

**Mandates of the Working Group on the use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination; the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities; the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health and the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children**

Ref.: UA RUS 6/2026

(Please use this reference in your reply)

13 July 2026

Excellency,

We have the honour to address you in our capacity as Working Group on the use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination; Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities; Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health and Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 60/5, 53/14, 60/10 and 53/9.

In this connection, we would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government information we have received concerning **the alleged predatory recruitment of a Colombian individual with autism, who was subsequently trafficked into the Russian Federation, forcibly recruited into the Russian army and deployed to the frontline in Ukraine.**

According to the information received:

Mr. Luis Enrique Reinoso Rodríguez, born on 15 April 2003, and a person diagnosed with autism, received a job offer related to motorcycle, car maintenance and logistics tasks in 2025 from a Colombian citizen, known as [REDACTED]. Mr. Reinoso received a plane ticket to the Russian Federation and on 29 November 2025, he travelled to the Russian Federation with the understanding that he was going there to perform maintenance work on motorcycles and automobiles, however, without full knowledge of the actual conditions of the job offer.

Mr. Reinoso met [REDACTED] through an acquaintance, who reportedly travelled alongside Mr. Reinoso to the Russian Federation and who may also have been the victim of predatory recruitment.

Upon arrival, Mr. Reinoso was asked to sign a document in Russian, and since he was not provided with a translation into Spanish, he has no knowledge of the contents of the document. As such, Mr. Reinoso has no record of having signed a formal contract with the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation to serve on its frontline or provide military services, nor of the conditions of the contract.

Mr. Reinoso was reportedly assigned to the 2<sup>nd</sup> motorised Infantry Battalion "Black Hussars", regiment 1437, brigade 15 - an assault battalion of the Russian Federation considered high risk as it is engaged in high-risk combat operations.

Two to three days following his arrival, Mr. Reinoso was reportedly transferred to the frontline between Russia and Ukraine and forced to provide combat services despite not having any military background or training prior to this deployment.

Shortly after being transferred to the front line, Mr. Reinoso was injured on 6 December 2025 in an attack, of which he was the sole survivor. Due to the injuries received, Mr. Reinoso was hospitalised between 10 December 2025 and 24 January 2026, in the Central District Hospital in Krasnodon (Sorokyne), in the territory of Luhansk oblast of Ukraine temporarily occupied by the Russian Federation<sup>1</sup>. As a result of the injuries suffered, Mr. Reinoso has lost his hearing in one ear and has a serious intestinal condition due to the injuries sustained during the attack. While being treated for his injuries in the Central District Hospital, Mr. Reinoso received a confirmed diagnosis of autism.

Mr. Reinoso has reportedly been stationed south of the Ukrainian city of Snizhne, near the Russia-Ukrainian border, in a territory under the control of the Russian Federation. Currently, Mr. Reinoso has reported that he is living in dire conditions, with lack of hygiene and basic items, such as clothing including underwear and socks, food and medicines.

Faced with this situation, Mr. Reinoso's relatives have filed formal complaints with the Ombudsman's Office (Defensoria del Pueblo) and the Attorney General's Office who have in turn informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Colombia. They have also provided information to various international organizations in Colombia and met with the Working Group on the Use of Mercenaries during their visit to Colombia which took place from 16-27 March 2026. The relatives contacted the consulate of Colombia in Moscow but reported difficulties in communicating with the Colombian consulate in the Russian Federation.

According to information received, at the end of January, Mr. Reinoso would be transferred to Russian territory for the repatriation process to begin. However, Mr. Reinoso has apparently not been transferred. At the end of April, Mr. Reinoso was brutally beaten by eight soldiers and as a result, he is unable to walk and is using crutches. Following the attack, Mr. Reinoso has lost all hearing from his right ear and has limited hearing from his left ear. According to information received at the end of May, Mr. Reinoso would be transferred from his unit. He is currently registered as Rifle Soldier, in the 6<sup>th</sup> Company, of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Motorised Infantry Battalion, belonging to Military Unit / Field Mail 29656. There are credible grounds to fear for Mr. Reinoso's life, physical and mental health and for his psychological state.

