



Observatoire ARGA

ARGA Atlas

**SYSTEMIC DEGRADATION OF JUDICIAL CONTROL IN
RUSSIA AS A RISK FACTOR IN INTERNATIONAL SEARCH,
EXTRADITION AND ASYLUM PROCEDURES:**

**Template-Based Russian Judicial Acts as an Evidentiary Indicator of
Formal Justice**

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Note on Anonymisation of Data

For the purposes of confidentiality, protection of personal data and prevention of the identification of individuals, information concerning the persons involved in specific criminal cases, judges, judicial assistants and other participants in the proceedings has been anonymised in this report.

Real surnames, initials, exact numbers of court materials, dates that could directly identify a specific person, and other identifying details have been replaced with neutral designations: “Case 1”, “Case 2”, “Case 3”, “Case 4”, “Moscow City Court Judge No. 1”, “Moscow City Court Judge No. 2”, “source ruling No. 1”, and so forth.

This anonymisation does not affect the substance of the quantitative and legal analysis, because the subject of this report is not the personal data of participants in specific cases, but the structure of judicial reasoning, the repetition of textual blocks, the nature of appellate review and the possible international legal consequences of using such judicial acts.

Where necessary, the full details of the judicial materials may be kept in a separate confidential annex and used only within procedural, legal, expert or institutional frameworks, in compliance with applicable rules of confidentiality.

Purpose of the Document

The purpose of this report is to analyse the systemic problem of formal judicial control in Russian criminal cases involving the imposition of preventive measures, international search mechanisms, subsequent extradition procedures and issues of international protection.

The report is not intended to describe isolated judicial errors or to assess the merits of specific criminal cases. Its purpose is different: to show how the repetition of judicial language, the mass use of standard reasoning blocks and the absence of individual assessment of defence arguments may transform a national judicial act into a source of international legal risk.

The focus of this analysis is appellate rulings of the Moscow City Court in cases concerning preventive measures and international search. The empirical basis consists of four anonymised cases compared against a corpus of 240 appellate rulings of the Moscow City Court for the period from 2025 to March 2026. The original analytical memorandum expressly states that the analysis was based on four target rulings and a corpus of 240 appellate rulings of the Moscow City Court concerning preventive measures and international search.

The central question of this report is not whether individual phrases coincide across different judicial acts. In criminal procedure, recurring references to legal provisions, standard procedural formulas and established legal language are inevitable. The problem arises when a substantial part of the reasoning section of a judicial decision is reproduced from other cases, while the individual arguments of the defence effectively disappear inside a pre-existing textual construction.

This problem has direct relevance for the international dimension. Russian judicial decisions on preventive measures, in absentia detention and international search do not remain within the domestic legal system. They are used as a basis for international search, extradition requests, justification of detention abroad, opposition to asylum claims and the formation of the requesting state’s position before foreign courts, migration authorities and international bodies.

Accordingly, where such judicial decisions are formal, template-based and do not contain a genuine individual assessment of the defence arguments, this must be taken into account not only within Russian proceedings, but also in any international assessment of the reliability of the corresponding criminal prosecution.

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Executive Summary

This report considers the template-based nature of Russian judicial acts not as a technical defect of legal drafting, but as an indicator of a broader institutional problem: the degradation of individual judicial control in criminal cases that have international significance.

The analysis of four anonymised appellate rulings of the Moscow City Court shows that the reasoning sections of these judicial acts substantially reproduce texts that had already appeared in other rulings of the same court. Under the main metric, coverage by blocks of five or more words with the most similar source, the figures are as follows:

- Case 1: 86.3%;
- Case 2: 84.4%;
- Case 3: 72.8%;
- Case 4: 69.3%.

The aggregated coverage across the full corpus is even higher:

- Case 1: 86.6%;
- Case 2: 94.3%;
- Case 3: 81.6%;
- Case 4: 82.2%.

These figures matter not in isolation, but because they allow a problem usually described only in evaluative terms to be measured: formal judicial control, absence of genuine assessment of defence arguments, mechanical reproduction of procedural formulas, presumption in favour of the investigative authorities and the ritualised nature of appellate review.

