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## **Transnational Repression by the Russian Federation: Threats, Tendencies, Solutions**

**Joint Research  
Interim Report, 2025**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Russia's use of transnational repression (TNR) has expanded dramatically in scale and reach. A mass exodus from Russia — **approximately 900,000 people**, representing the largest political migration since the 20th century — has triggered new security and legal challenges. Initially seeking refuge in the South Caucasus and Central Asia, many dissidents have since relocated to the European Union, bringing the risks of repression into the EU itself.

While acts of violence still occur, Russia's methods have become increasingly covert, administrative, and digital. This shift creates new challenges for EU member states, whose sovereignty, legal systems, and democratic frameworks are being tested by authoritarian interference.

**Assessment.** Between 2022 and 2024, the average annual number of TNR cases **increased by four to eight times** across fifteen destination countries, including Armenia, Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, France, Georgia, Germany, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Poland, Romania, Serbia, and Spain (**Annex 5**). The increase has been particularly sharp in Russia's near abroad, including Georgia, Armenia, and Kazakhstan, which have become the primary locations for Russian-led TNR activities. Notably, within the EU, Poland has emerged as one of the most affected member states.

While case volumes inside the EU remain moderate, the trend is clear. Incidents have been also recorded in Italy, Spain, and Romania — all new additions to the list of affected countries. This expansion highlights the EU's growing exposure to foreign authoritarian repression.

Russian tactics have shifted accordingly. Denial of Entry prevents access to safe territories, while Denial of Services blocks access to essential rights such as banking, placing exiles in precarious legal and economic positions. These measures erode protections for political refugees. At the same time, digital repression — including spyware, covert surveillance, and abuse of legal frameworks like Interpol — directly challenges EU sovereignty and undermines trust in European legal standards.

In parallel, state collaboration in certain regions has intensified. Central Asian countries, especially Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, have demonstrated significant cooperation with Russian security agencies, often facilitating unlawful detentions and forced returns of exiles. These actions not only endanger individuals in transit but also create unsafe corridors that push dissidents further toward EU territory.

Despite steps to address foreign interference, transnational repression remains insufficiently integrated into the EU's security and human rights policies. Divergent national approaches, inconsistent legal recognition of TNR methods, and limited protection mechanisms have created exploitable gaps, exposing individuals and institutions to persistent risks.

**Policy Implications.** Addressing transnational repression is essential to defending both human rights and EU sovereignty. Russia's use of legal, bureaucratic, and digital mechanisms to target dissidents within the Union constitutes foreign interference and undermines core democratic principles.

The EU should adopt a harmonized legal and policy framework to define TNR and recognize new tactics, including Denial of Entry and Denial of Services, as legitimate grounds for international protection. Asylum and residency procedures should be adapted to prevent politicized deportations and extraditions.

A dedicated EU-wide mechanism for monitoring TNR cases should be established, as current data relies solely on civil society and nonprofit efforts and remains fragmented. Systematic collection is critical to understanding the scale of the threat and developing responses.

In parallel, partnerships with civil society and nonprofit organizations should be deepened to enhance early warning systems and victim support. Finally, the EU must strengthen safeguards to prevent abuses of legal and digital infrastructure, including improved oversight of intelligence-sharing agreements and data privacy protections.

Conclusion. Russia's campaign of transnational repression has become a European challenge. As it spreads westward and adopts more covert tactics, it threatens both individuals and the sovereignty of EU states. A coordinated and robust policy response is urgently required to protect European democratic values, sovereignty and maintain the Union's role as a place of refuge for those fleeing authoritarian persecution.

Failing to anticipate and address the growing threat of transnational repression leaves EU member states exposed to a particularly insidious form of authoritarian interference — one that strikes **at the very core of legal sovereignty and political freedom**. As Anstis, Al-Jizawi, and Deibert (2023) [note](#), this phenomenon reflects a fundamental clash between competing conceptions of sovereignty. In democratic systems, sovereignty is closely tied to the obligation to protect rights and uphold the rule of law within national borders. By contrast, authoritarian regimes increasingly view

sovereignty as the prerogative to exercise control over citizens regardless of where they reside. This extraterritorial logic, often justified in the name of regime security, legitimizes practices such as cross-border surveillance, legal manipulation, and forced returns — actions that directly undermine the legal order and security of host countries, including EU member states. The Council of Europe has **underscored** the seriousness of such threats, emphasizing that they directly attack the rule of law.

Therefore, transnational repression must be recognized not only as a human rights violation, but also as a strategic effort by authoritarian regimes to impose their sovereignty beyond their borders. While the issue has gained increased attention — including through a recent PACE **report** and the **appointment** of a dedicated rapporteur — a significant gap persists between recognition and implementation. Without targeted and coordinated policies, victims will remain vulnerable, and the EU's core democratic principles and institutions will continue to be tested.

## **CONTEXT AND STRATEGIC RELEVANCE FOR THE EU**

Russia has long been a global leader in transnational repression (TNR), using harassment, legal manipulation, and violence to silence dissent abroad. Since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, these practices **have intensified and diversified**, posing a growing security challenge for Europe. The war triggered the largest political exodus from Russia since the 20th century, with **approximately 900,000 individuals fleeing the country**. Many were anti-war activists, journalists, and civil society leaders, now facing risks of persecution beyond Russia's borders.

Initially seeking refuge in the South Caucasus and Central Asia, dissidents have increasingly turned to the European

Union. This shift has been driven by rising collaboration between Russian security agencies and local authorities in **Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, and Georgia**, turning these regions into unsafe transit zones. As a result, Europe has become not only a destination but also a new frontline in the global contest between authoritarian and democratic notions of sovereignty.

