

JOINT NGO LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION
TO STOP CLAMPDOWN ON FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

Dear President,

We, the undersigned non-governmental organizations, are writing to urge you to stop the clampdown on the right to freedom of association and end reprisals against independent non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Russia.

We are deeply concerned that under the legislation on “foreign agents”, hundreds of NGOs have been subjected to unannounced inspections by government officials which have interrupted and obstructed their legitimate work with dozens currently embroiled in lengthy court hearings. Several NGOs and their leaders have had to pay prohibitive fines, and some were forced to close down because they refused to brand themselves as “foreign agents” – an expression akin to spying. Recent legislative changes now give the Ministry of Justice powers to register organizations as “foreign agents” without their consent and without a prior court decision. More than a dozen of leading Russian rights groups have already been branded by the Ministry. These NGOs are not foreign spies or “agents”, and have worked in the interest of the people of Russia. Many more face the same fate.

Under the previous legislation, NGOs in Russia were already accountable to the government and the public, having to report on their activities and finances. It is difficult to avoid concluding that the only purpose of the legislation on “foreign agents” is to publicly discredit and stigmatise them.

We believe that NGOs are essential to the healthy functioning of society. They play an important role in providing much needed services to the public. They help keep officials accountable and improve policies in the interests of the people.

We are calling on you as the President of the Russian Federation and the guarantor of its Constitution and of the fundamental rights and freedoms enshrined therein, to take all necessary steps to ensure that the “foreign agents” law is repealed and NGOs in Russia are able to do their work without hindrance, harassment, stigmatisation or reprisals.

- Action des chrétiens pour l'abolition de la torture (ACAT) (France)
- Agir ensemble pour les droits de l'homme (AEDH) (France)
- Amnesty International
- ARTICLE 19 (UK)
- Bulgarian Helsinki Committee (Bulgaria)
- Bunge la Mwananchi (Kenya)
- Centre de recherche et d'information pour le développement (CRID) (France)
- Centrum Kształcenia Liderów i Wychowawców im. Pedro Arrupe (Poland)
- CIVICUS
- Comité catholique contre la faim et pour le développement – Terre solidaire (CCFD) (France)
- Committee on the Administration of Justice Ltd (CAJ) (Northern Ireland, UK)
- Cordaid (Netherlands)
Danny Sriskandarajah, our Secretary General
- English PEN (UK)
- European Human Rights Advocacy Centre (EHRAC) (UK)
- Emmaüs International (France)
- Finnish PEN (Finland)
- Foundation Max van der Stoep (Netherlands)
- Free Press Unlimited (Netherlands)
- Front Line Defenders (Ireland)
- Fundacja Edukacja dla Demokracji (Poland)
- Fundacja im. Stefana Batorego (Poland)
- Gevalor (France)
- Greenpeace Spain (Spain)
- Helsińska Fundacja Praw Człowieka (Helsinki Foundation *for* Human Rights) (Poland)
- Hivos (Netherlands)
- Human Rights Commission (Kenya)
- Human Rights House Foundation (Norway)
- Human Rights House Foundation HRHF (Switzerland)
- Human Rights Watch
- Index on Censorship (UK)
- INPRIS – Instytut Prawa i Społeczeństwa (Poland)
- Instytut Spraw Publicznych (Poland)
- International Service for Human Rights
- Kansalaisjärjestöjen ihmisoikeussäätiö KIOS (Finland)
- Kenya Human Rights Commission (Kenya)
- Koalicja Karat (Poland)
- La lliga del drets dels pobles (Spain)

- Ligue des droits de l'Homme (France)
- Małopolskie Towarzystwo Oświatowe (Poland)
- MEMORIAL Deutschland e.V. (Germany)
- Milieudefensie (Netherlands)
- MONIKA - Naiset liitto ry (Finland)
- Movies that Matter (Netherlands)
- Naisten Linja Suomessa ry (Finland)
- Netherlands Helsinki Committee (Netherlands)
- Nederlands Juristen Comité voor de Mensenrechten (NJCM)
- Nederlandse Vereniging van Journalisten (NVJ) (Netherlands)
- NGO Working Group OSCE (Switzerland)
- Observatoire pour la protection des défenseurs des droits de l'Homme (joint program FIDH and OMCT) (France)
- Pakolaisneuvonta ry (Finland)
- Pat Finucane Centre, (Ireland)
- Queer Youth Norway (Norway)
- REDRESS (UK)
- Reporters sans frontières (RSF) (France)
- Russie-Libertés (France)
- Sadankomitea (Finland)
- Society for Threatened Peoples (Switzerland)
- Stiftung Haus der Demokratie und Menschenrechte (Germany)
- Stowarzyszenie Wschodnioeuropejskie Centrum Demokratyczne (Poland)
- The Bellona Foundation (Norway)
- The Norwegian LGBT Association (Norway)
- UNITED for Intercultural Action (Netherlands)
- XENION Psychosoziale Hilfen für politisch Verfolgte e.V. (Germany)
- Автономная некоммерческая правозащитная организация «Молодежный центр консультации и тренинга» (Россия)
- Автономная некоммерческая организация «Правозащитная организация «МАШР» (Россия)
- Благотворительный фонд развития города Тюмени (Россия)
- Общественная правозащитная организация «Солдатские матери Санкт-Петербурга» (Россия)