

'Non-citizens, aliens in their own country' – article by Camille Petit

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Aleksandr Gaponenko, non-citizen

My identification is that I am Russian, but ethnically I am mixed: Russian, Ukrainian and Polish. We live on the base of Russian culture, Russian language. But we are separate from Russia. We live here a long time and in such way we feel ourselves like part of the Latvian society. But this society is divided in two parts, here there are two communities: Latvian and Russian community.

Elizabete Krivcova, former non-citizen

All my family feel as Latvian, we lived here all our lives and we have no other place where to go. My mother tongue is Russian and also my cultural identity is in many aspects Russian. But my political identity is of course absolutely Latvian and I understand the culture good and it is part of me, but also European; I also feel European and I think it is multiple identities that I feel in the same time.

Karlis Eihenbaums, the Foreign Minister's Press Secretary

We have here a group of something about 270 000 people who are so-called non-citizens. We definitely know that we have them. But that doesn't mean that they are without rights. I mean, that number was huge when we started and of course there is always problems what to do. Somebody can say, automatically they are citizens. If the number is relatively small, you can do it. Our number was quite bigger and they were not here on our invitation; they came during these certain circumstances, during this certain period. Amongst them were also ex-officers, or officers of the occupation army, let me say, there were people who were working for the colonisation of this country during the repressions, they were taking part in these repressions. You have to have something like a certain period for those who would like to stay to integrate. Even if you have a non-citizen's passport, a sort of green card, you know, you have all the rights basically, to travel, to live, to do whatever. You only don't have full political rights to be elected or to elect, like in Latvian case as well, to participate. But the rest... OK, some few professions you can't do. But basically you live here a comfortable life, you can go to West, you can go to East... Plus, if you go to East, you don't have to ask for a visa, which still costs 70 euros.