While the overall volume of TNR cases within the EU remains moderate, the pattern is unmistakable. Documented incidents have emerged in Poland, Italy, Spain, Romania, and France, signaling a growing geographic spread. Poland has become one of the most affected EU countries, reflecting its status as a major hub for Russian exiles (see Footnote 1).

The tactics used have evolved significantly. Beyond traditional methods such as arrests and extradition requests, Russia now relies on **Denial of Entry** and **Denial of Services**, blocking access to safe havens and essential services. At the same time, digital transnational repression has intensified. Investigations reveal the use of spyware to monitor exiles and journalists in the EU, while Russian networks engage in covert surveillance and harassment operations. Notably, attempts to kidnap dissidents, such as the plot against journalist Roman Dobrokhoto in Berlin, **illustrate** the tangible threat within European borders.

Russia has also exploited international legal mechanisms to legitimize its repression. The abuse of Interpol's Red Notices to target activists, journalists, and opposition figures within the EU circumvents legal protections and violates European human rights standards, as **condemned** by the Council of Europe.

These TNR activities threaten not only individuals but also EU sovereignty, the rule of law, and fundamental democratic values. Transnational repression undermines national jurisdictions, distorts asylum and residency procedures, and normalizes authoritarian practices within the EU.

Addressing this challenge is therefore not only a human rights obligation — it is a **strategic security necessity**. Failure to act leaves EU member states vulnerable to authoritarian interference that targets both the Union’s democratic institutions and the vulnerable individuals who turn to Europe for protection.

## FINDING 1: TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION BY RUSSIA HAS SHARPLY INTENSIFIED SINCE 2022

Since the start of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Russia’s use of transnational repression has accelerated significantly. A comparison between the pre-war period (2014–2021) and the post-invasion era (2022–2024) shows a **eightfold** increase in the average annual number of documented TNR incidents (**fourfold** if Denial of Entry cases are excluded). In absolute terms, the number of cases has tripled when comparing the two periods—29 cases over eight years versus 89 cases over three years. While much of this surge has occurred in Russia’s near abroad, notably Central Asia and the South Caucasus, the effects are now felt within Europe.

### Transnational repression targeting Russian citizens abroad has increased after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine



Chart: Consortium of NGOs and think tanks

Pic. 1: Repressions before and after the onset of the war

The increase is closely linked to two major developments. First, mass emigration following Russia’s intensified domestic repression has driven many dissidents abroad, where they continue to be viewed by Moscow as threats. Second, Russia has adopted new forms of transnational



repression, particularly Denial of Entry, which blocks individuals from entering or transiting through neighboring countries. This tactic has become widespread since 2022, contributing to the rapid rise in cases.

At the same time, Russia's domestic crackdown has intensified, creating a direct and predictable driver for transnational repression. Data from OVD-Info shows that political persecution cases in Russia rose sharply from 521 in 2021 to 846 in 2022, remaining high in subsequent years. This rise forced many dissidents into exile, yet these individuals continue to be viewed by the Russian state as threats. As Dukalskis and colleagues have **argued**, authoritarian regimes treat growing exile communities as **extensions of domestic opposition**. This logic makes transnational repression a natural continuation of internal crackdowns: as domestic persecution rises, exiled dissidents become primary targets abroad. Russia's expanded use of TNR since 2022 reflects this dynamic clearly.

### After 2022, the number of TNR cases increased significantly

Number of transnational repression targeting Russian citizens abroad

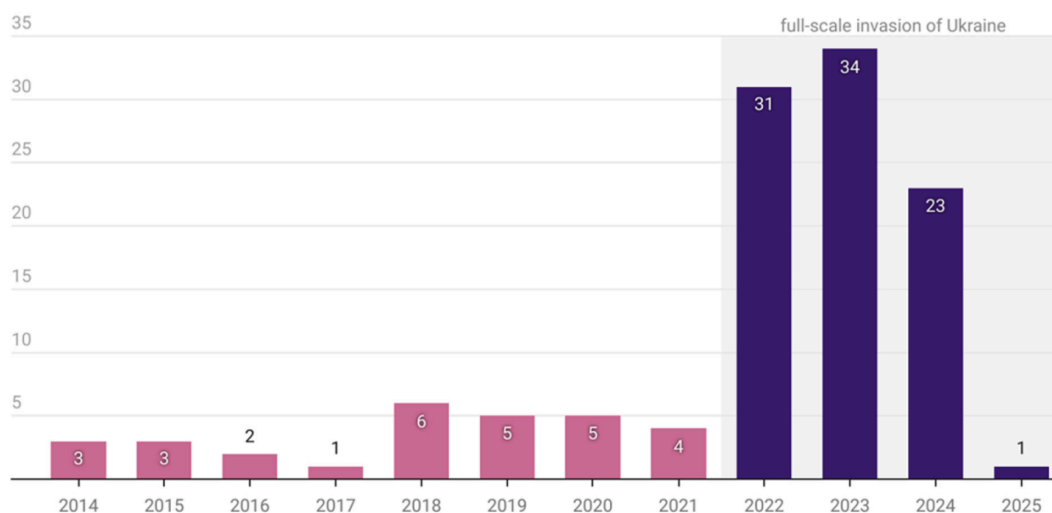


Chart: Consortium of NGOs and think tanks

Pic. 2: Repressions by year from 2014 to 2025

While the escalation within the European Union has been more moderate, the threat is growing. Poland has emerged



as one of the most affected EU member states (see Footnote 1), recording at least five cases of Russian-led TNR between 2022 and 2025. Other EU states have also begun to appear on the map of repression, reflecting the westward shift of this phenomenon.