The most striking individual example is Case 1, where the reasoning section coincides by 86.3% with an earlier ruling of the same Moscow City Court judge. The differences between the two reasoning sections are mainly limited to the substitution of the person's identifiers, the procedural party filing the application, one descriptive formula and one additional sentence. In other words, a judicial act from a different case was effectively adapted to a new person.

The most important systemic example is Case 2, where a continuous matching block of 257 words was identified. This block is not linked to a single ruling only, but to an entire cluster of Moscow City Court acts. Such a level of similarity no longer points merely to the individual drafting style of one judge; it indicates a reproducible model of reasoning in cases concerning preventive measures and search.

The practical conclusion of this report is the following: where a Russian judicial decision on a preventive measure or in absentia detention does not contain a genuine individual assessment of the defence arguments, foreign courts, migration authorities, asylum bodies and institutions dealing with search and international cooperation should not treat such a decision as neutral and reliable confirmation of the need to restrict a person's liberty.

In international procedures, such materials should be regarded as evidentiary indicators of risk: the risk of formal justice, the risk of arbitrary criminal prosecution, the risk of lack of effective judicial protection, and the risk that national judicial acts are being used as instruments of exported criminal pressure.

Why This Issue Has Legal and International Significance

This issue is particularly important because Russian judicial decisions on preventive measures and international search are not internal documents that remain within the Russian procedural system. In cross-border criminal cases, they become part of the international package: they are sent to foreign authorities, attached to extradition requests, used to justify international search, presented as confirmation of the legality of criminal prosecution and relied upon to justify detention.

A foreign authority considering detention, extradition or asylum will usually not review the Russian criminal case on the merits. It will look at formal indicators: whether there is a court ruling, whether a preventive measure has been imposed, whether the person has been placed on a wanted list, whether the procedural grounds have been confirmed, and whether appellate review has taken place.

On paper, everything looks orderly: a first-instance court, an appeal, references to criminal procedure, formulas on legality and justification. Bureaucracy, as usual, loves a document that sounds confident, even when there is a hollow space inside it.

This is precisely why the problem of template-based reasoning has international significance. If an appellate court does not actually examine the individual arguments of the defence, but instead reproduces a pre-prepared reasoning block, a foreign authority may be misled by the external appearance of judicial control. It sees a judicial decision, but it does not see that the decision may contain no individual assessment of the circumstances of the particular case.

In international search matters, this affects the question of whether the search is a bona fide law-enforcement mechanism or a continuation of procedural pressure. In extradition cases, it affects the assessment of the fairness of future proceedings and the effectiveness of judicial protection in the

requesting state. In asylum cases, it affects the assessment of whether the criminal prosecution is an ordinary criminal process or whether it may bear signs of misuse of state mechanisms.

The legal significance of the issue is reinforced by the fact that this is not about one case. The present analysis identified both intra-judge similarities and inter-judge links. In Case 1, the similarity is connected to a ruling of the same judge. In Case 2, a large block appears in several rulings. In Case 4, the same 98-word block is linked to subsequent anonymised rulings of the Moscow City Court. In Case 3, there is textual proximity to a stable cluster of acts by one Moscow City Court judge.

Thus, the report records not merely the repetition of words. It shows a reproducible model: judicial reasoning in sensitive cases concerning personal liberty and international search may be constructed not as an individual review, but as an adaptation of a standard procedural text.

Normative and Institutional Framework

The domestic framework of the problem formally rests on the guarantees of criminal procedure: the legality of the preventive measure, the reasonableness of the suspicion, the presence of risks provided for by Russian criminal procedural legislation, the assessment of personal circumstances, the examination of whether a less restrictive measure could be applied, compliance with the right of defence and the right to appeal.

In cases of in absentia detention and international search, it is especially important that a judicial decision does not function only as an internal procedural act. It opens or strengthens the possibility of further state action beyond national jurisdiction: detention abroad, submission of an extradition request, use of international police cooperation channels and opposition to the person's arguments that the prosecution is political or otherwise unlawful.

The institutional problem lies in the gap between the form and the substance of judicial control. Formally, the appellate court reviews the defence arguments and the legality of the first-instance ruling. Substantively, if the reasoning section reproduces texts from other cases, the question arises whether the review was individual or whether the court merely confirmed an already existing procedural construction.

