the same period in 2006. The INDEM [Information Science for Democracy – NGO] foundation estimates that millions of corruption-related offences were committed every year and cost the country \$300 billion (approximately 7.36 trillion rubles), almost equal to the country's entire federal budget (US Department of State 2008, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Russia*, 11 March. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100581.htm> – Attachment 13).

Commenting specifically on the level of protection available for those who fear organized crime in Russia, the 2006 UK Home Office *Operational Guidance Note: Russian Federation* states that::

3.10.6 Sufficiency of protection. The high levels of corruption within the Russian Federation may limit the effectiveness of any protection that the authorities are able or willing to offer to those that fear organised crime...

3.10.10 In cases of low level criminal activity perpetrated by criminal gangs or corrupt officials at a local level, i.e. street robbery/extortion in which there are no links with the authorities or where local officials are acting without the knowledge of higher authorities, the claimant will be able to seek the protection of the authorities (UK Home Office 2006, 'Operational Guidance Note: Russian Federation', UK Home Office website, 14 November <http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/countryspecificasylumpolicyogms/russianfedogn?view=Binary> – Accessed 7 December 2006 – Attachment 14).

The US Overseas Security and Advisory Council comments on the extortion faced by American companies in St Petersburg and the police response to the practice as follows:

#### Russian Organized Crime

Organized crime permeates economic activity in the region, and criminal syndicates are at the forefront of this criminal activity. Organized crime in St. Petersburg is dominated by three principal criminal societies: the "Tambov," "Kazan," and "Malyshev" but, over the last few years, the nature of the syndicates' activities has evolved considerably. The principal criminal organizations have moved into legitimate businesses and have legalized many of their traditionally criminal activities. Russian organized crime (ROC) groups are still active in the traditional crimes such as racketeering, but are also becoming major players in the sphere of commerce. They are particularly active in the transportation and banking sectors and are frequently involved with the development and delivery of oil and natural gas products. Organized criminal groups have also been known to profit from the privatization of state-owned industries.

Lower level groups of organized crime figures resort to extortion, racketeering, and strong-arm tactics to extort entrepreneurs. These groups are often comprised of no more than several thugs, or "bandits," without formal ties to larger criminal gangs. Some businesses arrange for "protection," referred to colloquially as a "krysha" or roof, by powerful political figures, law enforcement personnel, security firms, or organized criminals. Business owners who decline these services are often targets of violence.

Numerous American companies are investing in Russia, and while most of them, especially larger companies, do not experience problems, several American business owners each year complain of organized crime-related threats and targeting. Crimes perpetrated by organized gangs against the private sector include extortion, blackmail threats, and protection rackets that involve the threat or use of violence. In addition, individuals have received threats against their property, their Russian employees, their families and themselves.

Joint ventures are also not immune from the criminal gangs. Some Americans have reported that their Russian national partners have taken over the business with the assistance of organized criminal elements. The Russian partner will let criminal connections infiltrate the business, cause problems resulting in a "distressed business," and then use this situation as a pretext to usurp the American partner's ownership. Statistics on the number of American business people who have been the victims of such crimes are unknown because many do not report these crimes to the police.

Caution and diligence are the operative words when establishing business relations in Russia. With the organized crime problem in St. Petersburg, American businesses must address security issues while, and not after, making business plans. Security planning and thorough background checks on prospective partners and employees are essential elements of business security in Russia.

#### Police Response

The police are not well prepared to deal with foreign victims of crime. In general, militia (local police) forces provide only marginal assistance to foreign victims of street or organized crime. Key tourist locations in the city lack trained officers to assist foreigners, and they are minimally schooled in the necessary foreign languages. While there are a few examples of professionally handled and positive encounters with the police, in most instances, the local militia fails to provide appropriate response and investigative assistance to American victims of crime.

The procedures for reporting crimes constitute another major stumbling block, contributing to the number of crimes that go unreported. Foreigners have discovered that they must often wait several hours in local station houses and deal with an intransigent police bureaucracy to submit reports that will accomplish little ('St. Petersburg, Russia: 2006 crime and safety report' 2006, Overseas Security and Advisory Council, 8 June – Attachment 15).

The 2003 UK Home Office 'Country of Origin Information Report: Russian Federation' describes the activities of criminal organizations, their influence over the economy and the police involvement as follows:

#### **ORGANISED CRIME**

**6.52.** Organised crime and corruption [10b] have become significant factors in the political and economic life of Russia. While Russian organised crime has a long tradition dating as far back as the nineteenth century, the collapse of the Soviet state and subsequent loss of a capacity to impose order on the population provided unprecedented opportunities for the flourishing of criminal organisations. The adoption of a new criminal code went some way towards easing the problem, but its implementation remained uneven, particularly as lack of resources made it difficult for the police to combat organised crime. The number of criminal organisations operating in the country grew from 3,000 in 1992 to 9,000 in 1998, and their activities include extortion, economic crime and financial fraud, ... Of these activities, the most pervasive and significant is the extortion of business, with criminals demanding 10% of turnover, often accompanied by threats of violence and no prospect of any protection service in return.[1]

**6.53.** Cases where such criminals are acting with the co-operation or at least with the acquiescence of the police [13a] are believed to be widespread throughout the Russian Federation, although this is more likely to occur in smaller cities, towns and rural areas, beyond the environs of Moscow and St Petersburg, and particularly in the east of the country, where feudal-type systems dominate. The likelihood of such occurrences is also affected by the presence of foreign business, as there tends to be more adherence to the rule of law if foreign companies are located in an area. Meanwhile, the victims are more likely to be able to obtain the protection of the authorities in the larger cities. However, in cases where low-level police officers are co-operating with criminal groups, even in the larger cities it is possible that protection might not be adequate, given that the higher authorities may fear the exposure of further dubious connections at the senior rank. In such cases, the victim may be compelled to seek refuge in another area of the country (see Chapter V.A.G: Freedom of Movement). It is possible that a victim who returns to Russia from abroad may be pursued by the same criminals, but the likelihood of this occurring will depend on the level of the criminal group, the profile of the victim, and the nature and extent of the harassment.[35]

