



Statement by members and supporters of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum in relation to the tragic death of Irina Slavina

We are shocked and saddened by the tragic death of our colleague, journalist Irina Slavina from Nizhny Novgorod. On October 2, 2020, Irina Slavina, editor-in-chief of Koza Press, an independent online media outlet, died after setting herself on fire in front of an interior ministry office in the city of Nizhny Novgorod. She died from her injuries at the scene. Our deepest condolences go out to Irina's family and friends.

We do not perceive this as a trivial act of suicide to escape from reality (the interpretation advocated for by conservative circles and law enforcement in Russia), but as an ultimate, sacrificial act to underline the flagrant lack of freedom, injustice and arbitrariness of the security forces in the country.

We, media workers, media experts and civil society activists, often fail to notice the boorishness and meanness of the authorities, and how they continually neglect our rights and freedoms. We are used to working under conditions of censorship and self-censorship, as well as dealing with constant pressure, repression and provocation from the security forces. The sense of solidarity, the fundamental ethical core of the struggle for our rights and freedoms, has been almost completely wiped out by policies of deceit and disintegration.

We expressed almost no reaction when the authorities passed humiliating laws, branding NGOs as "foreign agents" and international organisations as "undesirable" and making human rights defenders, environmentalists and philanthropists "spies" in the eyes of the public. It is not surprising, then, that very few people have responded to the fact that the same "agent" law has now been adopted for journalists and the media. It is worth remembering that the persecution of Irina Slavina was entirely related to the accusation of her working for an "undesirable organisation".

With this statement, we reach out to the colleagues of Irina Slavina to remind them of the solidarity that exists for those fighting for civil rights in Russia. We call upon journalistic organisations to assess this tragedy and judge the actions taken by Russian law enforcement against Irina Slavina in the days leading up to her death.

We demand that the Prosecutor's Office and the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation provide an objective and transparent investigation of the case and the initiation of criminal proceedings under Article 110 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation "Incitement to Suicide".

We call upon international organisations to defend and protect freedom of speech and the rights of journalists to provide in-depth analyses of the persecutions, restrictions and repressions against civic activists, human rights defenders and non-profit organisations, as well as journalists and media in Russia.

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Viktor Yukechev, journalist, director of the human rights foundation “Tak-tak-tak”
Grigory Pasko, Association of journalists-investigators
Lev Ponomarev, Public Association “For Human Rights”
Lyubov Moyiseeva-Elye, Board member of the Kaluga movement “For Human Rights”
Svyatoslav Khromenkov, Chairman of “Siberia without Torture” organization
Magomed Mutsolgov, journalist and human rights defender, Head of the human rights organisation “MASHR”
Anton Khvostov, Center of Social, Legal and Environmental Initiatives
Igor Kalyapin, Interregional Public Association “Committee Against Torture”
Yuri Dzhibladze, Centre for the Development of Democracy and Human Rights
Olga Gnezdilova, lawyer, “Legal Initiative” Project
Elena Belokurova, German-Russian Exchange
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