



EU-RUSSIA CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM ГРАЖДАНСКИЙ ФОРУМ ЕС-РОССИЯ

Stop the Persecution of Activists from the Republic of Ingushetia and Ensure Their Rights and Freedoms

Statement by the Board of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum

The Board of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum condemns the continued persecution of activists from the Republic of Ingushetia and the restrictions on the freedom of movement and the freedom of assembly imposed on them. We call on the Russian federal authorities to conduct a thorough and open investigation of such incidents and to re-establish the rule of law in the North Caucasus.

Mass protests in Ingushetia began in September 2018, after the Head of the Republic, Yunus-Bek Yevkurov, and the Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov had signed an agreement on land-swap behind closed doors¹. In late March 2019 thousands attended protest rallies in Ingushetia's capital Magas, demanding that Yevkurov stepped down. The police forcibly dispersed the 27 March 2019 rally. In early April, homes of dozens of protest leaders were searched, activists were charged with administrative violations and sentenced to up to two months of detention or fines².

The conflict involves not only both parties of the treaty but also further North Caucasian republics and even other states.

A number of protesters were transported for a court hearing to Kabardino-Balkaria. On 25 April 2019, at least one leader of protests, Akhmed Barakhoev, – along with Malsag Uzhakhov, a member of the Council of Teips of the Ingush People, – was transported for a pre-trial detention to Vladikavkaz in the Republic of North Ossetia – Alania. The lawyers and relatives of Barakhoev were not informed on the occurred disposition. On 8 May 2019, Ismail Nalgiev, the Head of the NGO “Ingushetia's Choice”, was detained at the Minsk airport by the Belarus authorities before boarding a plane to Prague and subsequently extradited to Russia at the request of Russian law enforcement, which allegedly claimed that Nalgiev violated a travel ban. The most recent arrest associated with the protests in Ingushetia happened just yesterday, on 16 May 2019.

The Board of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum strongly believes that these unlawful practices should be stopped by the Russian federal authorities. Pressure on civic activists and demonstrators contradicts democratic principles and may lead to the degradation of the socio-political conditions in the Republic of Ingushetia and in the North Caucasus as a whole, a region infamous for brutal conflicts in the past.

¹ See, e.g., www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/325935 (in Russian)

² See the whole chronicle of protests at www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/326282 (in Russian)

We call on the Russian law enforcement authorities to conduct a thorough and open investigation of the March 2019 incidents leading to multiple arrests, to immediately release the detained demonstrators and ensure the freedom of assembly and the freedom of movement for Ingushetia's residents.

17 May 2019

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The EU-Russia Civil Society Forum was established in 2011 by non-governmental organisations as a permanent common platform. At the moment, 172 NGOs from Russia and the European Union are members or supporters of the Forum. It aims at development of cooperation of civil society organisations from Russia and EU and greater participation of NGOs in the EU-Russia dialogue. The Forum has been actively involved, inter alia, in the questions of facilitation of visa regime, development of civic participation, protection of the environment and human rights, dealing with history and civic education.

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