Implications for the EU. The growing number of cases — and their increasingly diverse geographic spread — show that transnational repression is becoming a European issue. Without a coordinated EU response, targeted individuals risk falling victim to politicized legal procedures, denial of refuge, and indirect harassment. There is an urgent need for an EU-level mechanism to monitor and classify TNR cases, strengthen protection standards, and adopt a shared legal definition that reflects the evolving tactics used by authoritarian regimes.

## **FINDING 2: RUSSIA'S SHIFT TO COVERT REPRESSION METHODS CREATES NEW CHALLENGES FOR THE EU**

Since 2022, Russian authorities have significantly expanded and adapted their methods of transnational repression. While arrests, detentions, and extraditions remain in use, traditional violence has been increasingly replaced by more covert and legally ambiguous tactics. This evolution makes repression less visible, harder to document, and more difficult to address through existing legal frameworks.

Two methods have become central to Russia's extraterritorial strategy. Denial of Entry has emerged as a prominent tool, with at least 43 documented cases since 2022. This tactic prevents activists, politicians, and human rights defenders from crossing borders and seeking refuge. Georgia has been a primary enabler, systematically refusing entry to Russian

dissidents and thereby isolating them in vulnerable transit zones.

Equally concerning is Denial of Services, a quieter but destabilizing practice that has left many Russian exiles without access to essential services. These restrictions, including denial of access to financial and administrative services, force individuals to rely on temporary documents, increasing their vulnerability during travel and complicating their ability to secure and maintain residency in host countries.

As one Russian exile explains, this vulnerability creates constant uncertainty and danger:

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«I am wanted and cannot travel to certain countries, such as Armenia and Kazakhstan, because they could detain me and deport me to Russia. We know for certain that the European Union and the United States will not expel to Russia, but in other countries, it's a risk. I also know of a situation involving a friend who had a grey passport. He was flying to Georgia when a medical emergency occurred on the plane, and they considered landing in Turkey. However, with a grey passport, landing in Turkey is not possible because you can be immediately denied entry or even deported due to restrictions. This makes travel unpredictable and risky.»

— **Ekaterina Alexandrova, former Navalny HQ staff member**

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These evolving practices are not isolated. They reflect a deliberate shift towards a repression strategy without borders — one that is difficult to detect, easy to deny, and challenging to counter legally. Critically, these tactics have already reached the European Union. While politically motivated violence has not disappeared — as illustrated

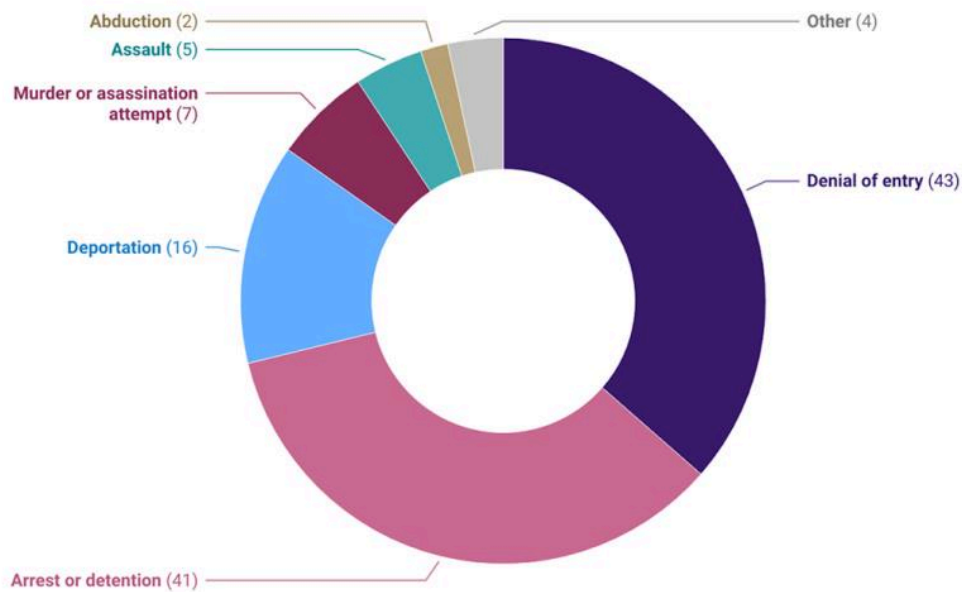
by the fatal incident in Spain in 2024 — the increasing refusal of passport renewals for Russian citizens in EU countries has become a significant concern. This aspect of Denial of Services not only endangers individuals but also undermines national administrative systems, which are forced to handle politically charged and legally complex cases.

Implications for the EU. The emergence and growing use of Denial of Entry and Denial of Services within the EU require policy attention. These tactics expose gaps in asylum and residency procedures, blur the line between administrative decisions and political persecution, and risk making EU legal systems instruments of authoritarian repression. To address this, the EU should recognize these forms of TNR as grounds for international protection. Guidelines should be developed for asylum and residency processes, including a standardized approach to individuals denied passports for political reasons (e.g., holders of so-called ‘grey passports’).