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<sup>1</sup> The General Assembly, in its resolution 68/262 and subsequent resolutions, including resolution ES-11/4 of 12 October 2022 on "Territorial integrity of Ukraine: defending the principles of the Charter of the United Nations" and resolution 79/184, reaffirmed its commitment to the territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. Krasnodon (Sorokyne) and Snizhne are located in areas of the Luhansk and Donetsk regions of Ukraine temporarily occupied by the Russian Federation.

Elements related to trafficking in persons:

As mentioned above, Mr. Reinoso's job application was based on an advertisement for a motorcycle and car maintenance position but was forcibly recruited to fight and participate in armed hostilities. In addition, upon his arrival to the Russian Federation, Mr. Reinoso was requested to sign a document in Russian, a language which he has no knowledge of and without being provided with a translation into Spanish. Mr. Reinoso was therefore not provided with the opportunity to give his informed consent. In addition, Mr. Reinoso was not given a copy of the signed document. Other documents of his personal property, including his passport were confiscated upon arrival.

Despite receiving medical treatment for one month and a half, hospital records do not show Mr. Reinoso in their official databases. To date, Mr. Reinoso has not received any payments for services rendered. Mr. Reinoso has been instructed to hide in the presence of high-ranking military officials, which could indicate Mr. Reinoso's irregular status and that he is not a formally recognized combatant.

While we do not wish to prejudge the accuracy of these allegations, we express our deep concern about the predatory recruitment of Colombian citizens into the Russian army for the purpose of their exploitation as soldiers to fight in the war against Ukraine, deceived by individuals or companies who recruit them with false promises of employment opportunities. According to the above-mentioned allegations, the facts indicate that the Colombian citizen was a victim of human trafficking through deception, fraud, abuse of his vulnerability, both mental and socio-economic, the seizure and retention of his identity documents, the withholding of his salary and his forced enlistment and participation in armed hostilities for the Russian army. Mr. Reinoso's confirmed diagnosis of autism raises further concerns that he may be facing protracted debilitating and severe psychological trauma and impacts.

We are further concerned about reports that hundreds or even thousands of other Colombian men, as well as other foreign nationals, have faced a similar situation, some of whom have reportedly been killed, disappeared or seriously injured, in addition to the negative mental impact this could have on these persons.

We are concerned that the circumstances of Mr. Reinoso's recruitment do not appear to constitute an isolated incident, but rather reflect a broader institutional pattern facilitated by the legal and administrative framework of the Russian Federation. We note in this regard that your Excellency's Government has established a simplified procedure granting foreign nationals who conclude a contract for military service of at least one year, together with members of their families, expedited access to Russian citizenship, while exempting them from requirements otherwise applicable, including knowledge of the Russian language, history and legislation (Presidential Decree No. 10 of 4 January 2024, as amended by Presidential Decree No. 534 of 31 July 2025, and later replaced by Presidential Decree No. 821 of 5 November 2025). We are further concerned by reports that this framework has been complemented by financial incentives at the regional level for the recruitment of foreign nationals, and by the involvement of intermediaries, recruitment agencies and online platforms operating transnationally.

We are concerned that such measures, when combined with deceptive recruitment practices of the kind described above — including false offers of civilian employment, the confiscation of identity documents, and the signing of contracts in a language the recruit does not understand — may serve to lend an appearance of voluntariness and legality to conduct that, in substance, amounts to trafficking in persons for the purpose of forced labour and forced participation in armed hostilities. We recall that, in accordance with article 3 (b) of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons especially Women and Children (referred to as the Palermo Protocol), ratified by your Excellency's Government on 26 May 2004, the consent of a victim of trafficking to the intended exploitation is irrelevant where any of the means set out in article 3 (a) — including deception, fraud, coercion or abuse of a position of vulnerability — has been used.

We recall that the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation has documented that the Ministry of Defence has enlisted foreign nationals into the Russian army to fight in the war against Ukraine, including persons trafficked from Nepal and Sri Lanka, coercing them into signing contracts through torture and threats, and that conscripts are forced through torture and deceit to sign military contracts allowing their deployment to the front line, in at least one case a person being shot dead for refusing ([A/HRC/60/59](#), paras. 96–97; [A/79/508](#)). She has further documented the systematic failure of the authorities to investigate and address trafficking in persons ([A/HRC/60/59](#), para. 127).

