

Russian Federation

Introduction

This page provides a country-specific quantitative overview of the foreign terrorist fighter (FTF) phenomenon. This includes, where available, a breakdown of how many individuals departed from or have returned to the country as well as certain demographics within those groups. The data is laid out below in infographics, you can hover over a data point to see its exact figures. Where not enough data is available the table is greyed out. If you can assist in completing this data, please click fill out the questionnaire on our [contact page](#).

Below this information, the page also sets out in detail a qualitative review of the policy measures utilized by or available to the country in response to the FTF phenomenon and provides a list of additional reading material relevant to the FTF situation in the country.

Last updated: 1 May 2026.

Russian Federation		
Totals	Total (Departed)	5,500 ¹
	Total (Non-Returned)	-
	Total (Returned)	357 ²
Nationality (At Departure)	Russian National	5,500 ³
	Dual Citizen	-
	Resident	-
Gender	Males (Departed)	-
	Females (Departed)	-
	Males (Returned)	-
	Females (Returned)	24 ⁴

¹ 'FSB: 5.5 thousand Russians who left to fight in the ranks of terrorists have been identified' [Translation], RIA Novosti, 16 October 2019, <https://ria.ru/20191016/1559839880.html>.

² Added the repatriated 20 people to the above referenced. 'Avoiding a Resurgent Islamic State: Repatriation, Rehabilitation & Reintegration', The Soufan Center, Intel Brief, 8 January 2025, <https://thesoufancenter.org/intelbrief-2025-january-8/>.

³ See fn, 1..

⁴ Cook, J. and Vale, G., 'From Daesh to 'Diaspora': Tracing the Women and Minors of Islamic State', ICSR Report, 2018, p. 16, <https://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/ICSR-Report-From-Daesh-to-%E2%80%98Diaspora%E2%80%99-Tracing-the-Women-and-Minors-of-Islamic-State.pdf>; and Briefing by Russian MFA Spokesperson Maria Zakharova, Moscow, 19 April 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fj7miLpKrPI>.

Parent Status	Female Parent (Non-Returned)	ca. 2,000 ⁵
	Female Non-Parent (Non-Returned)	ca. 2,000 ⁶
	Female Parent (Returned)	-
	Female Non-Parent (Returned)	-
Current Location (Non-Returned)	Died	619 ⁷
	In Camps	>3,500 ⁸
	In Prison	368 ⁹
	Operational (In region)	-
	Operational (In other regions)	150 - 200 ¹⁰
	Prosecuted (Awaiting trial or convicted and in prison)	
	Other (Unknown location)	-
Current Legal Status (Non-Returned)	Prosecuted	-
	Held Without Charges	130 ¹¹
	Citizenship Revoked	0 ¹²
	Trials in Absentia	4,000 ¹³

⁵ This number includes children. Apev, I., 'Hiding behind wives and children: how terrorists penetrate Russia' [Translation], Gazeta, 7 November 2019, <https://www.gazeta.ru/social/2019/11/07/12799892.shtml>.

⁶ This number includes children. Ibid.

⁷ Krasilnikov, S., 'Deputy head of presidential administration: more than 600 militants from Russia destroyed abroad' [Translation], Tass, 16 May 2018, https://tass.ru/politika/5205471?utm_source=google.com&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=google.com&utm_referrer=google.com.

⁸ Stepanov, A., 'The Ministry of Internal Affairs calculated how many Russians are in militant camps' [Translation], RG, 23 May 2019, <https://rg.ru/2019/05/23/reg-skfo/mvd-podschitalo-skolko-rossiian-nahoditsia-v-lageriah-boevikov.html>.

⁹ Krasilnikov, S., 'Deputy head of presidential administration: more than 600 militants from Russia destroyed abroad' [Translation], Tass, 16 May 2018, https://tass.ru/politika/5205471?utm_source=google.com&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=google.com&utm_referrer=google.com.