In normal judicial logic, reasoning must perform several functions. It must show which arguments were raised by the defence; which facts the court considered material; which evidence or materials support the court's conclusions; why a less restrictive preventive measure is impossible; why the particular circumstances of the person do not alter the legal assessment; and how the court connected general legal rules with the specific situation.

Template-based reasoning destroys this function. It replaces individual reasoning with a universal formula. Such a formula may look externally correct, contain references to the law and appear procedurally neat. But if the same formula is used in cases involving different accused persons, different circumstances, different defence arguments and different evidentiary records, it ceases to be reasoning in the strict sense. It becomes procedural scenery.

In the international dimension, this is especially dangerous. A foreign court or asylum authority is not always able to dissect the internal textual structure of a Russian ruling in detail. The task of the defence and of analytical institutions is therefore to move this problem from the level of general criticism to the level of evidentiary indicators: percentages of similarity, length of matching blocks, recurrence across cases and absence of response to specific defence arguments.

Methodology and Evidentiary Basis of the Analysis

This report is based on an analytical memorandum prepared on the basis of a corpus of 240 appellate rulings of the Moscow City Court concerning preventive measures and international search for the period from 2025 to March 2026. Four anonymised cases were selected as the target rulings.

The methodology is based on the comparison of the reasoning sections of judicial acts after textual normalisation. Elements that could artificially affect the result are removed or neutralised: case numbers, dates, individual identifiers, surnames of accused persons and judges, punctuation and other variable elements. The comparison then concerns the verbal constructions of the reasoning section itself.

Three key indicators were used.

The first indicator is the length of the longest continuous matching block. It shows the longest fragment of text that coincides in two rulings without interruption. Where such a coincidence amounts to dozens or hundreds of consecutive words, it can no longer be explained as a random similarity of legal language.

The second indicator is coverage by continuous blocks of 40 or more words. It allows the identification of large recurring fragments, that is, stable substantial templates.

The third indicator is coverage by blocks of five or more words. This is the main metric, because it captures what part of the reasoning section is effectively reproduced through recurring verbal constructions, even where longer blocks are broken by surnames, introductory words or minor editorial changes.

The substantive analysis separately took into account that direct quotations of legal provisions and explanations of higher courts may objectively appear in different rulings. The problem arises, however, where not only quotations of the law coincide, but also the court's own conclusions, transitional formulas, assessment of defence arguments and final statements on the legality of the preventive measure.

This methodology is important precisely because it removes the main possible counterargument: that "all judicial acts are similar because all courts apply the same law." The subject of the analysis is not merely identical references to legal norms, but the scale of repetition of reasoning constructions that should have reflected an individual judicial assessment.

Key Quantitative Indicators

The consolidated indicators for the four anonymised cases are as follows.

Designation	Period of Ruling	Category of Charge	Main Similarity Metric	LCS, Longest Continuous Block	Aggregated Coverage Across Corpus	Most Similar Source
Case 1	February 2026	Tax-related charge, in absentia preventive measure	86.3%	43 words	86.6%	Source ruling No. 1

Case 2	March 2026	Corruption-related charge, preventive measure	84.4%	257 words	94.3%	Source ruling No. 2
Case 3	June 2025	Tax-related and money-laundering-related charges, preventive measure	72.8%	76 words	81.6%	Source ruling No. 3
Case 4	November 2025	Tax-related charge, preventive measure	69.3%	98 words	82.2%	Source ruling No. 4

This table is important because it shows that in all four cases the main metric exceeds 60%. In other words, the problem is not limited to one ruling or one judge. In each case, a substantial part of the reasoning is reproduced from other judicial acts of the Moscow City Court.

The comparison between the main metric and aggregated coverage is particularly significant. The main metric shows similarity with the closest source ruling. Aggregated coverage shows what part of the text of the target ruling appears in the corpus as a whole, including through different sources. That is why in Case 2 the aggregated coverage reaches 94.3%: almost the entire reasoning section appears, in one form or another, in other rulings of the Moscow City Court.