## The most frequent types of TNR targeting Russian citizens abroad

Number of TNR cases between 2014 and 2025

Desktop analysis TNR cases



Online questionnaire

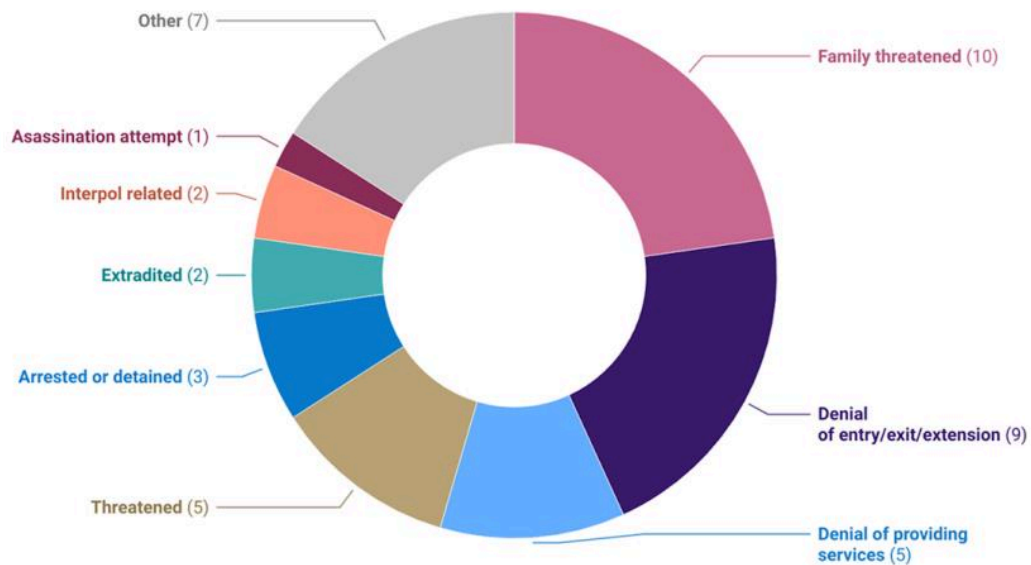


Chart: Consortium of NGOs and think tanks

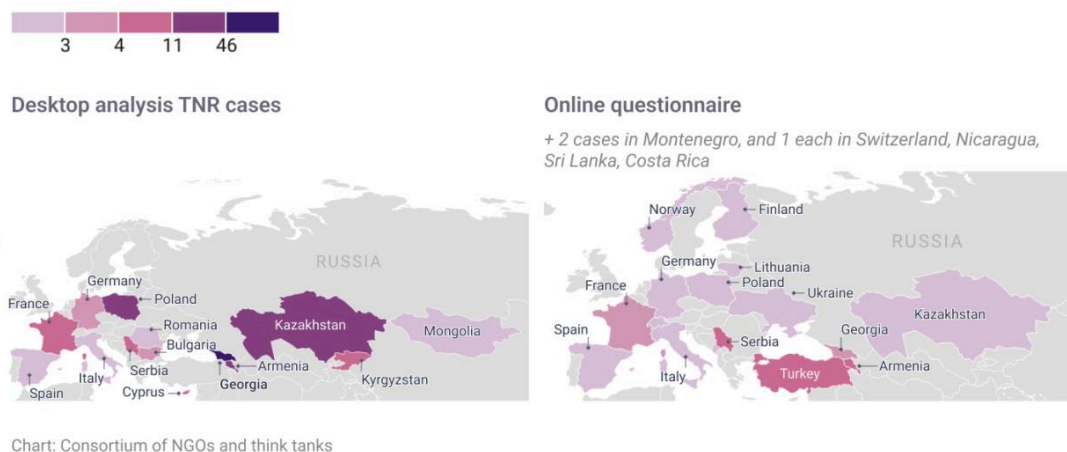
Pic. 3: Repressions by type

**FINDING 3: TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION IS EXPANDING GEOGRAPHICALLY, WITH NEW EU STATES BECOMING AFFECTED**

Since 2022, Russian transnational repression has expanded beyond its traditional hotspots in Central Asia and the South Caucasus. While states such as Kazakhstan, Armenia, and Georgia continue to cooperate with Russian authorities and remain central to TNR operations, repression is now spreading westward, increasingly affecting the European Union.

Georgia has become a particularly troubling example. In 2022 alone, at least 23 cases of Denial of Entry were documented. Though less visible than arrests or extraditions, this tactic systematically denies refuge to dissidents and isolates them in vulnerable transit zones. The scale and consistency of these actions raise serious concerns about Georgia's reliability as a safe country for exiles and its growing exposure to Russian political influence.

### Number of TNR targeting Russian citizens abroad between 2014 and 2024



Pic. 4: Repressions by country

At the same time, new geographic hotspots have emerged inside the EU itself. Since 2022, cases of Russian-led transnational repression have been recorded for the first time in **Italy, Romania, and Spain** — states that previously had no such incidents. This shift reflects a broader change in migration patterns, as Russian exiles increasingly turn to EU countries that are perceived as safer. However, the

appearance of repression cases in these countries also highlights the gradual westward spread of TNR and the growing vulnerability of EU states to authoritarian interference.

Implications for the EU. The expanding geography of transnational repression demands policy attention. As new EU member states become affected, there is a risk that TNR tactics will become normalized and more difficult to detect. To prevent this, EU institutions and member states should strengthen structured cooperation with civil society organizations and nonprofits working with exiles and political refugees. These actors are essential partners in identifying politically motivated persecution, providing early warnings, and ensuring that responses remain preventative and firmly rooted in human rights protections.