¹⁰ Between 150-200 Chechen FTFs belonging to the group Ajnad al Qawqaz (Soldiers of the Caucasus) were deployed in areas of northern rural Idlib (in northwestern Syria), before leaving in stages between 2022 and 2023 to fight in Ukraine against Russia. Al-Khouja, M., Eldin, O.A., Kakhi, M., 'A crisis of staying, a crisis of deportation Foreign fighters, a thorny dilemma for Syria's nascent state', Enab Baladi, 26 November 2025, <https://english.enabbaladi.net/archives/2025/11/foreign-fighters-a-thorny-dilemma-for-syrias-nascent-state/>.

¹¹ Aldroubi, M., 'Russia and Turkey ready to take back ISIS prisoners from Iraq', The National News, 26 February 2026, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/news/mena/2026/02/26/russia-and-turkey-ready-to-take-back-isis-prisoners-from-iraq/>.

¹² Kropman, V. and Elkina, A., 'Revoke citizenship? When can the state do it?' [Translation], Deutsche Welle, 25 February 2021, <https://www.dw.com/ru/lishit-grazhdanstva-kogda-gosudarstvo-mozhet-jeto-sdelat/a-56676829>.

¹³ 'FSB: 5.5 thousand Russians who left to fight in the ranks of terrorists have been identified' [Translation], RIA Novosti, 16 October 2019, <https://ria.ru/20191016/1559839880.html>.

Current Legal Status (Returned)	Citizenship Revoked	0 ¹⁴
	Extradited to Third Country	-
	Prosecuted	256 ¹⁵
	Post-release	-
	In Rehabilitation/Reintegration Program	-
	Not prosecuted	81 ¹⁶
Method of Return	Own Initiative	-
	Expelled	-
	Repatriated	20 ¹⁷
Returnee Attacks		1 ¹⁸

Preventive measures

National Strategy

The Russian Federation's most recent '[Strategy for Countering Extremism in the Russian Federation](#)' was approved by Presidential Decree on 28 December 2024. "The Strategy is a strategic planning document that defines the goals, tasks, and main directions of state policy in the share of countering extremism, taking into account the challenges and threats that the Russian federation faces, and is aimed at consolidating the efforts of public authorities, civil society institutions, organizations, and citizens for the purpose of ensuring the national security of the Russian Federation, suppressing extremist activity, strengthening civic unity, achieving interethnic and interfaith harmony, preserving the ethnocultural diversity of the peoples of the Russian Federation, and forming in society an atmosphere of intolerance towards extremist activity and the dissemination of extremist ideas."

Strategic communications

In the field of **state information policy**, the Strategy aims to counteract the propaganda of extremist ideas in the media and information and tele-communications networks, including the Internet, by organizing and conducting preventive work with representatives of the media and owners of Internet resources in order to prevent

¹⁴ Kropman, V. and Elkina, A., 'Revoke citizenship? When can the state do it?' [Translation], Deutsche Welle, 25 February 2021, <https://www.dw.com/ru/lishit-grazhdanstva-kogda-gosudarstvo-mozhet-jeto-sdelat/a-56676829>.

¹⁵ 'FSB: 5.5 thousand Russians who left to fight in the ranks of terrorists have been identified' [Translation], RIA Novosti, 16 October 2019, <https://ria.ru/20191016/1559839880.html>.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ 'Avoiding a Resurgent Islamic State: Repatriation, Rehabilitation & Reintegration', The Soufan Center, Intel Brief, 8 January 2025, <https://thesoufancenter.org/intelbrief-2025-january-8/>.

