

Lithuania violates International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

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On April 4, Lithuanian parliamentarians adopted a special law on national sanctions for Russian and Belarusian citizens. The law was adopted with 76 votes in favour, 13 against, and 34 abstentions. The law is set to enter into force on the 3rd of May and expires on the 2nd of May, 2024.

It includes restrictions for Russians and Belarusians to obtain Lithuanian visas, to import Ukrainian hryvnias, to enter Lithuania and to acquire real estate. Moreover, Lithuania will temporarily refuse to accept residency permit applications from Russians and Belarusians.

The bill was drafted and put before the parliament by Interior Minister Agnė Bilotaitė and chairman of the parliamentary Committee on Security and Defence Laurynas Kasčiūnas. It essentially transposes into law already existing restrictions. The new law also provides for individual checks of Russian citizens crossing the EU's external border. Each traveller will be screened for potential "threats to national security".

Under the law, Russian nationals will only be able to apply for Lithuanian citizenship through naturalization, after spending 10 years in the country. Exceptions will also apply to people who were deported by the Soviets, as well as to their children.

Moreover, Lithuania will not accept applications for temporary residence permits from Russian citizens until mid-April 2024, except in cases mediated by an institution authorized by the

Lithuanian government, or for holders of Schengen visas, national visas, or holders of the residence permits of an EU country.

Moreover, under the new law, Russian citizens and companies established or controlled by them will not be able to acquire real estate in Lithuania, unless they have a residence permit or have inherited the property.

The law caused heated discussions. Thus, Dainius Kėpėnis, an opposition MP said that it sorts out the people.

Before the vote, Social Democrat MP Algirdas Šekšas stated that this law was “intended to do better, but it came out as usual. And in this case, I would add, it’s very bad.”

According to him, this draft law “will leave bitterness for many years for those citizens who have lived in Lithuania for many years.”

“They will feel like second-class citizens – be it Russian or Belarusian citizens who have been living here for many years... It was necessary to first measure ten times and cut once. Unfortunately, we cut first and then made a bunch of corrections,” the MP noted. He stated, that sanctions should not affect the rights of Russian and Belarusian citizens “in any form whatsoever” who are already here in Lithuania, especially when it comes to humanitarian arrivals.”

The most acrimonious remarks about the law came from Social Democrat Julius Sabatauskas, who called the bill discriminatory.

“Segregation of people and discrimination based on nationality is being established,” he emphasized.

So, adopting such a law, Lithuania deliberately breaks [International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination](#).

The Convention stipulates that "Each State Party shall take effective measures to review governmental, national and local policies, and to amend, rescind or nullify any laws and regulations which have the effect of creating or perpetuating racial discrimination wherever it exists." So, the Law, adopted by Lithuanian parliament, fully contradicts the provisions of the document and violates human rights in the country.

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