

Item 4. 46

Julia Sohina

OHCHR Minority fellow 2019

ITEM 1: Human Rights and minority language education

Thank you, Madame Chairperson!

My name is Julia Sohina. I am a 2019 OHCHR minority fellow representing the Russian linguistic minority in Latvia.

In 2018 Latvia adopted amendments to the Education law that abolish education in Russian language to minority children and lead to assimilation. The amendments affect kindergarten, schools, and universities.

Russians are an indigenous population of Latvia. The Russian-speaking minority is 37%. There are 53% of Russian speakers in the capital of Latvia. Can you imagine Madam Chairperson, that Russian language is in a status of a foreign language?

Russian schools in Latvia have history of over 230 years. Now teaching Russian at private schools and universities has been restricted, while the teaching in other EU languages is allowed.

Despite the criticism from the international institutions such as the UN, OSCE, Council of Europe, European Parliament on this reform and recommendations to review discriminatory amendments, Latvian authorities still refuse to take any action to solve the problem.

The parents have sent 22 lawsuits to ECHR and will be sending dozens of more lawsuits in the near future. We need urgent action and response to our complains regarding the education for Russian minorities, in the contrary case our existing system of education is going to be totally abolished in near future.

Activists, protecting the rights of Russian-speaking minorities, face pressure and persecution.

Recommendations to the Latvian state:

- 1) To change the Education law and restore education in Russian and other minority languages.

This is certainly will lead to the improvement of the quality of education, which will reduce tension in society, reduce the rapid outflow of families and youth abroad.

- 2) To cancel the language checks of the teachers, that lead to additional stress, leaving work and other negative consequences.
- 3) To ratify the European charter of regional languages or minority language and the protocol to the convention against discrimination in the field of education.
- 4) To allow individual complaints under CERD, under CRC and ICESCR.

And I appreciate the international community's calls to action for Latvia to make changes to the discriminatory law.

Thank you.

Russian text is below.