¹⁸ 'Istanbul airport attackers 'Russian, Uzbek and Kyrgyz'', BBC News, 30 June 2016, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36670576>.

violations of the legislation of the Russian Federation on countering extremist and terrorist activities; as well as by preparing and placing social advertising aimed at patriotic education of young people in the media and in different information and telecommunications networks, including the Internet. Amongst others, the Strategy also sets out the coordination of measures aimed at information counteraction to the spread of extremist ideology in information and telecommunications networks, including the Internet (including social networks), as well as regular work to explain the essence of illegal activities carried out by leaders of extremist organizations, with the involvement of prominent figures in culture, science, opinion leaders, and representatives of ethnocultural associations. It also aims to prepare and disseminate information materials on the prevention and suppression of extremist activity, aimed at increasing the vigilance of Russian citizens and generating their interest in countering extremism. By subsidizing the production (release), distribution and circulation of socially significant projects (including books, films and videos) aimed at preventing extremism, harmonizing interethnic relations, developing interethnic understanding, promoting ideas of interethnic and interfaith tolerance, it aims to discredit the ideology of violence, fascism and neo-Nazism, national and (or) religious hatred and enmity. The Strategy also emphasizes the combining of efforts of civil society institutions (including socially oriented and other non-profit organizations), religious and scientific organizations to create propaganda materials aimed at countering extremist ideology, with their subsequent posting on various Internet resources, as well as to organize activities aimed at increasing the legal literacy of users of information and telecommunications networks, including the Internet.

Educational programs

In the field of **education and state youth policy**, the Strategy aims to develop a respectful attitude towards all nationalities, ethnic groups and traditional religions in the younger generation by including such topics in regional and municipal educational programs, conducting classes in educational institutions aimed at fostering patriotism, a culture of peaceful behavior, interethnic (international) and interfaith friendship, as well as classes on teaching skills of conflict-free communication, the ability to defend one's own opinion, and to counteract socially dangerous behavior (including involvement in extremist activity) by all legal means. To this aim, the Strategy promotes organizing leisure activities for children, teenagers, young people and family leisure, ensuring accessibility to cultural, sports and recreational facilities for the population, creating conditions for the realization of creative and sports potential, and the cultural development of citizens of all ages. Specifically with the aim of countering extremism, the Strategy aims to raise awareness among the heads and teaching staff of educational institutions, conduct monitoring and sociological research into the social situation in educational institutions, as well as study youth subcultures in order to promptly identify and prevent the spread of extremist ideology. It also emphasizes the importance of improving measures aimed at preventing

extremist manifestations in educational organizations, as well as the implementation of measures for the timely identification and prevention of cases of radicalization of minors. It supports the development and implementation in educational organizations of individual programs of social and pedagogical support for students from risk groups (including those with identified signs of problems in mental and personal development), conducting preventive measures with students susceptible to the influence of extremist ideology and members of their families, involving representatives of religious, public and sports organizations in this work. Outside of formal educational settings, the Strategy also encourages the interaction between anti-extremism actors and youth public associations, sports federations and clubs, sports fan organizations, individual youth representatives and youth groups in order to prevent extremist manifestations in the youth and sports environment. It also promotes conducting educational preventive seminars and informational events in general education organizations, professional educational organizations, and higher education organizations dedicated to countering methods of recruitment into radical religious groups and informing about the consequences of participation in extremist and terrorist activities. The Strategy also emphasizes supporting socially oriented non-profit organizations implementing projects aimed at the social adaptation of individuals influenced by extremist ideology and the ideology of violence, as well as the development of theoretical and methodological foundations for countering extremism, creation of recommendations for solving practical problems in specific areas of activity in the field of countering extremism.

The Strategy also lists the main results of the implementation of the previous Strategy for Countering Extremism in the Russian Federation until 2025. With regards to strategic communications, it mentions the suppression of the dissemination of extremist materials in information and telecommunications networks. Regarding educational programs, the practice of conducting educational and cultural-enlightenment events was carried out, aimed at developing in children, adolescents and young people a rejection of the ideology of extremism, and instilling in the younger generation traditional Russian spiritual and moral values.

Administrative measures

Watchlists, sanctions lists

The basis of the national system on countering the laundering of proceeds and the financing of terrorism is Federal Law No. 115-FZ of August 7, 2001 'On Countering the Legalization (Laundering) of Proceeds Obtained by Criminal Means and the Financing of Terrorism'. The Government Order of the Russian Federation No. 804 of August 6, 2015 establishes a list not only of organizations, but also of individuals in respect of whom information regarding their involvement in extremist activity or terrorism exists.

