Russian human rights defenders and organisations call on UN Human Rights Council to establish a Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Russia

20 September 2022

We, the undersigned human rights defenders and organisations from the Russian Federation, urge member States of the UN Human Rights Council to establish a mandate of a Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in the Russian Federation at its 51st session.

On 23 May 2022, a number of Russian HRDs and organisations called on the Human Rights Council to establish this mandate. The signatories to that call cited a “considerably more aggressive” environment for civil society over the last decade and the elimination of fundamental freedoms in our country. In the time since that call was made, the situation in the Russian Federation has deteriorated further.

In June, almost a decade since the original “Foreign Agents” law was established, the Russian Duma adopted new amendments to the law which further expand the definition of a ‘foreign agent’, including an extremely vague notion of “being under the foreign influence” which does not stand any legal scrutiny. As of 19 September, 116 individuals and organisations have been added to the Foreign agents registries in 2022 alone, including the Committee Against Torture, Vladimir Kara-Murza, and Deutsche Welle. Today, more than 500 individuals and organisations are designated as ‘foreign agents’.

Since February 2022, Russian authorities have arrested more than 16,000 people for participating in protests or voicing opposing or dissenting opinions, first and foremost in protest against actions of the Russian government in Ukraine. In late June, in continuation of its pressure on independent lawyers, Russian authorities detained the chairperson of the Udmurtia regional bar association, Dmitry Talantov, for critical comments made on Facebook.

At the same time, more and more avenues for engagement with the international community
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are becoming closed to Russian human rights defenders and organisations. In July, the Russian government failed for the second time to participate in the Human Rights Committee’s periodic review of Russia. In March this year, Russia was expelled from the Council of Europe. As of 16 September, Russian citizens no longer have the protections of the European Convention for Human Rights for complaints submitted in respect of violations committed after that date.

Moreover, in June, the Russian Parliament adopted new legislation related to judgements made by the European Court of Human Rights. Despite being legally obligated to do so, according to this new legislation the Russian government will no longer implement ECtHR judgements that entered into force after 15 March 2022.

In our letter to the Human Rights Council in May, members of the human rights community in Russia highlighted the growing political repression in Russia and diplomatic isolation making it nearly impossible to engage with the international community. As this situation worsens, we urge international action to support us.

We note and welcome the joint statements in respect of the situation in Russia made during the 49th and 50th sessions of the Human Rights Council. These statements clearly articulate the concerns of the international community for the human rights situation in the Russian Federation. We now call on Council member States to establish a mandate of a Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in the Russian Federation.

Signed:

Abuse Problem Resolution Center Nasiliu.Net (No to Violence)
Center for Assistance to International Protection (Moscow)
Citizens’ Watch Human Rights NGO
Crew Against Torture
Environmental Crisis Group
Environmental Human Rights Defenders program of the Russian Social-Ecological Union
Foundation of Sami Heritage and Development

Российские правозащитники и организации призывают Совет ООН по правам человека учредить должность специального докладчика по ситуации с правами человека в России

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Более того, в июне российский парламент принял новое законодательство в отношении решений Европейского суда по правам человека (ЕСПЧ). Несмотря на наличие соответствующего юрисдикционного обязательства, согласно этому новому принятому законодательству, правительство России больше не будет исполнять решения ЕСПЧ, вступившие в силу после 15 марта 2022 года.

В мае этого года в нашем письме, адресованном Совету ООН по правам человека, члены правозащитного сообщества России обозначили растущий масштаб политических репрессий в России и дипломатическую изоляцию, делающую практически невозможным взаимодействие с международным сообществом. Поскольку ситуация ухудшается, призываем международное сообщество оказать нам поддержку.

Мы отмечаем и приветствуем совместные заявления о ситуации в России, сделанные на 49-й и 50-й сессиях Совета ООН по правам человека. В этих заявлениях четко выражена озабоченность международного сообщества ситуацией с правами человека в Российской Федерации. Теперь мы призываем государства-члены Совета учредить мандат Специального докладчика по ситуации с правами человека в Российской Федерации.

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Foundation of Sami Heritage and Development
Friends of the Earth Russia
Human Rights Council of St. Petersburg
International Committee of Indigenous Peoples of Russia
Mass Media Defence Centre
“Memorial” Human Rights Defence Center
Moscow Helsinki Group
Movement for Defence of Voters’ Rights “Golos”
Movement of Conscientious Objectors
OVD-Info
Public Verdict Foundation
Russia Behind Bars
Sphere Charitable Foundation
Sakharov Center
Soldiers Mothers of St. Petersburg
Sova Center for Information and Analysis

Mr. Yuri Dzhibladze, member of the Council of Russian Human Rights Defenders
Ms. Karinna Moskalenko, human rights lawyer