

## CVs of the Speakers

**Abubakar Yanqulbaev** is a Chechen human rights lawyer and decolonial activist. Born and raised in Grozny, he and his family have faced persecution by Chechen authorities since 2015 for their political dissent. Since 2017, he has worked on cases of torture, kidnapping, and murder in the Republic of Chechnya. In December 2021, he was arrested by the Department for Combating Extremism and Terrorism of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs and was forced into exile. He is currently a political refugee, wanted in Russia, and studying international law at Sciences Po (Paris) while continuing his work on asylum law.

**Ainuur Akhmetov (Әхмәтов)** is a Tatar activist working in the fields of education and media. He is the host of the podcast about the Tatar language “Әйдә Podcast” and the creator of the language project “Әйдә Online.” Ainur has been engaged in activism since 2012, giving lectures and teaching courses in the Tatar language on topics such as “PR and promotion of Tatar organizations,” “Soft skills,” and more.

**Dr. Aliya Wedelich** (she/her) is an eco-, climate-, and animal rights advocate from Kazakhstan. Recently, she co-authored a shadow report to the UN Human Rights Committee, where she was responsible for the environmental justice section, as well as a Climate Policy Overview for Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. She holds degrees in ecology (BSc) and history (PhD). She is also an editor at *Ecoston News*, a niche media outlet targeting eco- and climate activists. Aliya is a co-organizer of the annual Youth Environmental Award (Tereshkevich Award) and the EcoActivism School, both focused on empowering youth across Central Asia. She collaborates with EcoForum Kazakhstan, a coalition of environmental NGOs, as well as with other regional networks and initiatives. In 2024, she was named one of 51 “Green Pioneers of the Steppe,” an initiative by Nazarbayev University’s Research Centre for Entrepreneurship.

**Altan Khaluun Darkhan** is an artist, writer, and decolonial queer activist from Buryatia. Their interdisciplinary practice spans digital zines, visual art, and auto fictional texts that explore identity, migration, language, and trauma within a postcolonial context. Altan has participated in feminist, anti-war, and Indigenous media initiatives. Recent projects include participation in the group exhibition *Ome* at the nGbK gallery in Berlin, the publication of the zine *Ulaalzai*, an auto fictional text in *GASP* magazine, and curating as well as contributing to the digital zine *Road opening*, which focuses on the migration experiences of descendants of historically nomadic peoples in Russia.

**Batlai Matenov** is a co-founder of the foundation and media project “Asians of Russia”, created in 2017 to highlight the culture and problems of Indigenous asian peoples of Russia, as well as to combat racism and xenophobia. With the outbreak of war in Ukraine in 2022, the project expanded its activities, including anti-war activism and helping people evacuate from Russia. Due to pressure from the authorities, Batlai and his wife Liliia were forced to leave the country. In 2022, they received the Redkollegia award for their coverage of Russian servicemen from national republics who died in Ukraine.

**Prof. Dr. Botakoz Kassymbekova** is a Kazakh historian specializing in Soviet and Eastern European history. Since 2024, she has held the Chair of Eastern European History at the University of Zurich. Her research focuses on Soviet colonialism, Stalinism and post-Stalinism, Russian imperial history, and the lived experiences of aging in the Soviet Union.

**Bektour Iskender** is a Kyrgyz journalist best known as the co-founder of Kloop, one of Central Asia's leading media outlets. He turned Kloop into a regional powerhouse, mentoring hundreds of journalists and producing award-winning investigations. A TED Senior Fellow and the first Central Asian to speak at TED, he has led cross-border media initiatives spanning Ukraine to Kyrgyzstan. Since 2024, he has served as Development Manager at From the Republics, an Indigenous-led media project about Russia's ethnic republics.

**Bulat Khalilov** is an ethnographer from the Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria, a journalist, a music promoter, and co-founder of Ored Recordings, a label dedicated to traditional and local music from the North Caucasus and Transcaucasia. He conceptualizes, produces, and leads projects at the intersection of traditional and independent music, ethnography, and contemporary art. Passionate about bringing people together through storytelling, he explores and highlights cultural phenomena that often remain overlooked. His work focuses on uncovering or creating new contexts for non-obvious cultural expressions, ensuring they find their place in the broader cultural discourse.