We wish to remind your Government's Excellency of articles 6 and 8 of the Palermo Protocol in relation to assistance to and protection of victims of trafficking in persons. Article 6 (5) cites that State Parties endeavor to provide for the physical safety of victims of trafficking in persons while they are in their territory, while article 6 (4) requires State Parties to take into account special needs of victims of trafficking with the provision of measures, including in relation to appropriate housing, counselling in a language which the victim can understand and medical, psychological and material assistance. Article 6(6) also requires State Parties for measures to offer victims of trafficking the possibility of obtaining compensation for damage suffered. In line with article 8 on repatriation of victims of trafficking in persons, the receiving State Party shall facilitate and accept the return of the person without undue or unreasonable delay and the return shall preferably be voluntary.

We wish to recall your Excellency to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which your Excellency's Government ratified on 25 September 2012. We would like to draw your Excellency's attention to article 11 which requires States Parties to take in accordance with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law, all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including situations of armed conflict and in line with article 16, to take all appropriate measures to prevent and protect persons with disabilities from all forms of exploitation, violence and abuse. We also recall, in relation to the risks of trafficking in persons for persons with disabilities, the briefing paper and recommendations prepared by the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, and the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities. In the document, the experts emphasize the right of persons with disabilities to receive reasonable

accommodations that ensure their access to all prevention, assistance, and protection measures to combat trafficking on an equal basis with the rest of the population. The experts urge all States to ensure that measures to combat trafficking in persons are universally accessible and guarantee equal access to justice without discrimination, as well as respect for the inherent dignity, autonomy, and decision-making capacity of persons with disabilities, including the freedom to make their own choices.

We wish to recall the absolute and non-derogable prohibition of torture as a *jus cogens* norm, codified in article 5 of the UDHR and article 7 of the ICCPR, which your Excellency's Government ratified on 16 October 1973. Pursuant to paragraph 18 of the general comment No. 2 of the Committee against Torture (CAT/C/GC/2, 24 January 2008), State authorities or others acting in official capacity or under colour of law, know or have reasonable grounds to believe that acts of torture or ill-treatment are being committed by non-State officials or private actors have to exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate, prosecute and punish such non-State officials or private actors. The ill-treatment includes lack of access to adequate food and being compelled to work in life-threatening conditions in war zones. We also recall Article 8, which establishes that no one shall be held in slavery and that slavery and the slave trade in all their forms shall be prohibited (paragraph 1). No one shall be held in servitude (paragraph 2), and no one shall be required to perform forced or compulsory labour (paragraph 3 (a)).

With regard to the prevention from forced labour, we wish to recall that the Russian Federation ratified C029, the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29) on 23 June 1956. In ratifying this Convention, Russia committed to “suppress the use of forced or compulsory labour in all its forms within the shortest possible period”.

The forced labour, protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), ratified by the Russian Federation on 17 January 2019, reaffirms that measures of prevention, protection and remedies, such as access to compensation, rehabilitation, are necessary to achieve effective and sustained suppression of trafficking in persons for purposes of forced labour, and of forced and compulsory labour.

Regarding ‘predatory recruitment’, we would like to draw your Excellency's attention to the thematic report of the UN Working Group on the use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination in relation to the recruitment of mercenaries and mercenary-related actors (A/HRC/54/29 of 12 July 2023). In its report, the Working Group defines the predatory recruitment as “a form of recruitment of individuals for mercenarism that takes advantage of their socioeconomic status or other vulnerabilities and that, in some instances, may involve coercion or fraud” (paragraph 25). The Working Group also noted in its report “with concern the ways in which mercenaries and related actors are using such recruits and the human rights violations perpetrated around their recruitment. The increased involvement of third-party States in armed conflicts has been identified as a context in which individuals can be recruited in a predatory form and deployed in so-called proxy wars. The recruitment of mercenaries in this context often involves complex networks of recruiters of States, armed non-State actors, private military and security contractors and local intermediaries close to the communities of the recruits. (...) This contributes to the vulnerability in which individuals targeted for predatory recruitment find themselves and is also a factor contributing to human rights violations

and violations of international humanitarian law in the context of conflict” (paragraph 25).

In this regard, we wish to draw the attention of Your Excellency’s Government to article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), ratified by Your Excellency’s Government on 29 October 1969, which enshrines the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. We would also like to refer Your Excellency’s Government to general comment No. 14 of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which states that: “[t]he right to health is closely related to and dependent upon the realization of other human rights, as contained in the International Bill of Rights, including the rights to food, [...] human dignity, life, non-discrimination, equality, the prohibition against torture [...]”, among others.