This indicator is especially important for international analysis. It shows not merely possible copying from a single act, but the inclusion of a specific judicial decision in a broader corpus of recurring reasoning formulas.

Key Mechanisms of Formal Judicial Control

The first mechanism is the substitution of individual assessment with general procedural formulas.

In all of the analysed cases, the defence raised specific arguments: lack of evidence of involvement, departure from Russia before the criminal case was initiated, family circumstances, children, absence of official or managerial status, violation of the right to counsel of choice, absence of materials from the search file, and the speculative nature of the investigative authorities' arguments.

These arguments require an individual response. Yet in many instances, the judicial reasoning responds to them through a general formula concerning the legality of the ruling, the existence of grounds and the impossibility of applying a less restrictive measure.

The second mechanism is the use of blocks that externally look like reasoning, but function as universal templates.

For example, in Case 2, a continuous matching block of 257 words was identified. This is not a short reference to a legal norm or an ordinary procedural phrase. It is a large fragment of the reasoning section, which should have reflected an individual review of the case materials. Its recurrence in other rulings indicates that the court's logic is formed not from the facts of the specific case, but from a pre-existing textual construction.

The third mechanism is the transformation of appellate review into confirmation of the first-instance ruling without real analysis.

Formally, the appellate court must examine the arguments raised in the appeal. In practice, template-based reasoning allows the appearance of review to be preserved while avoiding a substantive

response. The court states that the defence arguments were examined and found unpersuasive, but it does not explain why a specific argument does not affect the conclusion. This creates a procedural situation in which the right of appeal exists in form, but loses much of its practical content.

The fourth mechanism is the export of a formal judicial act into an international procedure.

A Russian ruling on a preventive measure, confirmed on appeal, may then be used abroad as a document confirming the legality of the search, the need for detention and the seriousness of the criminal prosecution. An international authority sees that there was a court and that there was an appeal. But if the appeal is built on template-based reasoning, the real level of judicial control is significantly lower than the external form of the document suggests.

The fifth mechanism is anonymisation and the resulting difficulty of verification.

In a number of rulings, judges or participants are anonymised, which makes it more difficult to establish precise inter-judge links. However, textual analysis makes it possible to identify links even where the published copy conceals part of the details. This is especially important for international analysis: where personal identifiers are unavailable, the structure of the text itself becomes an evidentiary trace.

Anonymised Cases: Structure of the Identified Similarities

Case 1: The Highest Pairwise Similarity Indicator

Case 1 concerns a tax-related charge and an in absentia preventive measure. The main similarity metric with the closest source ruling is 86.3%. Aggregated coverage across the corpus is 86.6%.

The distinctive feature of Case 1 is that the reasoning section largely coincides with an earlier ruling of the same Moscow City Court judge. The differences between the two reasoning sections are mainly limited to the substitution of the person's identifiers, the procedural party filing the application, one formula describing the person's presence outside the Russian Federation and one additional sentence.

The substantive significance of this case is as follows: the court does not simply use a general legal structure; it effectively adapts previously existing reasoning to a different case. At the same time, the individual arguments of the defence receive no separate textual assessment.

Among the defence arguments requiring individual analysis were arguments concerning the person's actual residence outside the Russian Federation, the absence of any managerial or accounting role in the relevant organisation, the absence of evidence of involvement, departure abroad before the criminal case was initiated, and the nature of the alleged offence.

The court responded to these arguments through a general formula concerning the legality and justification of the ruling, the impossibility of choosing a less restrictive measure and the absence of grounds to overturn the first-instance decision.

Thus, Case 1 is the clearest example of individual formal review, where a judicial act from another case was effectively used as the basis for a new ruling.

Case 2: The Most Important Systemic Example

Case 2 concerns a corruption-related charge and a preventive measure. The main similarity metric is 84.4%, while the aggregated coverage across the full corpus reaches 94.3%.

The most significant indicator in Case 2 is the longest continuous matching block of 257 words. This is not merely the repetition of several standard legal phrases. It is a large fragment of reasoning that appears in a group of Moscow City Court rulings.

The systemic significance of Case 2 lies in the fact that the similarity is not linked only to one source ruling. The analysis shows the existence of a cluster of acts in which the same core reasoning is reproduced. This points to the practice of using standard blocks in different cases, rather than merely to the individual style of a particular judge.