## **FINDING 4: STATE COLLABORATION IN FORCED REMOVALS HIGHLIGHTS GROWING RISKS FOR RUSSIAN EXILES, INCLUDING IN THE EU**

Extraditions and forced removals represent the most dangerous form of transnational repression. These actions pose grave risks to targeted individuals and often bypass legal safeguards designed to protect against politically motivated persecution. While such practices remain most prevalent in Russia's near abroad, they are increasingly relevant to European security and asylum policies.

In Armenia, for example, at least ten cases of detentions and arrests on Russian charges have been recorded. Although no formal extraditions were confirmed, accounts from affected individuals suggest informal cooperation and attempts to bypass legal procedures. One interviewee described being detained by plainclothes officers and facing an attempt at immediate deportation without trial. Although

the attempt failed thanks to legal support, the case illustrates how fragile protections can be in countries with close ties to Russia:

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**«Six plainclothes men came to me, took me to the police station and tried to deport me to Russia without a trial. I was detained, but thanks to my lawyers I was released after six hours. It was scary because I had a child, and we didn't know what to do next.»**

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In Kyrgyzstan, the situation is more severe. Documented cases show direct collaboration with Russian authorities, including the unlawful handover of individuals to FSB agents despite formal extradition requests being denied. Such transfers occurred without legal procedures or official documentation, highlighting the risks posed by states willing to circumvent basic rule of law principles under political pressure. One victim recounted:

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**«I was placed in a pre-trial detention center for extradition, but the prosecutor's office refused. However, a month later, officers of the Kyrgyz security service handed me over to Russian FSB agents at the border without official documents.»**

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While such direct cooperation remains rare within the EU, the underlying risks are growing. Exiled Russians in Europe continue to face significant challenges securing asylum and residency, leaving them vulnerable to extradition requests, deportation procedures, and restrictive visa policies. Notably, cases like the **deportation of Alvi Akiev** from Poland to Russia in 2024 underscore that politically motivated removals remain a real and escalating danger.



Implications for the EU. Although formal collaboration with Russia is not widespread within Europe, the risks of politically motivated deportations and indirect removals are real and must be addressed. EU member states should adopt comprehensive safeguards to prevent individuals from being returned to face persecution in Russia. This includes clear, harmonized procedures to assess the political nature of extradition requests and deportations, as well as strengthened protection measures for individuals facing indirect or informal pressure to leave. Preventing such removals before they occur is essential to upholding European commitments to human rights and asylum protections.

## **FINDING 5: TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION CONTINUES TO AFFECT VICTIMS LONG-TERM, CREATING PERSISTENT INSECURITY**

The impact of transnational repression does not end when individuals reach safe countries. For many exiles, including those who have relocated to EU member states, the threat remains very real. Our research shows that TNR continues to shape the daily behavior of victims long after their arrival in Europe. According to survey data, nearly one-third of respondents reported reducing their public and online presence to avoid detection, while others considered relocating again to escape potential exposure. Heightened anxiety and self-imposed restrictions were recurring themes.

First-hand accounts illustrate this reality. One Russian exile living in the EU explained:

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«I live in a house with cameras, I try not to trust strangers, especially Russians. I no longer go to rallies, although I used to actively participate. I try not to disclose my location, minimize activity on social networks, and avoid public events.»

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This persistent fear is compounded by growing concerns about digital surveillance. Although no direct digital repression cases were recorded in our questionnaire, interviews and reports point to rising risks. Prominent journalists and activists, such as **Irina Dolinina**, have **described** how their movements and communications have been monitored, even within the EU. Dolinina received detailed threats while based in Prague and believes her private information may have been accessed through both hacking and official data-sharing channels:

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«Digital attacks have been happening for years. [...] They found out about our flights, and it's not necessarily hackers — it could be special services using access to European databases.»

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As scholars such as Michaelsen and Thumfart have **argued**, this digital dimension of TNR presents unique challenges to host state sovereignty. When authoritarian regimes exploit cross-border data access or surveillance loopholes, they undermine the EU's ability to protect individuals residing within its territory.

Implications for the EU. The persistence of TNR-related fears, particularly in the digital sphere, poses serious challenges to the EU's asylum and human rights commitments. Protecting exiles requires not only safeguarding them from physical threats, but also addressing covert and indirect

forms of repression. EU institutions and member states should strengthen digital privacy protections, enhance oversight of intelligence-sharing with authoritarian regimes, and create targeted support mechanisms for vulnerable groups, including journalists and political activists. Increased training and awareness for law enforcement and asylum authorities are also essential to identify and counter TNR in all its forms.

## **METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN**

**Rationale and Approach.** While global datasets such as [Freedom House's TNR tracker](#), the [CAPE dataset](#), the [Authoritarian Actions Abroad Database](#), and the [Uyghur-specific dataset](#) offer valuable insights into transnational repression, none provide sustained or comprehensive coverage of Russian-led TNR. This represents a significant blind spot, particularly given Russia's central role in global repression trends and the growing risks this poses to the European Union. To address this gap, we developed a dedicated research framework tailored to Russian practices. Given the sharp increase in the number of Russian exiles and growing concerns about foreign interference, this approach is particularly relevant to the EU's evolving security and asylum challenges.

**Data Collection and Classification.** Our database builds upon the [Freedom House](#) methodology but introduces specific adjustments to reflect Russia's new extraterritorial tactics. Cases are categorized according to host country, year, type of repression, individual profiles, and source verification status. To ensure reliability, each case was cross-referenced using media reports, legal documents, and first-hand testimonies. Consultations with Freedom House experts, notably Yana Gorokhovskaia, further supported the accuracy of classifications.

