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Latvia. When a state takes revenge (Part 1)

Tatjana: her crimes, her weapons, her friends

[Original text: <https://www.worldcitizens.de/beitraege-tatjana/lettland-wenn-ein-staat-sich-raeht-teil-1.html> ,translated using DeepL (free version), post-edited by Klaus Schittich]

State of affairs

At the start of the new year, we would like to thank everyone who inquired, helped and contributed to our efforts to do something for a young woman in Latvia who is in distress. In the heart of Europe, Tatjana Andrijeca, a Latvian citizen, who belongs to the ethnic Russian minority in Latvia, is being politically harassed and persecuted, she faces a life sentence.¹ It was only individual citizens, compassionate and selfless, who were alarmed by what Tatjana was facing and who stood up for her. One daily newspaper, as a lone exception, reported on this.

In the summer of 2025, we suggested one possible way to take action², namely to write letters to the Latvian Minister of Justice. Many took up the cause. Everyone then received a letter on behalf of the Minister. Her staff emphasised that no one was allowed to interfere in ongoing legal proceedings, and that doing so was also a criminal offence.³ The Ministry had nothing to say about Tatjana's case itself, not a word.

The lone exception: the left-wing daily newspaper 'junge Welt' (jW) from Berlin was the only media outlet in Germany (we had informed about twenty agencies and media outlets twice each) to report on the current threat to Tatjana.⁴ Kristian Stemmler found a sensitive headline for his article: 'Reconciliation was never allowed'. So jW placed the unlawful harassment of Tatjana in the context of the tragedy of this small country, which we once described as follows: '**[The] irrational revenge of the indigenous Latvians on the defunct Soviet Union, exercised on the ethnic Russians now living in Latvia'**.^{5,6}

Tatjana's crime

With pinpoint precision, this dull revenge seems to be directed particularly at 25-year-old student Tatjana, and that with unmistakable cruelty.

Here a completely innocent young woman; there, on the other hand, a state apparatus, or more precisely, the seemingly all-powerful State Security Service (VDD), which wants to impose the harshest punishment possible under the law on Tatjana: life imprisonment. As death penalty not being an option. According to the obvious will of the state, this example must be carried out unwaveringly and brutally. For a long time to come, no one should even think of doubting the country's politics in the slightest, let alone rebelling against them.

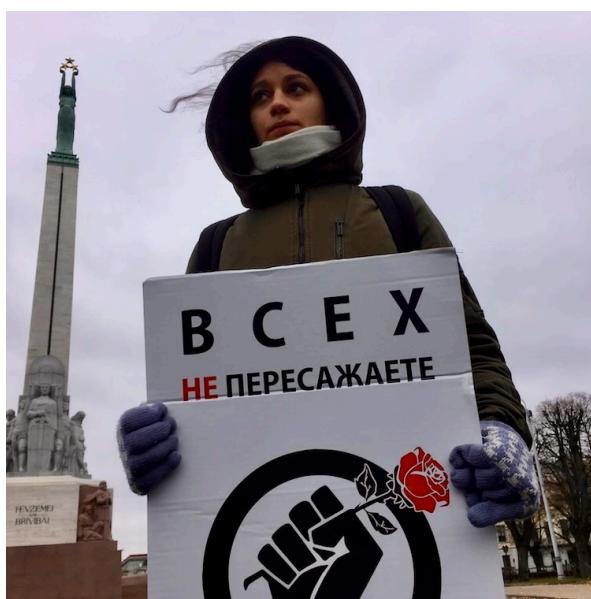


Image: Ivan Romanov

A picture showing Tatjana at a spontaneous vigil in December 2020 documents an early phase of her 'criminal career'. Tatjana is part of a small group that has gathered in front of Riga's most important mo-

nument (inscription: 'For Fatherland and Freedom') to protest the imprisonment of a so-called dissident. The subversive text on Tatjana's improvised poster reads: '**You can't lock them all up.**' No shrill protest, no call for revolution, just an almost timid statement. Tatjana also announces, figuratively speaking, what weapons she will soon be reaching for: **flowers**.

After eight long months of 'preventive detention' without a court ruling in 2023 proved ineffective from the state's point of view, the judiciary – seemingly obedient to the state security service – has been going all out since April 2025. The obvious goal is the complete destruction of this young, extraordinary personality. A motto seems to resonate, almost audibly: '**Now let's flatten the little toad!**'

Based on the course of the court proceedings since April 2025, the crime Tatjana is accused of, 'founding a criminal organisation', and the continuation of the proceedings can only be regarded as a farce. From a legal point of view, this has long been a waste of time. However, further court dates have already been set until the beginning of May 2026.