The full texts of the human rights instruments and standards recalled above are available on [www.ohchr.org](http://www.ohchr.org) or can be provided upon request.

In view of the urgency of the matter, I would appreciate a response as soon as possible on the initial steps taken by your Excellency’s Government to safeguard the rights of the above-mentioned person in compliance with international instruments.

As it is our responsibility, under the mandates provided to us by the Human Rights Council, to seek to clarify all cases brought to our attention, we would be also grateful for your observations on the following matters:

1. Please provide any additional information and/or comment(s) you may have on the above-mentioned allegations.
2. Please provide information about the current whereabouts and physical and mental health condition of Mr. Reinoso.
3. Please indicate what urgent measures the Government has taken to ensure the protection and safe return of Mr. Reinoso to his family in Colombia as well as to invest in the prevention of trafficking of persons for the purpose of forced recruitment and enlistment, including recruitment and enlistment into fighting on behalf of Russian Federation.
4. Please advise on the Government’s knowledge and use of recruitment agencies, intermediaries, and social media in the recruitment of foreign nationals to fight on the Russian side.
5. Please advise on the Government’s knowledge and role of services provided to recruited individuals vis-à-vis flights and visas into Russia as well as their conditions of stay in Russia, services available to them upon arrival and after signing military contracts.
6. Please advise on formal contracts signed, if any, between individuals recruited into fighting and your Government, specifying roles, duration, labour conditions, wages, and provisions for termination of such contracts, as well as where possible translation of such documents.

7. Please indicate the measures that your Excellency's Government has taken or may adopt to ensure that victims of the above-mentioned alleged abuses and violations have access to effective remedy, including their right to know the truth about these alleged abuses and violations, and receive reparation.
8. Please highlight the steps that the Government is taking, or is considering taking, to ensure non-recurrence of the alleged violations and abuses, including related institutional, legislative and administrative reforms and other measures to prevent such violations of international humanitarian law or human rights in the country or in territories under its control. Please also indicate any steps taken to regulate activities related to recruitment agencies or individuals in your country in order to avoid trafficking in persons for purposes of forced recruitment and enlistment, including recruitment and enlistment into fighting of behalf of the Russian Federation, and forced labour.
9. Kindly provide full details of any civil, criminal, disciplinary and/or administrative measures taken by your Excellency's Government in relation to the aforementioned allegations in compliance with its duty to investigate and prosecute, and to take effective action to combat impunity, including by carrying out effective investigations on individuals or recruitment agencies and trafficking, as well as the involvement of Russian officials in forced recruitment of individuals into the Russian army for their deployment to the war against Ukraine, and ensuring all evidence of violations of international humanitarian law and abuses and violations of international human rights law is preserved for accountability purposes.
10. Please provide information whether any foreign nationals, including Colombian citizens, have been recruited and enlisted to fight on behalf of the Russian Federation. Under what legal framework are such individuals recruited and deployed? What measures has the State taken to ensure that foreign nationals are not recruited or used as mercenaries in violation of international law?

This communication, and any response received from your Excellency's Government, will be made public via the communications reporting [website](#) at the 60 days mark. Should Your Excellency's Government respond within 60 days, both the communication and the response, may be published before the 60 days mark. The communications and responses will also be made available in the subsequent periodic report to be presented to the Human Rights Council.

While awaiting a reply, we urge that, on humanitarian considerations, your Excellency's Government **take urgent steps to repatriate Mr. Reinoso to Colombia**. We also urge that all necessary interim measures be taken to halt the alleged violations and prevent their re-occurrence and in the event that the investigations support or suggest the allegations to be correct, to ensure the accountability of any person(s) responsible for the alleged violations.

We may publicly express our concerns in the near future as, in our view, the information upon which the press release will be based is sufficiently reliable to indicate a matter warranting immediate attention. We also believe that the wider public should be alerted to the potential implications of the above-mentioned allegations. The press release will indicate that we have been in contact with your Excellency's Government's to clarify the issue/s in question.

Please be informed that a letter on this subject matter has also been sent to the Government of Colombia. A copy of this communication has also been shared with the Government of Ukraine.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Michelle Small

Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on the use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination

Heba Hagrass

Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities

Tlaleng Mofokeng

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Siobhán Mullally

Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children