The sample reflects the migration trajectory of Russian exiles. Many initially sought refuge in Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Serbia before relocating to EU countries. As evidence of repression expanded, the scope of the research was broadened to include additional EU member states with growing Russian diasporas: Bulgaria, Poland, France, Austria, Cyprus, Spain, and Italy.

In response to evolving Russian tactics, we expanded the typology (**Annex 1**) of transnational repression to include two emerging forms alongside conventional methods such as arrests and extradition attempts. This shift reflects a broader pattern **identified** by Dukalskis and colleagues (2022), who argue that transnational repression is often an extension of intensified domestic repression. As authoritarian regimes face rising dissent at home, they increasingly seek to neutralize perceived threats abroad. Russia exemplifies this logic, as internal crackdowns have been paralleled by the systematic targeting of exiles overseas.

The first of these emerging tactics, **Denial of Entry**, refers to politically motivated travel restrictions or border rejections, often aimed at preventing exiles from reaching safe territories. The second, **Denial of Services**, involves the refusal of essential services such as banking, legal assistance, and document issuance, which undermines the legal security and everyday functionality of individuals in exile. Both have become integral to Russia's efforts to restrict mobility and exert pressure beyond its borders.

Key Activities (2024). The research combined multiple methods to ensure robust data collection:

- Desktop analysis: Compilation of 118 documented TNR cases since 2014, using open-source data and partner contributions (Annex 6).
- Online survey: Collection of 40 responses from Russian civil society actors and NGOs in exile to assess prevalence and patterns of TNR.
- In-depth interviews: Conducted with three individuals reporting direct experiences of transnational repression, allowing for case validation and qualitative insights (**Annex 5**).

This mixed-method approach ensures that the findings presented are based on verified data, offering a rare and reliable insight into Russian TNR practices — and their growing implications for the EU.

## CONCLUSION

Russia's campaign of transnational repression has evolved into a serious and multifaceted challenge. Initially concentrated in the South Caucasus and Central Asia, TNR has now expanded geographically and methodologically, with new EU member states, including Poland, Italy, Spain, and Romania, increasingly exposed to authoritarian interference. While violent repression persists, Russia's shift toward covert tactics — notably Denial of Entry and Denial of Services — has rendered this phenomenon more difficult to detect and counter. Furthermore, forced removals and informal cooperation with third states highlight the erosion of legal protections that exile communities rely upon.

Most critically, the persistence of digital repression and intimidation tactics within Europe — combined with widespread anxiety and self-censorship among exiles — demonstrates that TNR does not stop at borders. It challenges European legal systems, weakens asylum

procedures, and threatens EU sovereignty by normalizing authoritarian tools within democratic institutions.

Addressing transnational repression is therefore not only a human rights obligation — it is a strategic security necessity. A robust EU-level response must include clear legal definitions, comprehensive data collection, and the formal recognition of emerging TNR tactics. Strengthening partnerships with civil society and improving early-warning and victim support mechanisms are equally vital. Moreover, enhanced oversight of legal and digital infrastructures is needed to prevent the EU’s own systems from becoming instruments of foreign repression.

If left unaddressed, transnational repression risks undermining the Union’s role as a global protector of human rights and safe haven for those fleeing persecution. A coordinated and determined response will be essential to uphold Europe’s democratic values, protect vulnerable individuals, and preserve the sovereignty of its member states.

# ANNEXES

## Annex 1. Table: Comparison of Classifications of TNR

No.	FREEDOM HOUSE	A. DUKALSKIS	CONSORTIUM
1	Unexplained Disappearance	Threatened	Threatened
2	Credible Threat	Family Threatened	Family Threatened
3	Detentions	Arrested/Detained	Arrested/Detained
4	Assault	Attacked	Attacked
5	Unlawful Deportation	Extradited	Extradited
6	Rendition	Abducted	Abducted
7	Assassination	Assassinated (Murder/Attempt)	Assassinated (Murder/Attempt)
8			Entry Denied (Difficulties)
9			Services Denied

## Annex 2. Table: Online Questionnaire

No.	DESKTOP ANALYSIS	QUESTIONNAIRE
1	Threatened	Threatened
2	Family Threatened	Family Threatened
3	Arrested/Detained	Arrested/Detained
4	Attacked	Attacked
5	Extradited	Extradited
6	Abducted	Abducted
7	Assassinated (Murder/Attempt)	Assassinated (Murder/Attempt)
8	Entry Denied (Difficulties)	Deny of entry Deny of the extension of the residence permit Difficulties with leaving the country Difficulties with transit through the country
9	Services Denied	Denied services
10	Other	Any of the above-mentioned difficulties resulting from your inclusion on Interpol's wanted list
11	Other	Other

## Annex 3. Online Questionnaire

### EXPERIENCE OF ENCOUNTERING TRANS-NATIONAL REPRESSIONS (TNR)

As part of a joint research project, we are conducting **an online survey on the experience of encounters with transnational repressions (TNR)** initiated by the Russian government, special services, etc. against Russian citizens located abroad.

*Transnational repression* is the persecution of its own (or former) citizens abroad by a regime using various measures of influence against them. According to international classifications, measures of transnational repression include a number of illegal actions (see below). Please answer the questions below about your experience of encountering them.

