

## RUSSOPHOBIC TENDENCIES IN FINLAND

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

Many Russians in Finland are victims of constant racism, hate crimes and human rights violations. Finnish press is often tinted with anti-Russian views, which Russian inhabitants of Finland may find insulting. Finnish officials are sensitive about racism and xenophobia, but they deny the existence of anti-Russian sentiments and Russophobia in Finland. There are up to 8,000 Russian-Finnish registered families living in Finland at the moment. Many Russian children are being mobbed at Finnish schools. Many Russian mothers and children are victims of repression by the social services, who have already seized dozens of Russian children with unfounded basis. Finland is not compiling reliable statistics about Russian inhabitants of the country, but according to estimates from May 2013, there are 62,500 Russian-speakers living in the country at the moment. In many regions, number of Russian-speakers is much more than the number of Swedish-speakers. Unfortunately, The Swedish National Party of Finland, their politicians and members of the Swedish-speaking intellectual elite are very strongly opposing any improvements to the position of Russian language and minority in Finland. Despite the fact that many Finns are even promoting the idea to replace compulsory Swedish language at Finnish schools with Russian, the Finnish minority ombudsman Eva Biaudet, herself representing the Swedish minority, is strongly against any new rights for Russian-speaking minority. Actually, the Swedish National Party of Finland and their politicians are not a result of democratic processes, but the political and educational privileges of the Swedish minority in Finland. New OSCE High Commissioner Astrid Thors is one of the most famous examples of this privileged minority, and we should be aware of the fact that opposing all reforms in favor of Russian language has always been a priority for the Swedish minority in Finland. The Finnish government does not even admit that a Russian minority exists in the country. On the contrary, the official documents and press mostly speak about Russian-speaking minority. Speaking about Russian Orthodox Minority in Finland is practically non-existent, although majority of Russians in Finland are Russian Orthodox. One of the main goals of Swedish minority politicians of Finland is seemingly to prevent any Russian national party from Finland from emerging, and in this way, to maintain the undemocratic elite privileges for the Swedish minority of Finland. It seems that the Finnish state is doing everything possible to prevent politicized Russian community from emerging.

Thank you for your attention.