

Mother-child separation

Mother-child separation presents an urgent issue across certain regions of Russia, namely Chechnya, Ingushetia, and certain communities of Dagestan, where traditional laws and strict gender hierarchies exacerbate the forced separation of children from their mothers. Under some *adats* (customary laws), children are deemed to belong to their father's family, depriving mothers of not only their custodial rights but also the ability to maintain contact with their children for extended periods. Even in situations when court orders determine children's residence with their mothers, they are often abducted by their ex-husbands or their relatives.

Mothers are denied access to their children and are sidelined from their upbringing. These mothers endure profound emotional and physical distress, leading to different psychosomatic issues and mental health disorders that require psychological, psychiatric, and medical intervention. Forced separation from the mother inflicts severe psychological trauma on the child as well. It affects their overall well-being and psychological state, and disregarding children's interests and needs constitutes a form of child abuse. Children subjected to family abduction experience various forms of violence, including physical and psychological abuse, communication restrictions with their mothers, and exploitation as household workers, often resulting in suicidal attempts and personality deformation. In this protracted situation, professional assistance and maternal support are vital for children to navigate the ensuing challenges and trauma, as their fragile psyches struggle to cope independently, leading to severe personality distortions under unbearable stress.

Calculating the extent of child abduction cases post-divorce is challenging due to the absence of statistics, yet the escalating divorce rates in Russia are anticipated to fuel an increase in such instances. Legally, parental or relative abduction of a child does not constitute kidnapping under Russian law, lacking specific regulations to address these scenarios, thereby jeopardizing the rights of the child and the mother.