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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by International Council of Russian Compatriots (ICRC), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[22 August 2023]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



The Violation of Human Rights of the Residents of the Transnistrian Region of the Republic of Moldova

The Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova continues to face comprehensive pressure on all spheres of its life activity and violation of the fundamental rights and freedoms of its half-million population by the Republic of Moldova.

The Moldovan authorities demonstrate their disinterest in continuing the negotiation process in the agreed international format, violate existing agreements and regularly generate new problems for the residents and businesses in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova. At the same time the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova remains a responsible participant in the dialogue.

Numerous cases of discrimination against the residents of the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova occur blatant disregard of international human rights instruments, as well as the agreements of the international negotiation process. Moldovan law with several new articles and notions into the Criminal Code, adopted despite the criticism by the OSCE, served as confirmation of Chisinau's repressive policy. Among them are "separatism", "conspiracy against the Republic of Moldova", "incorporation of an illegal information structure", "anti-constitutional entity", "failure to notify authorities of crimes committed against the state and national security", etc. These amendments represent a legal basis for the expansion of criminal prosecution on political grounds and a formal reason for mass arrests of the residents of the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova.

The validity of Transnistrian concerns in the context of the described legislative amendments in the Republic of Moldova is underlined by the fact that for many years the Republic of Moldova has actively used the practice of politically motivated criminal cases against people of the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova in order to intimidate, pressure and force them to leave the territory of the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova. There are numerous facts of illegal detention, recruitment by special services, imprisonment, and international wanted listings. Many residents of the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova have been deprived of the possibility to return home because of arrest threats. The personal safety and health of many Transnistrians are constantly threatened by the actions of Moldovan enforcement agencies and security services.

The Republic of Moldova significantly intensified its efforts to inflict economic damage on the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova by increasing systemic politicized pressure on local economic agents, including large industrial enterprises. The resumption of charging customs fees for the clearance of export-import operations, cancelled following the negotiations in 2014 testifies to the degradation of the Republic of Moldova's approaches. It violates the fundamental principle of the inadmissibility of double taxation. Another acute problem is the unreasonable demands of the Moldovan side that certain Transnistrian enterprises pay to the budget of the Republic of Moldova for environmental pollution.

The conditions of foreign trade activity for Transnistrian economic agents have significantly worsened. On 14 August this year, the government of the Republic of Moldova adopted a number of distressing for the Transnistrian business amendments to the Decree No. 815 concerning the regulation of foreign trade activities of Transnistrian enterprises. Among them are: toughening of the procedure for issuing Moldovan licenses, which will now be carried out exclusively on a paid basis, changing the procedure for registration of Transnistrian companies in the Republic of Moldova with its transfer to a paid basis, complication of customs clearance of goods, worsening of foreign trade activities' regime for some individual entrepreneurs from the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova.

It is characteristic that these changes, which created new realities for the Transnistrian economic entities, associated with additional financial burdens and administrative barriers, were adopted in conditions of refusal to discuss them with the Transnistrian side. It is a deliberate blow to the negotiation process and the prospects for normalization of Moldovan-Transnistrian relations.

Since February 2022, due to the closure of the Ukrainian border, the issue of importing a number of vital and socially important goods to the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova has significantly worsened. Because of administrative and bureaucratic barriers applied by the Republic of Moldova, it was difficult to import medicines and medical equipment, which resulted in serious shortage or total lack of many medicines, significant rise in price of pharmaceuticals, as confirmed by independent international experts. The Moldovan authorities simply block the supply of medicines in transit through their territory under various pretexts.

At the same time, Chisinau artificially blocked the solution of this issue within the negotiation process, refusing to implement the mechanism for the import of medicines into the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova, developed and agreed upon by expert groups, taking into account the list of vital medicines used in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova. The Moldovan authorities considered the challenge for Transnistrian patients and doctors as opportunities for own financial gain, and cynically use them.

