

Call for Justice and Duly Investigation of the Attack on Andrei Rudomakha and Other Activists of the "Environmental Watch on North Caucasus" Statement by the Working Group "Environment" of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum

The Working Group "Environment" of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum firmly condemns the violent attack aimed at Andrei Rudomakha, Coordinator at the "Environmental Watch of North Caucasus" (EWNC), and other activists of the organisation on 28 December 2017 in Krasnodar, Russia¹. We call for a duly investigation of the crime and demand to bring perpetrators to justice.

In the late evening of 28 December 2017, three men wearing balaclavas severely injured Andrei Rudomakha on his way back from documenting new constructions infringing environmental rules on the Black Sea coast². The attackers were waiting for Andrei and his colleagues as they exited their vehicle; the criminals beat and kicked Andrei in the face, leaving him unconscious. His colleague Viktor Chirikov was punched in the stomach, whilst a third member of the organisation was pepper-sprayed. The assaulters stole equipment, cameras, and computers from the vehicle before disappearing. Mr Rudomakha was brought to the hospital and is currently undergoing treatment. He has got a cerebral concussion, his nose was broken, and his skull was fractured.

There is reason to assert that this attack was carefully planned. Assaulters had information on Andrei Rudomakha's and his colleagues' travel itinerary as well as on the place of their residence.

EWNC and its members have continually been a subject to ungrounded persecution. Evgeni Vitishko, its Council member, had to spend several years in detention upon a framed up case³. Suren Gazarian, one of its prominent members, had to flee Russia and ask for an asylum in Estonia⁴. In April 2017, the house rented by Pavel Suganeev was ransacked and equipment was stolen⁵. In September 2016, masked men brutally beat EWNC and Greenpeace Russia volunteer firefighters during a training in the Krasnodar Region, leaving two of them severely injured⁶. And

¹ See also http://www.ewnc.org/node/24972 (in Russian)

² See more at https://zona.media/news/2017/12/29/rudo (in Russian)

³ See more at http://freevitishko.org

⁴ See inter alia the Statement by the Steering Committee of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum of 8 May 2014 at http://eu-russia-csf.org/fileadmin/Statements/StatementSurenGazaryan05 05 2014 en.pdf

⁵ See more at http://ewnc.org/node/24082 (in Russian)

⁶ See more at http://www.ewnc.org/node/23022 (in Russian)

these are only few of the latest numerous attacks on EWNC activists! So far, previous cases have not been investigated thoroughly by the police, and no attacker have been sought, arrested, or condemned.

The Working Group "Environment" of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum, taking into account the high public significance of a series of crimes against EWNC members, urges Vladimir Kolokoltsev, Minister of Internal Affairs of Russia, as well as Alexander Bortnikov, Head of the Federal Security Service, and Alexander Bastrykin, Head of the Investigative Committee of Russia, to take immediate action, conduct a thorough investigation of the attack of 28 December 2017, and bring all perpetrators of this and previous assaults to justice.

We also demand that authorities would fulfil their international obligations and ensure safe and favourable conditions for the work of the "Environmental Watch on North Caucasus" as well as other environmental and human rights defenders in the region.

Considering the high attention paid to environmental safety and environmental issues in Russia, what had been mentioned, among other things, throughout the just-concluded Year of Ecology, we are convinced that law enforcement bodies will take all actions depending on them and that contractors and customers of these vicious crimes will be found and punished.

9 January 2018

Contacts:

Alexander Fedorov, Coordinator, Working Group "Environment" of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum / Association of Environmental Journalists (Moscow, Russia); <u>fyodorovalex@qmail.com</u>

Ksenia Vakhrusheva, Board Member of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum / BELLONA (St.Petersburg, Russia); <u>ks.vakhrusheva@gmail.com</u>

The EU-Russia Civil Society Forum was established in 2011 by non-governmental organisations as a permanent common platform. At the moment, 161 NGOs from Russia and the European Union are members 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.

EU-RUSSIA CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM E.V. / ГРАЖДАНСКИЙ ФОРУМ ЕС-РОССИЯ

Address (Secretariat): 44, Bad St., 13357 Berlin, Germany, Tel. + 49 (0)30 46 06 45 40

Адрес (Секретариат): Бадштрассе 44, 13357 Берлин, Германия, тел. + 49 (0)30 46 06 45 40

Website: www.eu-russia-csf.org E-mail: info@eu-russia-csf.org

Facebook: <u>EU-Russia Civil Society Forum</u> Twitter: <u>@EU Russia CSF</u> YouTube: <u>EU-Russia Civil Society Forum</u>