Among the defence arguments that required individual assessment were arguments concerning the absence of a special status material to the qualification of the charge, the absence of evidence of involvement, the absence of proper notification, the incompleteness of materials connected to the search component, and template-based errors in the first-instance ruling.

However, the identified similarities show that the court's response to these arguments was embedded in a general reasoning block that was also used in other cases with different factual circumstances.

For this reason, Case 2 is of particular value for the international dimension: it makes it possible to speak not only of a defect in one case, but of the existence of a reproducible model of judicial reasoning in a category of cases involving preventive measures and international search.

Case 3: A Stable Cluster of Reasoning

Case 3 concerns tax-related and money-laundering-related charges. The main similarity metric with the closest source is 72.8%, and the aggregated coverage across the corpus is 81.6%.

The distinctive feature of Case 3 is its textual proximity to a stable cluster of rulings by one Moscow City Court judge. The closest sources demonstrate the recurrence of reasoning constructions within a series of judicial acts.

In this case, the defence relied on the first-instance ruling's inconsistency with applicable standards, the absence of sufficient evidence supporting the grounds for the preventive measure, the impermissibility of finding the suspicion justified solely on the basis of materials confirming the event of the offence, the impermissibility of using the severity of punishment as a factual ground for the measure, and a violation of the right of defence.

Part of the reasoning blocks used in the ruling functions as a general formula refusing to discuss proof at the stage of imposing a preventive measure. Such a formula may be acceptable as a general procedural framework, but it does not replace the individual analysis of a specific defence argument.

What is particularly important in Case 3 is that, even with lower indicators compared with Case 1 and Case 2, a high degree of aggregated template-based reasoning remains. This shows that the problem is not limited to the most obvious cases of near-complete textual coincidence. Even more "diluted" reasoning may still be embedded in a stable template-based corpus.

Case 4: Inter-Case Block and Subsequent Reproduction

Case 4 concerns a tax-related charge and a preventive measure. The main similarity metric is 69.3%, while aggregated coverage across the corpus is 82.2%. The longest continuous matching block is 98 words.

The distinctive feature of Case 4 is that the same 98-word block is linked to subsequent anonymised rulings of the Moscow City Court. In the published copies of those rulings, part of the details is concealed; however, textual comparison makes it possible to establish the presence of a shared reasoning construction.

The defence arguments included assertions that the person had left the Russian Federation before the criminal case was initiated, had not been hiding from the investigation in a legally meaningful sense, had family circumstances and minor children as dependants, and that the investigative authorities' arguments concerning risks were speculative.

The court responded through a general formula concerning the presence of information confirming the reasonableness of the suspicion and the legality of the selected measure. At the same time, the argument concerning departure before the initiation of the case and the argument concerning family circumstances did not receive a separate individual assessment.

Case 4 is important because it demonstrates that even with a relatively lower pairwise similarity indicator, high aggregated template-based coverage and a significant continuous block reproduced in other judicial acts remain present.

Typical Scenarios for the International Use of Russian Judicial Acts

The first scenario is international search.

In cases where a person is located outside Russia, a ruling on a preventive measure and its confirmation on appeal may be used as the basis for placing the person on an international wanted list or for maintaining such a search. If the judicial decision contains no individual assessment, the international search rests on a formal national act rather than on a genuinely reviewed necessity to restrict liberty.

The second scenario is extradition.

When requesting extradition, the requesting state usually presents a foreign court with a package of documents confirming the existence of a criminal case, the preventive measure and the person's procedural status. A Russian judicial ruling in such a package functions as evidence that the case has passed through a judicial filter. If that filter was formal, the defence must directly show the foreign court that the existence of a ruling does not equal the existence of genuine judicial review.

The third scenario is asylum and international protection.

In asylum procedures, the state of origin or its representatives may argue that the person is being prosecuted not for political or other improper reasons, but within an ordinary criminal case. In such conditions, judicial acts are used as an external indicator of the "ordinary" nature of the process. Analysis of template-based reasoning makes it possible to show the opposite: a formal judicial shell may conceal the absence of effective protection and individual consideration.