**6.54.** There is evidence that the Russian authorities are committed to combating the problem of organised crime. Laws have become stronger, omissions of legislation are being rectified and the criminal justice system is gradually beginning to function with greater integrity and effectiveness. During 1997, over 16,000 participants in criminal formations were brought to justice in Russia, while 5,600 cases of bribery were identified and over 480 corrupt officials were indicted.[1] Some 26,100 crimes were exposed by the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs Department on Organised Crime, between January and October 2000. In the same period, approximately 24,600 crimes were solved, while 5,381 pieces of firearms, more than 650,000 pieces of ammunition, over 230 tonnes of explosives, 11,000 bombs, 2 million dollars worth of counterfeit money, and 1,767 kilograms of narcotic drugs were confiscated by the department.[30] Meanwhile, criminal proceedings were instituted against more than 18,000 officials in 2000, for various economic crimes.[29] Furthermore, the overall number of crimes registered in Russia in 2000 did not exceed three million for the first time in the past few years, with a decline of 2.2% in the crime rate, along with a considerable improvement in crime detection.[32] (UK Home Office 2003, 'Country of Origin Information Report: Russian Federation', UK Home Office website, April <http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/default.asp?PageId=190> - Accessed 11 June 2003 – Attachment 16).

Referring to the nexus of corruption, extortion and bribery in Russia, a 2003 Freedom House publication, 'Nations in Transit 2003: Russia' states that:

Corruption and extortion pervade life in Russia. Individuals pay bribes regularly to receive a bed for a hospital operation, to obtain a passport, or to register their residency. Likewise, businesspeople frequently pay bribes to conduct their affairs, while government officials routinely accept and even demand them. Corruption has the effect of imposing a de facto tax on citizens that both slows economic growth and deprives the authorities of legitimate revenues (Freedom House 2003, 'Nations in Transit 2003: Russia', [http://www.freedomhouse.org/pdf\\_docs/research/nitransit/2003/nitrussia2003.pdf](http://www.freedomhouse.org/pdf_docs/research/nitransit/2003/nitrussia2003.pdf) - Accessed 19 January 2004 – Attachment 17).

Similarly, 'Nations in Transit 2001: Russia' comments on the link between the government and criminal organizations in Russia as follows:

The old Soviet underworld has been largely replaced by sophisticated political-criminal organizations that are often staffed by police and former security professionals. Mafia organizations have close relations with officials at many levels of the Russian government. According to a Gallup International poll reported in April 2000, Russia placed in the top 20 of the most corrupt countries in the world. The poll was conducted through interviews with senior bankers, business leaders, and government officials in many countries. Russia was ranked 82 out of the 90 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2000 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) and received a score of 2.1 on a scale of 0 (highly corrupt) to 10 (highly clean). Corruption and extortion pervade everyday life in Russia. And despite public support for the Putin government, polls show widespread skepticism about his anticorruption promises ('Nations in Transit 2001: Russia' 2001, UN website <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/nispacee/unpan008097.pdf> - Accessed 30 July 2008 – Attachment 18).

A 2004 Country Research Response examines the government's ability to protect people from the Russian mafia (RRT Country Research 2004, *Research response RUS17009*, 13 October 2004)– Attachment 19.

A 2006 *The Guardian* report provides a case study of the criminals' penetration into the high society of politicians and businesspeople with the aim of extortion. (Mainville, Michael 2006, 'Gunmen kill Russia's crime-fighting banker', *The Guardian*, 15 September <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2006/sep/15/russia.mainsection/print> - Accessed 30 July 2008 – Attachment 20).

The Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada has compiled earlier reports of protection money paid by small businesses and the government's efforts to combat crime:

- Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2002, *RUS40369.E - Update to RUS37243.E of 25 May 2001 on whether a specific organized crime fighting unit has been established; activities and efforts thus far; reports of successes in battling extortion and other threats to small business owners (May 2001- November 2002)*, 3 December – Attachment 21
- Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2002, *RUS39573.E - Russia: Extortion and other threats directed against businesspersons, specifically against businesswomen in Novorossiysk; legal responses (1996-2000)*, 1 November – Attachment 22

## List of Sources Consulted

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US Department of State <http://www.state.gov/>

CIA *Factbook* <https://www.cia.gov/>

#### **United Nations (UN)**

UNHCR <http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home>

#### **Non-Government Organisations**

Amnesty International <http://www.amnesty.org/>

Human Rights Watch <http://www.hrw.org/>

#### **International News & Politics**

*BBC News* <http://news.bbc.co.uk>

*Pacific Regional Rights Resources Team* <http://www.rrrt.org>

*Freedom House* <http://freedomhouse.org>

*CBC News* <http://www.cbc.ca>

*The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life* <http://pewforum.org/>

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|--------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|
| Public | <i>FACTIVA</i>  | Reuters Business Briefing         |
| DIAC   | <i>BACIS</i>    | Country Information               |
|        | <i>CISINFO</i>  | DIAC Research Responses           |
|        | <i>CISLIB</i>   | CIS Library Catalogue             |
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| UNHCR  | <i>REFWORLD</i> | UNHCR Refugee Information CD-ROM  |



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RRT Country Research database, including  
Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, U.S.  
Department of State *Country Reports on Human Rights  
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### List of Attachments

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