

NEW REPORT: Unaccompanied children treated as criminals in the Commonwealth of Independent States

Press release - for immediate release

For media inquiries contact: Jenny Thomas (English), jthomas@crin.org / phone: +44 20 7401 2257); Larisa Abrickaja (Russian), larisa@crin.org / phone: + 44 20 7401 2257.

[16 December 2014, Kiev] - Children traveling unaccompanied between the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)* are subject to gross human rights violations, according to research by the Child Rights International Network (CRIN).

In a new report entitled [*'In whose interests? How the law treats unaccompanied children in CIS countries'*](#), CRIN has found that unaccompanied children travelling in the region are subject to detention, criminalisation and deportation, and are denied access to legal assistance, education and health services.

For example, in many former Soviet republics unaccompanied children may be held in “transit centres” for 30 days or longer, depending on national legislation, if no parent or guardian can be found. Children in these centres live in prison-like conditions, with only basic education available, poor healthcare provision and very limited access to lawyers.

To make matters worse, laws designed to protect these children have only added to their suffering. The Chisinau Agreement - the main instrument relating to the situation of unaccompanied children in the region, as well as domestic legislation of the CIS, are not guided by the best interests of the child, and instead treat unaccompanied children as criminals, rather than offering them protection.

The publication of this report marks the start of CRIN's new campaign: [*“Stop detention of unaccompanied children in the CIS”*](#), in which we call for reforms to be made to domestic laws in CIS countries and to the Chisinau Agreement to bring them in line with international human rights standards. To this end, CRIN is also urging NGOs and governments in CIS countries, as well as different actors and institutions working at regional and international levels, to lobby for reforms in order to protect the best interests of unaccompanied children in the region.

The report and campaign was launched on Tuesday, 16 December, at a roundtable conference organised by Women's Consortium of Ukraine in partnership with CRIN in Kiev, Ukraine.

At the launch, Larisa Abrickaja, CRIN's Regional Coordinator for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, pointed out that "[t]he report is first of its kind to look into the situation faced by unaccompanied children in the CIS and has uncovered truly shocking evidence. These children have been ignored for too long - it's time for the States to fulfil the obligations they have committed to by ratifying the CRC and other international treaties." Ms Abrickaja also called on States to bring an immediate end to the detention of unaccompanied children.

Notes to editors

**Member States: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan. Participating States: Turkmenistan, Ukraine.*

Child Rights International Network - CRIN is a global research, policy and advocacy organisation guided by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Our goal is a world where children's rights are recognised, respected and enforced, and where every rights violation has a remedy. www.crin.org

Further information:

Download '*In whose interests? How the law treats unaccompanied children in CIS countries*':
in [English](#) / in [Russian](#)
Campaign pages: [English](#) / [Russian](#)

ENDS