**Dankhaiaa Khovalyg** is an independent journalist and decolonial activist from Tyva, author of the podcast & media project "говорит республика" ("republic speaking").

**Dr. Ekaterina Zibrova** (PhD in Psychology), associate researcher, Wits Centre for Diversity Studies, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa. Currently, she studies Indigenous perspectives on decolonisation, Indigenous identity in Russia, and its role in social changes. Also, her areas of academic interest include critical diversity literacy and politics of identity. Dr. Zibrova is a representative of the Evenki People (East Siberia).

**Elmira Abylbek** - Head of the Polis Asia Analytical Center, founder of the Esimde Research and Discussion Platform.

Focus: socio-political research in the Central Asian region and active promotion of civic education and science in Kyrgyzstan.

Main areas of interest: memory studies and decolonization processes, civil society in memory activism.

In 2007 - founded the think tank - the Polis Asia Analytical Center.

In 2013 - the discussion platform "Academy of Civic Education", which later became part of the Council of Europe Network of Schools of Political Studies in Strasbourg.

Since 2017 - the Esimde research and discussion platform (I remember) focus - understanding the history and memory of Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia in the 20th-21st centuries.

In 2023 - Esimde School "Breaking the Silence".

Synopsis:

The research and discussion platform "Esimde" (I Remember) was formed 7 years ago as a group of like-minded people asking questions to jointly search for answers.

Questions about: identity, memory, decolonial optics on the past, present and future.

The first stage is the question of opening "gray pages" or "murky past".

The second is data preservation. Archives - archipelagos. When state archives are still closed.

The third is understanding and forming a discourse (together searching for answers): from public discussions to academic ones, from art initiatives and exhibitions to a memorial tour of 1916, from documentary films to a performance, from Man and only then to the state and its monopolies.

**Elvis Colpuh** is the founder of the Crimean Cultural Center "KERMEN" in Germany and a prominent representative of the Crimean (Crimean Tatar) diaspora. Trained as a psychiatrist and forensic psychiatric expert, he now works in the field of cultural, educational, and human

rights advocacy. He supports displaced persons, defends the political rights of Crimean (Crimean Tatar) people, and promotes the preservation of Crimean identity in exile. His efforts focus on decolonial education, historical justice, and international recognition of the 1944 deportation of Crimean (Crimean Tatar) people as genocide. He regularly initiates dialogue with European institutions, including the Bundestag, and works to strengthen diasporic networks committed to the decolonization of Russia.

**Fatima Souleimanova** is a student at the Sorbonne and serves as the spokesperson for the Chechen national liberation movement, “United Force.” Since 2022, this movement has been cooperating with the Ukrainian Parliament and, since 2023, has been permanently raising the Chechen issue on the international stage, at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. Since 2025, the movement has also received mandates from six other peoples — the Germans of Russia, the Siberians, the Karelians, the Tatars, the Circassians, and the Dagestanis — to represent them as well before the Assembly.

**Gulnara Shuraleeva** is a LGBTQ feminist activist with a decade of human rights, social and gender justice work. Journalist, editor and researcher.

**Khandama Tudebei** is a project manager, language teacher, and activist dedicated to advocating for Indigenous and minority rights. She works at the intersection of decolonization, cultural preservation, and social justice. As a project manager, she has led initiatives supporting marginalized communities, while her work as a language teacher focuses on empowering learners through linguistic and cultural identity.

**Leyla Latypova** is a Tatar journalist and political analyst from Bashkortostan. She is a special correspondent with The Moscow Times’ English-language service covering Russia’s regional politics and the founder of From the Republics, the first Indigenous-led English and Russian language media covering Russia’s ethnic republics and minoritized communities.

**Lilia Yuldasheva** is a queer and decolonial researcher and activist, editor of Beda media. Lilia researches anti-migrant ideologies in Russia, Russia’s infrastructural neo-colonial projects in Central Asia, and cross-ethnic solidarities across administrative and state borders. Loves butterscotch, plane trees, and black tea.

