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Russia: “They don’t trust the local authorities and commanders, but rather Putin”

Tuesday 25 October 2022, by [Feminist Anti-War Resistance/FAS \(Russia\)](#) (Date first published: 23 October 2022).

A female subscriber, whose close friend has been called up, joined a chat room of friends and relatives of the draftees. She sent us her observations and reflections on her experience of communicating with people united by common misfortune but who are in no hurry to change their position on the war.

The chat room of relatives of the draftees, which I found (at least its most active part), consists of those who in one way or another support the Special Military Operation (SMO), and when I first found myself in it, I immediately wanted to leave: what they were writing seemed unthinkable and cruel to me. It infuriated me terribly to see the stamps of state propaganda, the gloating towards the shelling of Ukrainian cities, the accusations against those who had left or were hiding from summonses. But after overcoming my initial indignation, I still decided to stay and try to understand why these wives and mothers of the draftees were thinking this way.

Thus a new ‘we’ was born. Regardless of our views on SMO, we are those whose loved ones have been sent to war.

And so, being in this new community for a few days, I drew some conclusions:

So far, contrary to the expectations of the opposition, the mobilisation has not united the community, but has divided it even more. Those who were pro-SMO and whose relatives were drafted now hate those who try to avoid being sent to Ukraine and those who do not support the draft even more. There are accusations of cowardice, weakness and betrayal of the homeland. From the opposite side come equally emotional scoldings and accusations of fascism. People break off those friendships that have not yet been severed, and this only deepens the misunderstanding between the parties.

They are very angry that the mobilization is partial. There are even impulses to turn in all known refuseniks to the police, to deliver summonses more actively and to demand that the Russian Guard and other representatives of special services be sent to the SMO.

Their feelings are understandable to some extent, they feel hurt and offended that their relatives were taken away and can be killed, while others are not taken away. They feel a great injustice to themselves. I don’t know if this can lead to any real action yet, but the emotions are very strong.

They are almost opposed to the Ministry of Defence and the local authorities because of the lack of equipment, the poor organisation of the exercises and the general chaos of the mobilisation. Seriously, people in the opposition don’t get so abused by the powers-that-be.

For the most part, they do not trust the local authorities and commanders, but rather Putin. In any case, the ‘tsar is good, the boyars are bad’ fiction is at work here.

Those supporters of the SMO who have had someone close to them drafted are unlikely to listen to those who have left the country or are evading summonses. But there is a chance that they will listen to the opponents of what is happening, who are also affected by mobilisation. A new 'we' has formed, partly blurring the boundaries. A bridge to try to cross. Among them, too, there are doubters worth talking to. It is possible that if the situation on the front worsens, they will change their minds. If the opposition wants to convey their position to the SMO supporters, they need to stop throwing accusations around.

This may not sound quite appropriate now, but we are all citizens of Russia, and we will have to live somehow in the same country when all this is over, so it seems to me important to try to reach out to each other. And it is those who are also affected by the call-up who have the best chance of being heard.

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