Based on the results of the study, the partner organizations (see below) will prepare a Report and submit it to the UN, the European Parliament and the European Commission, as well as to international organizations specializing in identifying cases of TNR. The purpose of the Report is to initiate coordinated international activities to prevent TNR acts in the world, in particular in Europe and the former USSR countries. The result will be an increase in the level of personal security of Russians (and citizens of other countries using TNR) located abroad.

Research partners: OVD-Info, Cedar, Vyvozhuk, Collective Action Brussels Think Tank (CABT).

We would be very grateful for your answers! It will take about 15 min.

The report will be distributed by partner organizations. If you wish to receive it, please indicate this in the application form.



Would you like to receive the report? It will be sent to the email address you specified above.

- ☐ 1. Yes.
- ☐ 2. No.

In what year/month did you leave the Russian Federation?

My answer

What country do you live in now?

My answer

Have you encountered, during or after your emigration outside of Russia (in the period starting in 2014), the following (below in the list) types of persecution in connection with your professional and volunteer (human rights, journalistic, activist, political) activities, anti-war and, in general, opposition statements and activities (you can select several options):

- ☐ 1. DETENTION (including for a short period of time) or arrest by law enforcement agencies of a foreign state in connection with the announcement of your name on the interstate or international wanted list by the authorities of the Russian Federation.
- ☐ 2. REFUSAL TO PROVIDE SERVICES (e.g. banking) and protection (e.g. humanitarian visas), directly motivated by the Russian Federation authorities declaring you on an interstate or international wanted list, adding you to the list of extremists and terrorists.
- ☐ 3. REFUSAL of ENTRY into the country, motivated by the Russian Federation authorities declaring you on an interstate or international wanted list, adding you to the list of extremists and terrorists, as well as in connection with your public opposition activities.
- ☐ 4. Difficulties with EXIT from a foreign country due to the fact that the Russian authorities have declared you on an interstate or international wanted list.
- ☐ 5. Difficulties with TRANSIT travel (for example, with transfers at airports) through certain foreign countries due to the fact that you have been declared an interstate or international wanted person by the Russian authorities.
- ☐ 6. EXTRADITION, an attempt to extradite you to Russia in connection with the Russian authorities declaring you on an interstate or international wanted list, or receiving a request for extradition from the Russian authorities.
- ☐ 7. Any of the above difficulties, motivated by the announcement of your wanted list by INTERPOL.
- ☐ 8. Receiving THREATS (if you select this option, please explain at the end of the questionnaire).
- ☐ 9. Attacks in the interests of the Russian authorities (for example, when this is openly declared by the attackers, when this is established by an official investigation of a foreign state or by authoritative investigative journalists, human rights organisations).
- ☐ 10. ATTEMPT to murder (also when it is declared in threats, established by an authoritative source).
- ☐ 11. Attempted KIDNAPPING (also when it is declared in threats, established by an authoritative source).
- ☐ 12. PRESSURE on partners, relatives, friends, neighbors, colleagues, close people who continue to live in Russia (searches, interrogations, threats, demonstrative surveillance, other types of influence with the aim of forcing you to return to Russia and/or stop activities that do not meet the interests of the current political regime).
- ☐ 13. REFUSAL TO EXTEND a residence permit or an identical permit to stay in the country, motivated by your political position or specific actions or statements of a political nature committed in the host country?
- ☐ 14. Other (please specify at the end of the questionnaire).
- ☐ 15. No, there was no experience of collisions with TWR.

If you have encountered any of the following threats, please indicate the number of these threats. Also here you can explain your choice of option 14, "Other," and describe the incident of THB that happened to you.

My answer:

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If you have selected the option "13. Refusal to extend a residence permit or an identical permit to stay in the country, motivated by your position or activities," above, please select the appropriate clarification option below:

☐ I ASSURE that such refusal was motivated by my political position, actions or statements I rely on my own feelings.

☐ I HAVE oral or written CONFIRMATION that the refusal was politically motivated.

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In which **country** did you encounter the above-described THB (in case of several incidents, please indicate the response number from the list above and the corresponding country)?

My answer:

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In what **year/month** did you encounter the above-described incidents (if there are multiple incidents, please provide the response number from the list above and the corresponding year)?

My answer:

---

On what basis, as far as you know, are the THBs being implemented against you?

☐ 1. A criminal case has been opened for political reasons.

☐ 2. Prosecuted administratively, according to the Code of Administrative Offenses of the Russian Federation.

☐ 3. There is no formal persecution, but the actual persecution is due to my political activities.

☐ 4. There is no formal persecution, but actual persecution is due to the expression of opinion, including public opinion.

☐ 5. There is no formal persecution, but the actual persecution is due to my professional activities.

☐ 6. Other please write in the comments.

---

Your comment if you select option 6, "Other."

My answer:

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If a criminal case has been opened against you, if you are being prosecuted administratively, under what articles of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation and the Code of Administrative Offenses of the Russian Federation are the charges classified?

My answer:

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How did the actions described above, which you qualified as THB, **influence your behavior** (you can select several options):

☐ made a decision to move to another country.

☐ made a decision to return to the Russian Federation.

☐ made a decision to completely stop any political and non-political activity in order not to become a victim of the THB again.

☐ I have decided to limit my activity in the media and social networks, refusing to post, repeat or comment on any posts that could lead to retaliation against me.

☐ began to use a pseudonym for publications in the media, social networks, etc., which, in my opinion, could provoke THB against me.

☐ no way but anxiety increased.

☐ other please explain below:

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If none of the suggested options describing the response and reactions to the act of THB suited you, please **explain your case** - what you did, how you changed your position or lifestyle as a result of the act(s) of THB.