Deprivation of nationality

A citizen of the Russian Federation may not be deprived of their Russian citizenship (Article 5, paragraph 2 of Federal Law No. 138-FZ of April 28, 2003 'On Citizenship of the Russian Federation'), however, a number of different grounds for termination of citizenship are provided for (Articles 22, 24-26 of the Federal Law), among which the commission of certain categories of crimes, as well as the commission of acts severely endangering the national security of the Russian Federation are listed.

Restrictions to exercising the right to liberty

House arrest (Articles 97-101, 107 of the [Criminal Procedure Code of the Russian Federation No. 174-FZ of December 18, 2001](#)), as a preventive measure, is indicated by a court decision in respect of a suspect or accused where it is impossible to apply another, more lenient preventive measure, and consists of the suspect or accused being kept in isolation in a dwelling in which they reside as owner, tenant, or upon other lawful grounds, with the imposition of certain prohibitions and the exercise of supervision over them.

As preventive measures, there are the ones that have the general characteristics of legally and necessarily restricting the constitutional rights of suspects (accused persons) in the form of a recognizance not to leave (Article 102 of the Criminal Procedure Code of the Russian Federation) and a prohibition on certain actions (Article 105.1 of the Criminal Procedure Code of the Russian Federation). A prohibition on certain actions as a preventive measure is imposed by a court decision with respect to a suspect or accused where it is impossible to apply another, more lenient preventive measure, and consist in placing on the suspect or accused the obligation to appear in a timely manner upon a summons of the inquirer, investigator, or court, and in observing certain prohibitions.

Restrictions to the freedom of movement

The relevant District Court, with execution enforcement from the Customs/Border Protection Officers, may **restrict the freedom to leave the country or temporarily seize, retain, cancel/revoke or refuse to issue or renew the passport of a national**. The order may be imposed when an individual is convicted for committing a crime for the serving period of the punishment or until the release from punishment, or if they evade the fulfilment of obligations imposed on them by the court. The measure may be appealed under Articles 46 and 50 of the [Constitution of the Russian Federation](#). The regulation is included in [Article 15.4-5 of Federal Law N 114-FZ](#).

Restrictions to the freedom of expression

The [Federal Security Service](#) may **restrict means of communication/internet use** in urgent cases where a delay may lead to the committing of a terrorist act and endanger

the lives of citizens. Alternatively it may be applied when there is information whereby it may be assumed that a terrorist act is, or has, been committed on a residential premises or in the pursuit of an individual suspected of being involved in committing a terrorist act. It may be appealed under Article 46 of the [Constitution of the Russian Federation](#). The regulation is contained in [Article 11 Paragraph 3.4 of the Federal Law N 35-FZ](#).

Criminal and surveillance measures

The Russian Federation's [Federal Law No. 35-FZ of March 6, 2006 'On Counteraction to Terrorism'](#) defines terrorism as "the ideology of violence and the practice of influencing decision-making by state authorities, public authorities of federal territories, local self-government bodies, or international organizations, associated with intimidating the population and/or other forms of unlawful violent acts" (Article 3). According to the same Article, "terrorist activity shall mean activity including the following:

- a) arranging, planning, preparing, financing and implementing an act of terrorism;
- b) instigation of an act of terrorism;
- c) establishment of an unlawful armed unit, criminal association (criminal organization) or an organized group for the implementation of an act of terrorism, as well as participation in such a structure;
- d) recruiting, arming, training and using terrorists;
- e) informational or other assistance to planning, preparing or implementing an act of terrorism;
- f) promotion of terrorist ideas, dissemination of materials or information calling for terrorist activities, substantiating or justifying the necessity of such activities."