In an unprecedentedly inhumane move, the Republic of Moldova prevented, in violation of the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the World Health Organization, the import of an X-ray device for computed tomography in one of the medical institutions of the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova, which serves the disabled and veterans, despite the fact that import of this equipment into the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova had no restrictions before. The importation was blocked for 3 months, despite the fact that the daily delay in commissioning the CT scanner led to the disruption of scheduled and urgent operations for people with disabilities and extra needs.

Moldovan authorities have explicitly stated their intention to impede the operation of all public medical institutions in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova by making it impossible for them to function normally in the future.

In addition to the medicine blockade, the detention of cargoes destined for Transnistrian economic entities: industrial equipment, vehicles and foodstuffs became systematic. Chisinau also restricted the supply of plant protection products, which threatened the sowing campaign and the loss of crops.

By its actions of restricting the import of socially important goods, the Republic of Moldova deliberately undermines the medicinal and food security of the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova, provokes shortage and panic among the people, poses a direct threat to the life and health of residents, violating their right to a decent standard of living, including food and medical care.

The right of Transnistrians to freedom of movement is still massively violated due to the Republic of Moldova's failure to execute the Protocol decision on the participation of Transnistrian vehicles in international traffic, as well as undermine of agreements on freedom of movement and non-application of discriminatory practices to citizens and officials. The Moldovan side not only blocked the work of the Vehicle Registration Offices in Tiraspol and Ribnitsa, but also by legislative norms destroyed the mechanism of "neutral license plates" within the framework of the model that was agreed upon in April 2018, limiting the possibility for Transnistrian residents to travel abroad in private cars. At the same time, the Republic of Moldova ignored the initiatives of the Transnistrian side and the OSCE's calls to return to the full functioning of this mechanism.

Another urgent problem in the transport sector is the administrative prosecution of Transnistrian car drivers on the territory of the Republic of Moldova for the absence of a Moldovan car insurance policy, which grossly violates the 2015 agreements on cooperation between the insurance entities of the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova and the Republic of Moldova under the agreements of compulsory insurance of civil liability of vehicle owners.

In addition, the practice of unjustified detentions, in-depth inspections and interrogations of the Transnistrian residents at Chisinau international airport is intensifying. Pressure on Transnistrians crossing the border of the Republic of Moldova is increasing. Moreover, Transnistrians returning home are denied entry, depriving them of their fundamental rights to return to their place of residence and the possibility to reunite with their families.

The banking blockade of the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova persists and tends to get stronger. This problem has not been solved for several years, despite international expert recommendations. The international payment systems “Visa” and “MasterCard” are blocked in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova. The problem is humanitarian in nature, because Transnistrian residents, as well as Ukrainian refugees holding such cards, cannot use their funds and receive transfers from abroad on the territory of the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova.

The Republic of Moldova has also officially refused to implement the 2017 agreement in the field of telecommunications. Instead, Moldovan telecommunication operators create harmful interference and limit the ability of Transnistrians to use telephone, Internet access, and TV broadcasting services.

Thus, the Republic of Moldova resorted to new unilateral and unfriendly steps, significantly increasing pressure on half a million population of the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova, grossly violating people’s rights and freedoms, including the right to freedom of movement and return to the place of residence, to personal security and integrity, to life and health, the right to development and others. The measures related to intensification of repressive tactics of the Republic of Moldova against Transnistrians, as well as the multiplication of pressure on Transnistrian economic agents represent a particular danger.

In this regard, we urge the Human Rights Council and the international community to pay the closest attention to the plight of the Transnistrian residents, to take urgent measures to normalize the situation, to restore the violated rights and to prevent further violations by the Moldovan authorities.

We also ask the Human Rights Council to make an appropriate assessment of the Republic of Moldova’s destructive actions, and to make all necessary efforts for ensuring that Chisinau strictly complies with all the agreements previously signed with the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova and for restoring the functionality of the mechanisms of the international negotiation process for a Moldovan-Transnistrian settlement.
