

Manifesto of National Minorities (natsmen_ki) of the Feminist Antiwar Resistance [in the Russian Federation]

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The Russian government and its propaganda forces justify the war in Ukraine with claims of the “Nazism” of Ukrainian authorities and average Ukrainians. They claim that the destruction of the Russian language and persecution of Russian speakers living in Ukraine as an example of Nazism in Ukraine. This is actually what Russia considers the primary justification for an invasion of the territory of its neighbor: in a word, Russia will bring them peace and liberation from persecution based on their ethnic identity.

We, non-Russians living in Russia – look at this and feel as if we’ve wound up in a world turned upside down. Accusing a neighboring country of fostering interethnic hatreds, the Russian leadership is silent about the fact that the very constitution of the Russian Federation, the most important document of the country, only the Russian people – of 190 ethnic groups living here! – is named as “state-forming.” All the other ethnic groups were not given this right, as if we didn’t participate in the formation and support of this state.

Moreover, the leadership of the Russian state has for years ignored the activity of Russian nationalistic and openly fascist groups in the territory of our own country, closing their eyes on “Russian marches” being held annually in many cities, and in no way ever limited public speakers sowing hatred. And now this government is saving another country from oppression?

The problem, in fact, is much bigger than the actions of the Russian state today. The history of Russia constitutes hundreds of years of imperialism and colonial enslavement of the peoples near it and inside it, including the peoples of the Northern Caucasus and Central Asia, Siberia and the Far North, the peoples of the Volga Region, the Far East, and other regions. A multitude of ethnic groups was forcibly made subject to this empire. One post is insufficient to enumerate all those who have suffered from the power of this imperial metropolis.

We have been murdered: events described in history textbooks as the neutral “discovery of Siberia” in fact were bloodbaths for those who “discovered” these very lands many years before the travelers from Moscow. We were Russified and forbidden from speaking in our own languages and believing in our own gods. Our culture and history were destroyed.

Those representatives of non-Russian peoples who, wishing to survive, rejected their roots and tried to assimilate into Russian society nonetheless remained within Russia second-class people, not full citizens, who have constantly confronted hatred based on their names, physical appearance, or ethnic origin.

In the Soviet era, we were named “natsmeny” – national minorities. Even in those days, when the

authorities allegedly “liberated” us, their attitudes toward us were a combination of humiliation and annihilation, and this “liberation” unfolded voluntarily-compulsorily in that very form which the metropolis pushed forward. The contemptuous relationship to us, embedded in this very ugly word, “natsmen,” is precisely that which persecuted us for years and an attitude with which we are compelled to reconcile ourselves today as well. And “natsmeny” is not the worst word with which we’ve had to deal with, because we more frequently hear more offensive words, such as “slant-eyes” and “kike” [as well as other Russian-language derogatory terms for Central Asians and Indigenous peoples that have no equivalents in US English].

Verbal insults and contempt have not prevented Moscow from stealing our republics and regions, extracting income from them, and living on that income for decades. Contempt for non-Russians doesn’t prevent the Russian leadership from using the representatives of national minorities for their wars and imperial ambitions: as BBC research has shown, the greater part of the troops of the Russian armed forces who have perished in the war against Ukraine are people from non-Russian regions of Russia, including the national republics such as Dagestan, Buryatia, and Bashkiria. There are almost no dead soldiers from the Moscow region, although the Moscow region constitutes about 9% of the population of the Russian Federation.

What Can We Do Right Now?

Unite with representatives of your people in an activist group, and discuss the future you would like to see for yourself and the methods to fight for it. Some peoples have already united in such groups, for instance, the organizations “Free Buryatia” and “Kalmyks Against the War in Ukraine”. We want to express support for the participants in these initiatives!

Use your native language as an instrument of protest, raising in this way the visibility of people in Russia who do not speak Russian. Translate this appeal and other anti-war texts into the language of your people. The Manifesto of the Feminist Anti-War Resistance has already been translated into the Udmurt, Sakha, Bashkir, and Tatar languages.

Create and disseminate in your lands anti-war and anti-colonial posters and flyers, create graffiti, and organize protest actions.

Think about sabotage in those local enterprises that make the war in Ukraine possible. This process includes not only military enterprises but also the media and educational programs that attract young people to the war and fill their heads with propaganda. Without leaving your job or school, you can seek different ways to ignore those assignments that are clearly related to the war.

In addition, we are launching a new hashtag, #голоса_нацмен_ок (#voices_nationalminorities [the Russian-language hashtag is deliberately non-binary in a semantic context in which a gender-based choice would be the conventional language norm]).

Send us your texts about Russian imperialism and its impact on non-Russians in Russia to the bot and we will publish them in our channel. The war in Ukraine is another war crime, and Ukrainians – are one more people, which suffers from Russian imperialism.

If the past and present of Russian chauvinism are not recognized, if the imperial thirst for enslavement and conquest is not stopped, it is impossible to talk about any kind of future. Together let’s fight against Russian imperialism and for the freedom of national self-determination.

Feminist Antiwar Resistance

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