The fourth scenario is assessment of fair trial risk.

Foreign courts and international bodies considering extradition and protection issues assess not only detention conditions or the risk of ill-treatment, but also the prospect of a fair trial. If, already at the stage of preventive measure and appeal, it is evident that defence arguments receive no individual assessment, this becomes a relevant indicator of future risk.

The fifth scenario is protection against abuse of criminal prosecution.

In economic, tax, corporate and politically sensitive cases, formal judicial confirmation may be used to intensify pressure on a person abroad. The more template-based the reasoning, the more important the question becomes: is the criminal case ordinary law enforcement, or is it being used as an instrument of pressure, recovery, control or coercion?

Main Risks, Conflict Zones and Problem Areas

The first risk is false reliance on the form of a judicial act.

A foreign authority may proceed from the presumption that the existence of a judicial decision and an appellate ruling means the existence of full judicial control. However, template-based reasoning shows that this presumption requires verification. A judicial act may be properly formatted while substantively failing to respond to the individual arguments of the defence.

The second risk is the substitution of review with the seriousness of the charge.

In a number of cases, courts use general formulas concerning the seriousness of the charge, risks of absconding and the impossibility of applying a less restrictive measure. At the same time, they do not always analyse why, in the specific case, those risks are actually confirmed. This is particularly problematic in cases where the person left the country before the initiation of the criminal case, has a known place of residence, family, business or other stable ties. The automatic transformation of being abroad into “hiding” is one of the key conflict zones.

The third risk is the absence of individual assessment of defence arguments.

This is the central risk. If the defence points to the absence of a special status, the absence of a managerial role, departure before the case was initiated, children, lack of notification, lack of access to search materials or violation of the right to counsel of choice, the court must respond to each material argument. A general phrase that the arguments of the appeal are unpersuasive is not a full assessment.

The fourth risk is the international circulation of a defective decision.

Within the national process, a template-based ruling already undermines the quality of judicial control. But the international risk is greater: such an act may become the basis for detention in another country, restriction of liberty, denial of protection or acceleration of extradition proceedings. The defect of national reasoning is thus transferred into the international system.

The fifth risk is the inability of the defence to effectively contest a “ready-made” judicial formula.

When a judicial act is built on a template, the defence is not confronting reasoning, but a closed formula. It is impossible to respond to specific reasons because the court has not, in substance, given any. As a result, appeal becomes a dispute not with reasons, but with their absence.

The sixth risk is the reduced evidentiary value of Russian judicial acts in international procedures.

If a judicial act is built on a recurring template, it should not be treated as full confirmation of the individual necessity of a preventive measure. It may confirm only the fact that a national procedural decision exists, not the quality of the judicial review underlying it.

International Standards and Relevance for the Defence

The first basic standard is that a judicial decision restricting a person's liberty must be individually reasoned. This is especially important in cases of detention, in absentia arrest and international search, because such decisions directly affect the right to liberty and personal security.

The second standard is that the right to an effective defence includes not only the possibility of filing an appeal, but also the court's obligation to examine material arguments. If defence arguments are reproduced in the ruling but receive no individual response, the appellate procedure becomes formal.

The third standard is that, in extradition procedures, the requested state must assess not only the existence of documents, but also the risks connected with the quality of justice in the requesting state. Formal judicial reasoning may be used by the defence as an evidentiary indicator that the national procedure does not provide a sufficient level of judicial control.

The fourth standard is that, in asylum procedures, criminal prosecution should not automatically be treated as neutral where there are signs of abuse, formal judicial control or lack of effective protection. Template-based judicial acts may strengthen the argument that criminal prosecution is being used not only as a legal mechanism, but also as a repressive or instrumental one.

The fifth standard is that international search mechanisms must not be used to bypass safeguards. If a national decision on a preventive measure contains no individual assessment, it must not automatically legitimise an international restriction of liberty.

The sixth standard is that, when assessing the risk of future judicial proceedings, not only final judgments matter, but also the practice of interim decisions. If formal judicial control is already visible at the stage of preventive measure and appeal, this may indicate a broader risk of unfair proceedings.