**Madina Tlostanova** is a feminist thinker and fiction writer, professor of postcolonial feminisms at Linköping University. Her research interests focus on decoloniality, feminist social movements, and theories of the Global South; the postsocialist human condition, fiction, and art; critical future inquiries and critical interventions into complexity, crisis, and change. Tlostanova’s numerous works have been translated into many languages. Her most recent books include *A New Political Imagination, Making the Case* (co-authored with Tony Fry, Routledge, 2020), *Decoloniality of Knowledge, Being and Sensing* (Centre of Contemporary Culture Tselinny, Kazakhstan, 2020, Kazakhian translation - 2023), and *Narratives of Unsettlement. Being Out-of-joint as a Generative Human Condition* (Routledge, 2023). Currently, she is working on a book on the stateless future.

**Maria Ochir** is a Doctor of Historical Sciences, an archaeologist, and the author of four monographs. She is a Distinguished researcher of the Republic of Kalmykia and a corresponding member of the German Archaeological Institute. Born and raised in the Republic of Kalmykia, she studied at Leningrad University and has dedicated her career to the Kalmyk Research Center in Elista. Over the years, she has led archaeological excavations across Kalmykia, gaining deep insight into the lives of people in even the most remote areas.

**Mariana Katzarova** was appointed as Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation by the UN Human Rights Council on 4 April 2023. She officially assumed her function on 1 May 2023. Ms. Katzarova led the UN Human Rights Council mandated examination of the human rights situation in Belarus, in 2021-22. During the first 2 years of the armed conflict in Ukraine (in 2014-16), she led the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission team in Donbas as head of the regional office in Eastern Ukraine. For a decade she headed the Amnesty International investigations of human rights in Russia and the two Chechnya conflicts. With the Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights, she focused on the war in Bosnia and the creation of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY). Ms. Katzarova founded RAW in WAR (Reach All Women in War) in 2006 after working as a journalist and human rights investigator in the war zones of Bosnia, Kosovo and Chechnya. At RAW, she established the annual Anna Politkovskaya Award for women human rights defenders working in war and conflict zones. She was Advisor to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on combating human trafficking, and a senior advisor at the OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe).

**Mikhail Lobanov** is a Russian mathematician, democratic socialist, trade union activist, and former associate professor at Moscow State University (MSU)

**Nuria Fatykhova** is the Head of the Democracy Programme at the Dialog Office for Civil Society Cooperation (Vienna, Austria). She studied journalism, philology, and philosophy in Chelyabinsk, Tübingen, and Berlin, completing her graduate studies in philosophy.

As a curator of educational programs, she focuses on critical thinking, decolonial perspectives on Russian and European history, democratic theory, gender equality, and non-discriminatory discourse. As a journalist and publicist, she has contributed to several independent media outlets. Her writings explore issues of gender equality, women's rights, the care economy, and colonial legacies in Russian culture and politics.

**Sergey Tereshnikov** is a professional multilingual communicator and networker. He has worked at leading positions at the Civil Society Forum in Berlin. Besides, he has been the Coordinator of CURE – Campaign to Uphold Rights in Europe. Sergei has 15 years of experience in communications and 8 years of experience in international advocacy work. Previously, he worked for a number of NGOs in Russia, including his position as PR Director of the "Kudymkar. Culture Reloaded" Programme in the Komi-Permyak District, and business. He is also the author of i-networker, a YouTube channel about international networking, and three fiction and non-fiction books.

**Seseg Jigjitova** is an architect, artist, and Buryat activist based in Berlin. She is one of the organizers of the Forum and the founder and chair of the board of Nomads Indigenous Collective e.V., an organization dedicated to building transnational solidarities among North Asian, Central Asian, and global Indigenous communities. Her work explores the intersections of decolonization, anti-racism, and cultural memory, often drawing from her family history and experiences of migration. Currently, she dedicates her work to reclaiming North Asian narratives through art, storytelling, and community-based activism.