People in Latvia who are close to Tatjana and are in contact with us remain convinced that Tatjana's original crime, her original sin, was her appearance at a plenary session of the Saeima, the Latvian parliament. There, as a 17-year-old schoolgirl, she had toughly messed things up for the state. She was supposed to play the role of the successful, charming, conformist young model Russian, speaking in accent-free Latvian, praising the blessings of her Latvian school and advocating the rapid closure of all Russian schools. But Tatjana did not do this; she got out of character and spoke her own truth. One can vividly imagine the formula that all the party loyalists in parliament had at the ready once they had caught their breath again: '**There will be consequences!**'

Tatjana has not been left in peace since that sunny spring day on 2 March 2018. But everything she is accused of – even if it were true, which it is not! – would be protected by the right to freedom of expression. The right to freedom of expression is part of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union as Article 11, and it is enshrined in almost all the constitutions of the 27 EU countries. Including Latvia's⁷.

Tatjana's advocacy for the rights of the ethnic Russian minority, her active concern for political prisoners in Latvia, her efforts to ensure that Latvia's modern history is not presented in a one-sided manner – all of this would be commendable civil society engagement. But in her home country, she is discriminated against, persecuted and dragged before the courts for her commitment. In the heart of Europe, which supposedly brims with grand values and respect for human rights.

After a large number of emails exchanged since April 2025, including some very personal ones, the author of this article ventures the possibly absurd assessment that **Tatjana's crime is her personality**.

Any attempt to describe some aspects of her character must necessarily remain incomplete: Tatjana is committed to truth and honesty at the cost of incurring massive disadvantages. She believes in higher law, which for her includes the irrevocable right to freedom of expression. She is highly empathetic. Tatjana consciously lives according to ethical principles, some of them drawn from her Russian Orthodox faith, among other sources. Tatjana is admirably gifted and also multi-talented. Just a brief note: After she graduated from high school, quite a few people were disappointed that she did not study music and pursue a career as a classical violinist.

One of her older friends, the journalist Alla Berezovskaya, once described Tatjana as 'naive' in a public statement.⁸ This term does not only have the common, pejorative meaning. According to its origin in Old French, the word also refers to the characteristics 'original, natural, genuine'.⁹

Like a spotlight, this second meaning of the word 'naive' illuminates Tatjana's problem: Being irrevocably committed to the truth, being genuine and unpretentious, remaining true to oneself – in Latvia, this can easily be considered a crime. She is not only accused because she has a different opinion. She is to be found guilty and destroyed as a personality, simply because she is who she is. Tatjana's crime is her personality. And this seems to be unbearable for the Latvian state: **'She must go'**.

Tatjana's weapons

Tensions between the tragically divided population groups in the country have increased since the Russian Federation's invasion of

Ukraine in spring 2022. It seems that the government and the majority of 'genuine Latvian' Latvians are passionately fueling anger towards everything 'Russian'. Be it history, language or identity. One cannot help but feel that Russophobia, hatred of Russians, has been elevated to the status of a state religion.

To this day, religions also give rise to iconoclasm¹⁰, i.e. the destruction of physical representations of the consciousness of 'others'. Thus, much that was Russian¹¹ fell victim to quasi-religious zeal shortly after February 2022.

The most powerful iconoclasm was directed at the so-called Victory Monument, literally the 'Monument to the Liberators of Soviet Latvia and Riga from the German Fascist Invaders,' in Victory Park in the west of the capital. It was demolished in August 2022. All traces have been removed. The 79-metre-high obelisk has disappeared, as have the two massive groups of figures.

This event was reported even in the German media. The FAZ¹² (Frankfurter Allgemeinen Zeitung) published a commendably objective and fair article, which states that this demolition is a sensitive domestic political issue.

Various videos show examples of how the media can manipulate the focus of attention.

1. The video by Germany's highest-circulation newspaper, BILD¹³, makes no mention whatsoever of Latvia's ethnic Russian population. 'All that remains is the dust of history!' This vague, elegiac kitsch brings the BILD clip to a close, which could not be more one-sided.
2. EURONEWS¹⁴ reports in a balanced manner, giving a voice to an ethnic Russian resident who, without anger or hatred, advocates that both population groups, Latvians and ethnic Russians, should respect each other's rights.
3. RT DE¹⁵ (Russia Today) reports in a similarly fair manner, allowing the same ethnic Russian protagonist to speak at greater length, giving him a name and stating his position. In addition, the video shows the typical weapons of the ethnic Russian protesters lying on the ground: **flowers**.

When we asked Tatjana why she was not at the monument on the day of the final demolition – preparations had been underway for some time – she wrote: on the one hand, she could not have borne to watch the spectacle, which would have been completely masochistic, and on the other hand, she had been arrested again the day before

and interrogated until late into the night.