My answer:

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**Opportunity for interview.**  
 If you have a need to tell us more about your situation of encountering actions that you define as THB, in particular about how THB has affected your life (for example, forced you to move to another country, give up your activity, etc.), our researchers will be happy to talk to you on terms acceptable to you (full or partial anonymity or publicity - at your discretion, face to face or online).

We, for our part, would be extremely interested in such communication in order to understand your situation better - we understand that a short online survey does not provide such an opportunity.

If you don't mind such communication, write us your contact information of choice: email, Signal, Telegram, or another messengers.

We guarantee your anonymity if you need it.

My answer:

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# Annex 4. Interview Guide

## Interviewee Information

## Personal Background

- What is your age, education, and current or previous profession?
- What country are you currently in, and how long have you been living there?
- Have you lived in other countries before arriving at your current destination?
- Why did you leave Russia? Was it related to state repression?
- Under what circumstances did you leave the country?

### **Repression in Russia**

- How would you describe your political views?
- Were you involved in any activist or opposition movements in Russia?
- Did you face repression or harassment in Russia? If so:
  - What was the nature of the repression or harassment?
  - When and where did it occur?
  - Were specific articles of the Administrative or Criminal Code invoked?

### **Repression Abroad**

- Have you experienced repression or pressure from Russian authorities since leaving?
- How has this pressure manifested in your current country?
- Does it come from individuals, organizations, or government agencies?

### **Impact on Life and Safety**

- How has your life changed as a result of repression or persecution abroad?
- What steps do you take to ensure your safety?
- Do you receive support from local organizations or human rights advocates?
- Have you encountered challenges when seeking help from local law enforcement?

### **Future Expectations and Recommendations**

- What are your expectations for the future?
- Do you see your future in your current country, in Russia, or elsewhere?
- What safety measures would you like to see for yourself, your family, your colleagues?
- Who should provide these measures, and how should they be implemented?
- What advice would you give to others facing persecution from Russia abroad?
- What actions would you recommend to governments and law enforcement agencies in countries hosting at-risk individuals?

## **Annex 5. Geographic Distribution of TNR Cases (2014–2025)**

REGION	COUNTRY	NUMBER OF CASES
South Caucasus	Georgia	45
	Armenia	13
Central Asia	Kazakhstan	13
	Kyrgyzstan	5
Europe	Poland	11
	Austria	8
	Serbia	5
	France	5
	Cyprus	4
	Germany	4
	Bulgaria	3
	Spain	1
	Italy	1
	Romania	1
Other	Mongolia	1

Note: The total number of cases presented in this brief — 118 — is based on the number of individual victims. Some cases involve multiple countries or multiple types of transnational repression, meaning that totals in specific categories may exceed or differ from the overall count.

✱ A Flourish data visualization

## Annex 6. Distribution of Transnational Repression Against Russians, 2014–2025, by Type

TYPE	NUMBER OF CASES
Threats	3
Arrests/Detentions	41
Attacks	5
Extraditions/Deportations	16
Abductions	2
Murder/Attempted Murder	7
Entry Denied (Difficulties)	43
Other	5

Note: The total number of cases presented in this brief — 118 — is based on the number of individual victims. Some cases involve multiple countries or multiple types of transnational repression, meaning that totals in specific categories may exceed or differ from the overall count.

✱ A Flourish data visualization

# Annex 7. Cases of TNR Against Russians, 2014–2025

No.	COUNTRY	YEAR	DESCRIPTION	TYPE OF TNR
1.	Armenia	2025	A Russian citizen who left Russia in 2023 and opposed the war was detained after living and working in Armenia legally for over a year. Armenian police detained him based on allegations of unauthorized military absence.	Detention/Arrest
2.	Armenia	2023	An activist was detained in Armenia at Russia's request but was not extradited.	Detention/Arrest
3.	Armenia	2023	A Russian citizen accused of anti-war graffiti was detained at the airport and released hours later.	Detention/Arrest
4.	Armenia	2024	A blogger and journalist was detained at the airport but later released.	Detention/Arrest
5.	Armenia	2023	Activists from southern Russia were detained and later released.	Detention/Arrest
6.	Armenia	2023	An activist faced possible extradition but was released and relocated.	Detention/Arrest
7.	Armenia	2023	A Russian national suspected of desertion was detained in Yerevan at Russia's request.	Detention/Arrest
8.	Armenia	2024	A teacher fleeing Russia was detained after arriving in Armenia.	Detention/Arrest
9.	Armenia	2024	A Russian man fleeing military service was detained in Yerevan.	Detention/Arrest
10.	Armenia	2024	Russian security agents entered a police station in Yerevan and pressured an activist.	Detention/Arrest
11.	Armenia	2023	A conscript detained in Armenia was abducted and returned to Russia.	Abduction
12.	Armenia	2023	A U.S. citizen wanted by Russia has been unable to leave Armenia for two years, though not formally detained.	Other
13.	Armenia	2024	A Russian deserter allegedly pressured by military police was taken to the Russian consulate. Abduction is suspected.	Other
14.	Georgia	2019	A Chechen man living in Georgia was detained on a Russian INTERPOL notice and extradited in 2019.	Extradition/Deportation
15.	Georgia	2023	An activist was detained at the airport with no reason disclosed.	Detention/Arrest

Note: The total number of cases presented in this brief — 118 — is based on the number of individual victims. Some cases involve multiple countries or multiple types of transnational repression, meaning that totals in specific categories may exceed or differ from the overall count.

✱ A Flourish data visualization