**Sholbaana Kuular** is the co-founder of "New Tuva", a Tuvan activist and a radiologist in forced exile. With the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Russia into Ukraine, she was forced to emigrate with her family from the country, since she had been engaged in anti-war activities since the beginning of the war.

Currently, she is actively studying the topic of decolonization and decoloniality in various fields. Also, she is studying for the recognition of my medical specialty at the Jeroen Bosch Ziekenhuis in the Netherlands.

**Stas Shārifullā** is a Basel-based researcher and Indigenous rights activist. Stas is a PhD candidate at the Department of Media Studies at the University of Basel, a guest lecturer and mentor at the Institute Art Gender Nature HGK FHNW (Basel), and a curator and co-host of Resynthesising the Traditional Lab at the CTM Festival (Berlin).

**Suleiman Mamutov** has dedicated the past decade to international humanitarian, development, and human rights work with Ukrainian and international organizations. His contributions extend to Ukrainian policy-making, where he co-authored legislation on IDPs, mine action, and Indigenous Peoples' rights.

In 2022, he was elected an expert member of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues; in 2024, he was elected a Rapporteur of the Forum. Currently, Suleiman is engaged with Amnesty International Ukraine and the OSCE to advance the rights of Indigenous Peoples and to promote international justice. His research and activities focus on the critical issues of Crimean Tatar identity, collective rights, and language preservation.

#### Publications

- 2024, Guiding principles for the implementation of Indigenous Peoples' rights to autonomy and self-government, United Nations, Economic and Social Council, UNPFII research

**Taras Byk** is a graduate of the International Relations Faculty of the Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, Ukraine, and was a visiting student at the LLM courses at Queen Mary University of London, United Kingdom. Taras worked at the Lvivska Gazeta newspaper, the Secretariat of the President of Ukraine, Viktor Yushchenko, the International Republican Institute in Ukraine, and the Wooden Horse Strategies consulting company. Besides, he was a trainee at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine's Representative Office in Lviv and at the European Commission in Brussels. Since 2022, Taras has been co-founder and Board Member of three NGOs – “Freedom Friends,” “Agency for Recovery and Development,” and “Decolonization,” working with the captive nations on the decolonization and de-imperialization of the Russian Federation.

**Viktoriiia Maladaeva** is buryad-mongol activist, filmmaker, and founder of the Indigenous of Russia Foundation. Maladaeva has organized major online decolonial conferences and forums, including gatherings in New York, to unite Indigenous voices and strategize for knowledge sharing and resistance to systemic injustice. As a filmmaker, Viktoriiia produces documentaries that spotlight the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples, including the intersectional struggles faced by LGBTQ+ Indigenous individuals in Russia. Viktoriiia is currently working on a documentary that investigates the history and legacy of residential schools for Indigenous peoples of the North and Siberia. This project aims to highlight the systemic oppression faced by these communities, focusing on the forced assimilation practices, loss of language and culture, and the broader impacts of Russian colonial policies on Indigenous children and families.

**Viktoriiia Šāltār** is an artist and curator, co-founder of the collective Yáhnñān Humě. Her practice engages with the Chuvash language, local mythologies, and fragmented cultural fabrics. Through a principle of reassembly—montage and the juxtaposition of materials from different temporal layers—she constructs compositions where loss becomes a space for imagination. She works with installation, object, text, and video.

**Viliuia Choinova** is a Sakha scientist, activist, and advocate for Indigenous peoples' rights with a background in environmental engineering. Viliuia is one of the organizers of the Forum, and she is currently pursuing studies in space geodesy and geoinformation at TU Berlin and focuses on decolonial issues, human rights, and the intersection of gender, climate, and urban sustainability.

**Yura Yurkin**, curator and researcher, works with the theme of Komi-Permyak identity and indigeneity in Russian contemporary art. He has worked in leading Russian museums, co-founded the educational project about queer culture Gender Blender, co-author of the art project Discover Russia — a board game revealing the theme of extractivist colonialism in Russian history.