Practical Conclusions and Model Legal Approach

The first practical task of the defence is not to limit itself to assertions about the formality of Russian justice. Such assertions are too easily perceived as general political rhetoric. The problem must be translated into measurable form: percentages of similarity, length of matching blocks, identification of source cases, recurrence of formulas across judges and absence of response to specific defence arguments.

The second task is to connect template-based reasoning not with the aesthetics of judicial writing, but with legal consequences. Repetition of formulations is not always, in itself, a violation. The violation arises where the repeated formula replaces individual assessment of the circumstances of the case. Therefore, each indicator of template-based reasoning must be accompanied by an analysis of which defence arguments remained unanswered.

The third task is to use such materials in international procedures not as an “additional complaint about a Russian court,” but as evidence of risk. In submissions to international bodies, extradition objections, asylum applications and communications concerning international search, such materials should be framed as evidence of a reproducible practice in which judicial control is formal in nature.

The fourth task is to build a unified evidentiary line. A report on template-based reasoning should be used together with the materials of the specific case: the appeal, the judicial ruling, the defence arguments, documents concerning place of residence, family circumstances, notification, departure abroad, procedural violations and the political or economic context of the prosecution.

The fifth task is to show the foreign authority that the problem concerns not only a past judicial decision, but also future risk. If, at an early stage, the court already fails to assess the defence arguments individually, there is a well-founded risk that similar formality will persist at later stages of the proceedings.

The sixth task is to separate the public report from the confidential annex. The public version should use anonymised cases, aggregated metrics and legal conclusions. The confidential version, intended for specific procedural use, may contain the exact details of judicial acts where this is necessary and permissible.

Conclusion

The analysis of template-based appellate rulings of the Moscow City Court shows that the problem of formal judicial control can be established not only through legal assessment, but also through quantitative indicators. Recurrent reasoning blocks, high percentages of textual similarity, inter-case and inter-judge links, and the absence of individual responses to defence arguments all make it possible to speak of a systemic problem with significance far beyond Russian jurisdiction.

The main conclusion of this report is that a formally issued judicial decision is not always evidence of genuine judicial control. In cases concerning preventive measures, international search, extradition and asylum, this distinction is fundamental. Foreign authorities must assess not only the existence of a Russian judicial act, but also the quality of its reasoning, its connection with specific defence arguments and signs of template-based reproduction.

For the defence, such materials have dual value. In the domestic context, they strengthen the argument that the appeal was examined formally and without individual assessment. In the international context, they make it possible to show a broader problem: Russian judicial acts may be used as instruments of exported criminal prosecution while failing to provide the level of judicial review that must precede the restriction of a person’s liberty.

In other words, this is not about stylistic poverty in judicial language. It is about the fact that template-based reasoning in cases concerning personal liberty becomes a mechanism for legitimising procedural pressure. When a court decision becomes a formula, international authorities must examine not only the signature and the stamp, but whether there is any genuine individual judicial assessment inside that decision.

Annex A. Terminology

Formal judicial control means a situation in which a court formally considers an appeal or application, but in substance does not provide an individual assessment of the material arguments raised by the defence.

Template-based judicial reasoning means the reproduction in a judicial act of substantial textual blocks already used in other cases, without sufficient adaptation to the circumstances of the specific case.

Reasoning section of a judicial act means the part of a judicial decision in which the court must explain the factual and legal grounds for its conclusion.

International search means the use of international law-enforcement cooperation channels to locate a person, secure detention or facilitate subsequent transfer.

Extradition risk means the risk of transferring a person to a state where they may face unfair proceedings, arbitrary detention, politically motivated prosecution or other violations of fundamental rights.

Risk of formal justice means the risk that a person's case will be considered through pre-prepared procedural constructions without an individual assessment of evidence, defence arguments and personal circumstances.

Exported criminal prosecution means a situation in which a national criminal case is used beyond the state of origin through international search, extradition requests, migration procedures, banking and compliance mechanisms or other cross-border channels of pressure.

Anonymised case means a description of a real case without the person's surname, court material number or other identifiers that would allow a participant in the proceedings to be identified.

Source ruling means a judicial act from the comparison corpus with which the target ruling has the highest level of textual similarity.