Tatjana herself tells us best the story of how, heavily armed with flowers, she cycled to Victory Park the day before the obelisk was demolished:¹⁶

"Yes, the day I was arrested by the police was the first day of the demolition of the monument (it took three days – it was not just one monument, but an entire complex of two monuments and an obelisk). My friends and I had agreed to go there, at least to Victory Park, to lay flowers. When I rode my bike towards the park, I didn't even manage to enter it – a police car was already waiting for me. The officers were wearing balaclavas. Later, I asked them why – normally the police don't wear them. They said they didn't want people to see who was arresting me or film them on video. They immediately grabbed my bag and my mobile phone, put me in the car and pushed my bike in too. They started shouting at me, saying I had 'gone too far' and would now go to prison. To be honest, I couldn't believe you could be arrested just for laying flowers 😂, so I wasn't afraid. I was mainly worried about my friends and what they would think if I didn't show up, even though I had invited them. But when they saw I wasn't there, they somehow understood that I had been arrested and went to all the police stations in Riga 😊. In one of them, they saw my bicycle and decided to wait there. According to the law, they were not allowed to hold me for more than four hours. And indeed, they released me exactly four hours later. However, they did not give me back my mobile phone. They said that someone in Riga had distributed leaflets with 'subversive content' and that they suspected me. I had never heard of any leaflets! When they checked my mobile phone and saw that I had nothing to do with it, the case was closed. But they still kept my mobile phone 😂. They released me at one o'clock in the morning. My friends were waiting for me outside the police station – it was really touching. So, in the end, this story is not particularly dramatic after all."

Let us remember: it had become part of Tatjana's everyday life to be arrested without cause, shouted at and threatened.

Let us remember: Tatjana and her friends simply wanted to lay flowers to mourn the destruction of a memorial, a meeting place that was important to their grandparents, their parents and themselves. No paving stones were thrown, no bottles, no rubbish bins or cars

were set on fire, no one was injured, there was no vandalism. And let us remember and ask ourselves: what kind of country is this where young people start searching the city's police stations just because their friend didn't show up on time for an appointment?

Ethnic Russians usually gathered at this monument on 9 May each year to commemorate the end of the Second World War. According to official estimates, there were once 260,000¹⁷ of them, which is not insignificant given a population of approximately 1.8 million. In May 2022, when the demolition was just becoming law in parliament, only a few dared to go there. The fear of repression had become greater than the desire to publicly commemorate one last time the soldiers of the Soviet Army who gave their lives to liberate Latvia from fascism.

Our cover photo shows the very last flower carpet on a 9 May. The ethnic Russians got it through in the end somehow, it was still there. Our photo was taken one day later.

Another photo was supposed to be featured as the cover image for this article. It shows Tatjana attempting to lay flowers near the memorial a few days before her arrest, as described above. She was prevented from doing so by police officers standing close around her. As the group grew larger, the officers pushed them away from the memorial. The few who wanted to stay were arrested and taken away.

The Latvian media company TV-NET GRUPA refused to allow us to publish the photo. Emails were exchanged, including a flimsy explanation from Riga, but at least the management seems to have dealt with our request. As a substitute, we have resorted to linking¹⁸ to the photo, which does not require a licence under international practice.

With this pictorial representation of the armed, 'criminal' Tatjana – **she is holding her weapon lowered in front of her** – we conclude the first part of this two-part series. May the image tell its own lasting story.

[The LINK as mentioned in note 18.]

15 January 2026
Klaus Schittich

Notes

1 Web article: <https://www.worldcitizens.de/beitraege-tatjana/lettland-lettland-tatjana-gehoert-nicht-in-den-knast.html>

2 Web article: <https://www.worldcitizens.de/beitraege-tatjana/lettland-kein-knast-fuer-tatjana-die-briefaktion.html>

3 Anecdotally, it should be noted that the letters from the minister's office had the nice introduction that the respective letter did not actually need to be answered. The correspondence had to be in Latvian. Oh dear, what kind of 'European spirit' is blowing through this small Baltic country?

4 <https://www.jungewelt.de/artikel/507432.politische-gefangene-in-lettland-eine-versoehnung-wurde-nie-zugelassen.html>

5 See note 1, there: 'The tragedy of a small country'.

6 For a comprehensive research report on this, see: https://iorr.uni-koeln.de/sites/ostrecht/forschung/Minderheitenschutz_im_oestlichen_Europa/Lettland_Schmidt.pdf, no date [University of Cologne, presumably 2003].

7 <https://likumi.lv/wwwraksti/LIKUMI/SATVERSME/VACU.PDF>, see Article 100.

8 Alla and her statement will be discussed in the second part of this 'two-part article'.

9 <https://www.dwds.de/wb/na>

10 https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reformatorischer_Bildersturm

11 See note 1, where it states: 'The situation has been coming to a head since 2022.'

12 <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/ausland/in-riga-wird-das-sowjetische-kriegerdenkmal-abgerissen-18268823.html>

13 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kzUPbdsoXLM>

16 Email dated 26 October 2025 [translated from English].

17 See overview (ChatGPT on 10 January 2026), see below.

18 <https://www.tvnet.lv/7589576/foto-pie-pieminekla-pardaugava-policija-aizturejusi-dazus-protestetajus?gallery=319232&image=14780175>

Victory Monument

Number of participants on 9 May in Riga (selection, until 2022)

Year | Estimated number of participants | Source / Note

1995 | approx. 11,000 early large gathering after independence

2005 | tens of thousands no exact figures, growing participation

2014 | up to \approx 260,000 frequently cited peak figure in the media

2015 | approx. 220,000 figure provided by the organisers

2016 | approx. 150,000 Police estimate

2017 | No reliable figures Media reports only general

2018 | Approx. 22,000–25,000 Significantly lower participation

2019 | No official figures 'Several tens of thousands'