[The Criminal Code of the Russian Federation \(No. 63-FZ of June 13, 1996\)](#) establishes the parameters of criminal responsibility, the definition of offences and their types, as well as the punishments and other measures for committing such offences.

The Criminal Code established responsibility for **public calls** to carry out terrorist activity, public glorification of terrorism and propaganda of terrorism, as per [Article 205.2](#). Such crime "shall be punishable by a fine in the amount of one hundred thousand to five hundred thousand rubles, or in the amount of the wages or other income of the convicted person for a period of up to three years, or by imprisonment for a term of two to five years." "The same acts committed using mass media or electronic or information and telecommunications networks, including the Internet, shall be punishable by a fine in the amount of three hundred thousand to one million rubles, or in the amount of the wages or other income of the convicted person for a

period of three to five years, or by imprisonment for a term of five to seven years with the deprivation of the right to hold certain positions or engage in certain activities for a period of up to five years.”

Paragraph 1.1. of [Article 205.1](#) states that “inducement, **recruitment** or other involvement of a person in the commission of at least one of the crimes provided for in Articles 205, 205.3, 205.4, 205.5, parts three and four of Article 206, part four of Article 211 of this Code, arming or training a person for the purpose of committing at least one of the specified crimes, as well as the financing of terrorism - shall be punishable by imprisonment for a term of eight to fifteen years with a fine of three hundred thousand to seven hundred thousand rubles, or in the amount of the wages or other income of the convicted person for a period of two to four years, or without such, or by life imprisonment.”

According to the [Article 205.1](#), Paragraph 3. “**aiding and abetting** the commission of at least one of the crimes provided for in Article 205, part three of Article 206, part one of Article 208 of this Code, - shall be punishable by imprisonment for a term of twelve to twenty years.

[Article 205.5](#) covers the **organization** of the activity of a terrorist organization and **participation** in the activity of such an organization, whereby “organisation of activities of an organisation recognised as terrorist under the legislation of the Russian Federation – shall be punishable by imprisonment for a term of fifteen to twenty years with a fine of up to one million roubles or in the amount of the convicted person’s wages or other income for a period of up to five years, or without such a fine and with a restriction of liberty for a term of one to two years or life imprisonment.” In addition, “participation in the activities of an organisation that, in accordance with the legislation of the Russian Federation, is recognized as terrorist – punishable by imprisonment for a term of ten to twenty years with a fine of up to five hundred thousand roubles or in the amount of the convicted person’s wages or other income for a period of up to three years, or without it.”

[Article 208](#) establishes criminal liability for the organization of an illegal armed formation or participation in it, as well as **participation in an armed conflict or military actions** for the purposes contrary to the interests of the Russian Federation. Creating an armed formation is punishable by deprivation of liberty for a term of two to seven years, while participation in one is punishable by restraint of liberty for a term of up to three years, or by arrest for a term of up to six months, or by deprivation of liberty for a term of up to five years.

Training of a person for the purpose of committing an offence of a terrorist character entails responsibility under [Article 205.3](#). Training consists in supplying persons

participating in terrorist activity with weapons, ammunition, explosive devices, radioactive substances, nuclear materials, military equipment and the like for the purposes of committing at least one of the offences listed under Article 3 of Federal Law No. 35-FZ (see above). Training also includes instruction over the rules for conducting combat operations, as well as conducting relevant briefings, drills, shooting practice, exercises, and the like.

The criminalization of **preparing** for a terrorist act is defined under Part 1 of [Article 205](#), as “perpetration of an explosion, arson, or any other action endangering the lives of people, causing sizable property damage, or entailing other socially dangerous consequences, if these actions have been committed for the purpose of violating public security, frightening the population, or exerting influence on decision-making by governmental bodies, and also the threat of committing said actions for the same ends” and it is punishable by deprivation of liberty for a term of five to ten years.

