

Mr Josep Borell Fontelles
The High Representative and Vice President
European Commission
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Subject: Call for de-listing organisations such as 'People in Need' from the list of 'Undesirable Organisations' and to stop Russian repression practices towards civil society

We, the undersigned Members of the European Parliament, are writing to express strong concerns about the addition of the Czech NGO People in Need to the list of undesirable organisations in Russia. Furthermore, to express grave concerns for civil society in Russia in the light of the signed bill that amends a current law on media outlets and allows to target foreign and Russian civil society. It is impermissible that a well-respected organisation from a European member state is deemed 'undesirable'. We see these actions as part of a new wave of common repression against independent civil society and democracy in Russia.

People in Need is a non-profit NGO that was established 25 years ago in the Czech Republic. In 2015 the organisation was awarded the European Citizen's Prize for their activities. The organisation's main activities are emergency relief and development cooperation in critical regions, human rights support, social integration programmes, and educational and awareness programmes. Their work is currently an essential part of more than 50 countries. The organisation in Russia focused on the support of the civil society, mainly activists, bloggers, critically-minded thinkers, groups of people that are working on anti-corruption and transparency, environmental protection, minority rights protection, protection and upholding human rights and right to assemble, and even more.

Russian Ministry added the organisation People in need to the list of the undesirable foreign and international NGOs on the territory of the Russian Federation. These steps were taken without further elaboration on the 7 November by Deputy Attorney General under the federal law no. 272-FZ of 28th December 2012 'On Sanctions for Individuals Violating Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms of Citizens of the Russian Federation.' Moreover, Russia just passed a law targeting civil society scrutiny that allows any bloggers, journalist, activists, who receive any foreign money to be declared as a foreign agent. This vaguely drafted law complies with a consistent policy to suppress freedom of speech and expression.

We call on the president of the European Commission, president and members of the European Council and High Representative of European Action External Services to publicly express their dismay over the decisions and communicate the position to their Russian counterparts. The issues should be raised as long as necessary during meetings between Brussels and Moscow with the goal of de-listing People in Need and similar NGOs. Moreover, ultimately stopping Russian repressive practices against civil society and upholding the right for freedom of speech and expression.

Furthermore, we call on Russian authorities to repeal not only this decision but also to reconsider the entire legislation, which contravenes the fundamental principles of international law and violates the international obligations of the Russian Federation.

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Co-signators:

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