

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

[Home](#)[> Research Program](#)[> Responses to Information Requests](#)

Responses to Information Requests

Responses to Information Requests (RIR) respond to focused Requests for Information that are submitted to the Research Directorate in the course of the refugee protection determination process. The database contains a seven-year archive of English and French RIRs. Earlier RIRs may be found on the UNHCR's [Refworld](#) website. Please note that some RIRs have attachments which are not electronically accessible. To obtain a PDF copy of an RIR attachment please email Basesdedonnees.DatabaseUnit@irb-cisr.gc.ca.

16 May 2014

UZB104867.E

Uzbekistan: Treatment of ethnic Russians by society and authorities; state protection (2012-May 2014)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

1. Treatment of Ethnic Russians

Information on the treatment of ethnic Russians in Uzbekistan was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

Sources report that ethnic Russians in Uzbekistan make up between 5.5 and 6 percent of the population (US 27 Feb. 2014, 33; L'aménagement linguistique 17 Sept. 2010; *PHW* 2013, 1580).

In a telephone interview with the Research Directorate, an associate professor at the University of Toronto, who specializes in identity politics, social transformations, social movements and authoritarianism with a focus on ex-USSR, particularly Central Asia, stated that "there is a large group of ethnic Russians in Tashkent" (7 May 2014). L'aménagement linguistique dans le monde, a Université Laval website outlining the linguistic situation and policies in 195 countries (L'aménagement linguistique n.d.), similarly indicates that most Russians live in Tashkent and other industrial centres of the country (ibid. 17 Sept. 2010). According to the Associate Professor,

[e]thnic Russians in Tashkent do not typically face exceptional difficulties in obtaining housing, accessing health care and employment; however, in smaller cities (outside of Tashkent, where the Russian community is small) they can be denied those services. (Associate Professor 7 May 2014)

The Associate Professor indicated that "[t]here are no language rights for Russians in Uzbekistan. Uzbek is the only official language" (ibid.). Article 4 of the Constitution states that

[t]he State language of the Republic of Uzbekistan shall be Uzbek. The Republic of Uzbekistan shall ensure a respectful attitude toward the languages, customs and traditions of all nationalities and ethnic groups living on its territory, and create the conditions necessary for their development. (Uzbekistan 1992, Art. 4)

However, without providing details, the US Department of State's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013* indicates that the law "provides that Russian is 'the language of interethnic communication'" (US 27 Feb. 2014, 33). The *Political Handbook of the World 2013 (PHW)* also indicates that Russian "remains the principal everyday language" (2013, 1580). The Associate Professor noted that "while Russians can get jobs in the small private sector, they have great difficulty getting jobs in the large state sector" (7 May 2014). *Country Reports 2013* also indicates that ethnic Russians expressed concern about limited job opportunities (US 27 Feb. 2014, 33). According to the same report, "[o]fficials reportedly reserved senior positions in the government bureaucracy and businesses for ethnic Uzbeks, although there were numerous exceptions" (ibid.).

2. State Protection

Country Reports 2013 notes that the Constitution of Uzbekistan provides for equal rights for all citizens, regardless of their ethnic background and "provides for equal protection by the courts to all residents, irrespective of national, racial, or ethnic origin" (US 27 Feb. 2014, 33). Article 18 of the Constitution of Uzbekistan states that

[a]ll citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan shall have equal rights and freedoms, and shall be equal before the law, without discrimination by sex, race, nationality, language, religion, social origin, convictions, individual and social status. (Uzbekistan 1992, Art. 18)

However, according to the Associate Professor,

[t]he law in the books in Uzbekistan is practically meaningless; the law is applied selectively-largely when it is convenient for the elite.

There are high levels of corruption in Uzbekistan. If a victim of a crime goes to the police, he or she may not be protected because of the police corruption (7 May 2014)

Country Reports 2013 also states that police corruption remained a problem (US 27 Feb. 2014, 25). According to the same report, "[p]olice routinely and arbitrarily extorted bribes" (ibid.). Freedom House reports that

[t]he judiciary of Uzbekistan is entirely subordinate to the executive branch, existing solely to legitimize the decisions of the central government. ... Groups or individuals targeted by the authorities have virtually no opportunity to prove their innocence in Uzbekistan's courts. (Freedom House, 3)

Moreover,

[t]he diplomatic cables posted by the whistleblower WikiLeaks website in January confirmed long-held suspicions of connections between the regime and key figures in organized crime. In one cable, U.S. Ambassador to Uzbekistan John Purnell, who left his post in 2007, claims "tenders and government positions can be fairly easily secured by paying the right amount of money to the appropriate individual." The cable names one of those individuals Salim Abduvaliyev, the current president of Uzbekistan's wrestling association, as one of the "bosses of the criminal world" in Uzbekistan. The cables reveal that Abduvaliyev paid the ministers of finance, interior, justice, and foreign affairs for the [r]ight to sell a range of government positions, including hokims (regional governors) and police chiefs. (ibid., 14)

According to the Associate Professor,

[e]thnic Uzbeks may have informal connections via their personal networks to the police and therefore enjoy some protection, whereas ethnic Russians lack such robust personal networks to the police force and therefore would be extremely unlikely to be protected by the police. (7 May 2014)

Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

L'aménagement linguistique dans le monde. 17 September 2010. Jacques Leclerc, associate member of the Trésor de la langue française au Québec (TLFQ), Université Laval. "Uzbekistan." <<http://www.axl.cefal.ulaval.ca/asie/ouzbekistan.htm>> [Accessed 9 May 2014]

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Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Attempts to contact the following individuals and organizations were unsuccessful within the time constraints of this Response: Assistant Professor, Rowan University; Center for Studies on Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, Tashkent; Centre Associate, Davis Centre for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Harvard University; Civil Assistance NGO, Moscow; Director/Senior Fellow, Hudson University; Ezgulik Human Rights Society, Tashkent; Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan; International Society for Human Rights (Uzbekistan Section); President, JNA Associates; Research Associate and Research Fellow, Centre of Contemporary Asia and Caucasus, University of London; Research Professor, Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies, George Washington University; Russian Cultural Center of Tashkent Region; SOVA Center for Information and Analysis, Moscow.

The following individuals were unable to provide information: Associate Professor, University of Washington; Associate Professor, University of Tsukuba; Professor, Concordia University.

The following individuals were unable to provide information within the time constraints of this response: a representative of the Moscow Helsinki Group and the Research Director of the Central Asia Caucus Institute.

Internet sites, including: Amnesty International; Asia Times; Balkan Insight; Central Asian News Services; ecoi.net; Eurasianet.org; Eurolex; European Commission; European Court of Human Rights; Factiva; Ferghana.ru; Frontline Defenders; Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan; Human Rights Watch; International Society for Human Rights; Legislationline.org; Minority Rights Group International; Moscow Helsinki Group; *The Moscow News*; *The Moscow Times*; Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development; Pravo.uz; *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*; SOVA Center for Information and Analysis; United Nations – Refworld; Uzbekistan – Consulate General of Uzbekistan in New York City, Governmental Portal of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Uznews.net.

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[Top of Page](#)

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