Surveillance measures:

In principle, any Russian FTF leaving a (digital) trace on any public domain could be detected by an interested party (be they civilians or state officials) using open source means. This, however, would only serve as a supporting piece of evidence against said FTF following which the case would have to be taken up by official government bodies (i.e., national intelligence agencies such as the [Federal Security Service \(FSB\)](#) or the judiciary). This would have to be done by notifying the relevant authorities.

The above principle would also apply to Russia's private intelligence sector; private intelligence companies could track down (would-be FTFs) but would, once they have detected them, refer said cases to the relevant state/public authorities.

The detection of departing/returning FTFs by public actors would mainly fall on the shoulders of Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) and the [Foreign Intelligence Service \(SVR\)](#), the latter of which is authorized to negotiate anti-terrorist cooperation and intelligence-sharing arrangements with foreign intelligence agencies. Another actor involved in this would be the [Federal Financial Monitoring Service of The Russian Federation](#) (Rosfinmonitoring) who provides and updates a list of organizations and individuals convicted or suspected of having committed, committing, or supporting terrorist activity.

The international mechanisms which the Russian Federation participates in which would facilitate the detection of departing/returning FTFs are: Interpol Notices, [The Shanghai Cooperation Organization's Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure \(RATS\)](#).

Rehabilitation and reintegration measures

There is no centralized, government-led rehabilitation and reintegration (R&R) program for returning foreign terrorist fighters in Russia. However, certain Russian republics have implemented different initiatives aimed at tackling the flow of returnees. Chechnya and Dagestan are two of the Russian republics that have greatly contributed foreign terrorist fighters to ISIL/Da'esh, largely due to pre-existing Islamist insurgencies in the region.

In **Chechnya**, **Objectiv** is a human rights organization that was initially set up around 2010 to serve as a '24-hour emergency service' assisting anyone who has 'been injured, abducted, tortured, found' in connection with the on-going insurgency between Chechen separatists and Russian forces. Objectiv, by the fall of the Caliphate, was involved in repatriating women and children from Iraq and Syria. In 2014, the organization helped bring back Said Mazhaev, a Chechen insurgent, who was seeking to return home from Syria. After Mazhaev served a short prison term, he renounced ISIL/Da'esh, and Objectiv, together with Chechen Deputy Interior Minister, began involving him in meetings with Chechen youth to persuade them of any allure the movement might hold.

In **Dagestan**, the local government created a commission that offered insurgents a way to surrender as early as 2010/11, as a response to an insurgency by local Islamist groups. Similar bodies were created at the local levels in almost all Dagestan districts. Though it had no judicial authority and its role was only advisory, the commission operated transparently and offered numerous services to insurgents and their families, including legal and medical counseling, solutions to housing and employment problems and relocation assistance.

Together with local disengagement panels at the municipal level, the commission provided insurgents a legal and transparent process through which they could surrender. In return, fighters were required to publicly repent, condemn the insurgency and pledge to cooperate with authorities at televised meetings. The commission comprised of representatives of different ethnic minorities and religions, ministers, police and justice officials, the bar association chairman and the imam of the central mosque of Makhachkala, Dagestan's capital. The government then launched efforts to encourage intra-religious reconciliation between the Sufi and Salafi Islamic communities, the clashes between the two being one of the main causes of the insurgency. These efforts were largely successful. The commission demobilized dozens of insurgents, while non-violent Salafis saw an improvement in their social and legal status. Most importantly support for the insurgency among young Salafis, the group most susceptible to recruitment, collapsed. This commission was closed in 2013, due to a change in the regime and a shift back to more hardline policies against

insurgents, though some demobilization of insurgents continued, but only informally, through agreements with local authorities and state security officers.

However, the last few years have seen a slight shift in policy towards a more nuanced counter-insurgency approach. A new commission, the **Commission on Reconciliation**, opened in 2016, but its operations are not transparent and are more focused on Dagestanis returning from Syria than domestic insurgents. Many municipalities also continue to operate their own working commissions that aim to assist former insurgents with demobilizing and reintegrating into civilian life, but these also work in a rather opaque manner.

Additional Resources

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