

Press Release

PR 15/2014

10 October 2014

Chechnya in focus

EASO publishes Country of Origin Information report on Chechnya

The European Asylum Support Office (EASO) has published a Country of Origin Information (COI) Report entitled 'Chechnya Women - Marriage, Divorce and Child Custody'. The report gives an account of the situation of women in Chechnya and of how their situation has changed since Ramzan Kadyrov became President in 2007. This topic was identified as a key COI need by experts in EU destination countries, and particularly relevant for the asylum application process of Russian nationals.

In 2013, applicants from the Russian Federation increased significantly to become the second largest country of origin for asylum claims in the EU. Although the number of applicants from the Russian Federation had been relatively stable since 2008, at around 20,000 applicants annually, 2013 saw a significant rise with 71% more applicants registered than in 2012, reaching a volume of 41,485 applicants. The vast majority of these persons were from the Northern Caucasus region, more particularly from Chechnya.

The report argues that in recent years, President Ramzan Kadyrov has run a so-called “virtue campaign” in Chechnya that constitutes a setback for women’s independence and their rights in society. The influence of Adat (local customary practices and tradition) and also partly the Islamisation of Chechnya during the regime of Kadyrov has worsened the situation for Chechen women: violence against women is widespread in Chechnya and domestic violence is a problem. Honour killings still take place and there are reasons to believe that their number has increased during recent years. Bride-kidnapping is an old tradition that still occurs.

In general, very few women seek protection from the authorities after being victims of violence. In the rare cases where women do seek assistance, they do not receive the protection they need. Additionally, women in general fear divorce because children traditionally stay with the father and his family afterwards. Although some cases seeking access rights are brought to court and are successful, decisions are often subsequently ignored.

By providing this focused report, EASO aims at ensuring common, high quality, COI at EU level. To this end, in 2013, EASO adopted a *Network Approach* for COI in order to make use of the existing national COI capacity in the EU and avoid duplication and fill gaps. This involved the setting up of COI Specialist Networks on key countries of origin at European level, including on the Russian Federation. The *Network Approach* allows for the joint production of common EU COI products and the “Europeanisation” of COI reports drafted by one EU+ country (EU Member States plus Norway and Switzerland) and peer reviewed by experts from other countries and EASO.

The Chechnya report is an example of such cooperation. The report was drafted by researchers from Landinfo, the Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre. It was then reviewed by a peer review group composed of COI experts on Russia from Estonia, the Netherlands, Poland, and by EASO, in order to ensure its accordance with the standards laid out in the [EASO COI Report Methodology](#). EASO shall continue to produce such reports on important countries of origin and to update them on a regular basis in order to raise and harmonise COI standards in the EU and to further support the practical implementation of the Common European Asylum System.

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