Aggregated coverage means an indicator showing what proportion of the target ruling's text appears in other rulings in the corpus, even where the similarities are distributed across several sources.

Annex B. Matrix of Risks / Evidentiary Indicators / International Consequences

Area of Analysis	Legal Risk	Evidentiary Indicator	International Consequence	Practical Comment
Reasoning of the ruling	The judicial act contains no individual assessment	High percentage of similarity with another ruling; repetition of blocks of 5, 40, 100+ words	A foreign authority may mistakenly treat a formal act as the result of full review	A comparative textual analysis should be attached, not merely an assertion of formality
Appellate review	The appeal is considered ritually, without a response to the defence arguments	The arguments are listed, but the court's response is reduced to a general formula on legality and justification	Trust in the effectiveness of national remedies is reduced	Show specifically which argument was raised and which individual response is absent

International search	The search is based on a formal decision on a preventive measure	In absentia detention is confirmed by a ruling with template-based reasoning	Risk of using international channels for procedural pressure	Communications concerning search should identify the defect in the national judicial basis
Extradition	A foreign court treats the Russian ruling as a reliable judicial filter	The judicial act contains large matching blocks with other cases	Risk of extradition on the basis of a document that does not confirm genuine individual review	Extradition objections should connect template-based reasoning with fair trial risk
Asylum	Criminal prosecution is presented as ordinary and neutral	Repetition of reasoning, absence of analysis of personal circumstances, formula concerning "hiding"	Risk that persecution will be underestimated and international protection refused	Use the report as country-context material in support of an individual application
Defence arguments	Material circumstances do not affect the court's conclusion	No response to arguments concerning departure before the case was initiated, family, children, status, notification or role in a company	Confirmation of the absence of an effective remedy	Prepare a table: defence argument, court response, why the response is template-based or insufficient
Inter-judge similarities	The problem goes beyond a single judge	One block appears in rulings by different judges or in anonymised acts	Argument of systemic practice rather than isolated error	Especially important for international bodies that require indicators of sustained practice
Anonymised rulings	Verification of personal responsibility and links between acts is made more difficult	The judge is concealed, but textual links are established through similarities and service details	Textual analysis becomes more important as an independent verification method	Avoid excessive conclusions about the identity of the judge, but record the textual connection
Repetition of legal provisions	Risk of confusing permissible quotation of law with a template-based judicial conclusion	Not only legal provisions coincide, but also the court's own conclusions	Strengthens the argument of mechanical reasoning	Distinguish quotations of law from the court's authorial formulas
Future proceedings	Formality at an early stage indicates the risk of further formality	Already at the preventive-measure stage, individual analysis is absent	Risk of unfair trial in case of return or extradition	Use as an argument concerning foreseeable procedural risk

Confidentiality	Public disclosure of details may harm the interests of clients	Presence of names, case numbers, exact dates or rare factual circumstances	Risk of secondary identification and procedural harm	The public version must be anonymised; full data should remain only in a confidential annex
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Annex C. Evidentiary Basis and Confidentiality Regime

This report has been prepared on the basis of an internal analytical sample of judicial acts, procedural materials and working tables of comparative textual analysis held by the organisation. These materials include a corpus of appellate rulings in cases concerning preventive measures and international search, anonymised data on individual cases, comparative indicators of similarity between reasoning blocks, and information on defence arguments reflected in the relevant procedural documents.

In order to ensure confidentiality, protect personal data, preserve legal privilege and prevent the identification of clients, this public version of the report does not contain a list of specific judicial decisions, material numbers, surnames of participants in the proceedings, exact case details or other data that could make it possible to identify the relevant persons. All quantitative findings and analytical indicators are presented in aggregated and anonymised form.

The full evidentiary basis, including the exact details of judicial acts, original comparison tables and procedural documents, is stored separately and may be used only within confidential legal, procedural, expert or institutional procedures where there is a lawful basis and in compliance with applicable information-protection requirements. Public disclosure of these materials is not the purpose of this report and is not necessary for understanding its central conclusion: the identified indicators point to a reproducible practice of formal judicial reasoning that is relevant to the assessment of risks in international search, extradition and asylum procedures.