



Open letter to Permanent Missions to the United Nations in Geneva, July 7, 2021

We the undersigned civil society organizations are gravely concerned about the state and trajectory of the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation. The politically motivated prosecution and arbitrary deprivation of liberty of Aleksei Navalny, his colleagues, associates and supporters, as well as outlawing organizations linked with him, have shed light on the wide range of human rights violations that are being committed by the authorities.

In recent years and particularly in recent months, the Russian authorities have constructed a legal landscape that is inconsistent with international standards, including the ICCPR and the ECHR, to which Russia is a party, and have arbitrarily applied those laws to oppress and target independent voices, from political and civil society groups and figures, to media outlets, to large groups of peaceful protesters.

We welcome the spotlight placed on these alarming trends at the 46th Session of the Human Rights Council via a cross-regional statement by 45 states, delivered on 12 March 2021. We welcome the calls made in this cross-regional statement on the Russian Federation: including to immediately and unconditionally release those arbitrarily detained and to respect its obligations and commitments under international human rights law and as a member of the Human Rights Council.

We hoped that the Russian authorities would have changed their approach following such clear expressions of concern from such a broad number of states. Yet, since the statement was delivered, the authorities have further expanded their crackdown, including through laws targeting members and supporters of civil society organizations labeled “extremist” or “undesirable” – in some cases, targeting them by retroactive application of newly introduced unduly restrictive legislation.

In this regard, continued, and heightened engagement by this Council is needed, including to:

- Condemn in the strongest terms the politically motivated prosecution and arbitrary deprivation of liberty of Aleksei Navalny, his colleagues, associates and supporters, and call on the Russian authorities to immediately release Aleksei Navalny and all those who have been detained for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly;
- Demand an immediate end to the ongoing harassment and prosecution of peaceful political and civil society activists, protesters and other dissenting voices in Russia, including the decisions to outlaw organizations linked with Aleksei Navalny, and insist on the full respect of the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association in line with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
- Urge the Russian authorities to immediately stop using laws on “foreign agents” and “undesirable organizations” to violate rights to freedom of association and expression, including by curbing activities of civic groups and attacking independent media outlets. As the first urgent step in this regard, urge the authorities to reconsider the recent labelling of Meduza and VTimes as “foreign agents”, as well as the labelling of individual journalists and civil society activists as “foreign agents”, to immediately release Mikhail Iosilevich and Andrey Pivovarov detained solely for their alleged participation in activities of the arbitrarily banned Open Russia movement, and to stop all prosecution for “offenses” under these laws; and
- Urge the Russian authorities to revert and repeal the legislative initiatives that unduly restrict the rights to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly, and bring Russia’s legislation into full compliance with its international human rights obligations.

1. Amnesty International
2. Fédération Internationale pour les Droits Humains (FIDH, International Federation for Human Rights)
3. Human Rights House Foundation
4. Human Rights Watch