



EU-RUSSIA CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM ГРАЖДАНСКИЙ ФОРУМ ЕС-РОССИЯ

Stop Repression: A Call for Justice and Freedom in Russia **Statement by the Board of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum**

The Board of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum is outraged by the violation of the judicial procedure, unjustified large-scale detentions of protesters and the inadmissible violence of the Russian police against the civilians. We express our solidarity with and support to the Russian civil society, as well as the lawyers and human rights defenders providing protection to the detainees. The Board demands that the Russian authorities stop the repression and respect the rights and freedoms of citizens, including the freedom of assembly.

Over the last weeks, Russian society has experienced some of the worst forms of repression and pressure on civic activists and observers¹, journalists and even ordinary citizens who did not take part in the protest. Russian juridical norms and standards were violated many times. Thousands of protesters were detained and arrested across Russia during the peaceful demonstrations on 23 and 31 January, as well as on 2 February: over 4,000²; 5,658³ and 1,463⁴ people respectively. Human rights defenders recorded hundreds of cases of violations of the law and human rights⁵ during the detentions and in the police departments. People were placed in overcrowded paddy wagons without heating and without access to hygienic facilities, water and food. Due to the lack of places in special reception centres, people were driven around the city for days⁶. The detainees were deprived of their phones or forbidden to call, lawyers and monitoring commissions were not allowed access to many police departments⁷. Some of the detainees received threats, others were reportedly beaten and even tortured by the police. Some of the police departments were closed off according to some secret protocols. It is reported about the terrible conditions of detention, including lack of potable water, in the Sakharovo deportation centre for migrants in Moscow suburbs, where, due to the lack of places in the special detention centres in Moscow, arrested people are being held.

¹ See www.mhg.ru/news/laureata-premii-mhg-oksimirona-i-nablyudatelya-ot-spch-nikolaya-svanidze-zaderzhali-na-akciyah (in Russian)

² See <https://ovdinfo.org/news/2021/01/23/spisok-zaderzhannyh-na-akciyah-v-podderzhku-alekseya-navalnogo-23-yanvarya-2021-goda> (in Russian)

³ See <https://ovdinfo.org/news/2021/01/31/spisok-zaderzhannyh-na-akcii-v-podderzhku-alekseya-navalnogo-31-yanvarya-2021-goda> (in Russian)

⁴ See <https://ovdinfo.org/news/2021/02/02/spisok-zaderzhannyh-v-svyazi-s-sudom-nad-alekseem-navalnym-2-fevralya-2021-goda> (in Russian)

⁵ See <https://ovdinfo.org/articles/2021/01/23/svobodu-navalnomu-itogi-vserossiyskoy-akcii-protesta-23-yanvarya> (in Russian)

⁶ See <https://ovdinfo.org/articles/2021/01/23/svobodu-navalnomu-itogi-vserossiyskoy-akcii-protesta-23-yanvarya> (in Russian)

⁷ See www.dw.com/ru/palata-advokatov-obratilas-v-mvd-rf-iz-za-narusheniya-prav-zashhitnikov/a-56458946 (in Russian)

Searches of homes and detentions of activists in multiple Russian regions continued on 6-7 February 2021⁸. Although no mass protest actions were planned over the past weekend, the police shut down the central parts of Moscow and St. Petersburg – just in case⁹.

This repression is taking place against the backdrop of the situation of Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny, who returned to Russia from Germany after receiving treatment for the effects of poisoning. He was detained right upon his arrival¹⁰ and then sentenced to 3.5 years prison term¹¹ for violating the terms of an earlier suspended sentence. Meanwhile, in 2017, the European Court of Human Rights found that sentence to have been arbitrary and manifestly unreasonable¹² and, as a consequence, in violation of Articles 6 and 7 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

The Board of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum appeals to international institutions to react to the multiple human rights violations in the Russian Federation and to show an unquestionable commitment and strong actions in support for independent civil society. Even more than ever, Russian citizens need protection according to the international law and Council of Europe norms and standards and, despite the disappointing result of the visit of Josep Borrell, European Commission's Vice-President / High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy¹³, to Moscow last week, the consistent application of the EU's fifth guiding principle of engagement with Russian civil society.

8 February 2021

Contacts:

Pavel Havlíček, Board Member, EU-Russia Civil Society Forum / AMO – Association for International Affairs (Prague, Czech Republic); pavel.havlicek@amo.cz

Mikhail Tumasov, Board member, EU-Russia Civil Society Forum / Russian LGBT Network (St. Petersburg, Russia); mtumasov@lgbtnet.org

The EU-Russia Civil Society Forum was established in 2011 by non-governmental organisations as a permanent common platform. At the moment, 183 NGOs from Russia, the European Union and the United Kingdom 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.

⁸ See <https://ovdinfo.org/express-news/2021/02/06/vo-vladivostoke-siloviki-prishli-domoy-k-mestnym-aktivistam>, <https://ovdinfo.org/express-news/2021/02/06/v-sankt-peterburge-k-aktivistam-prishli-s-obyskami> and <https://ovdinfo.org/express-news/2021/02/07/v-astrahani-zaderzhali-treh-piketchikov-trebovavshih-svobody-politzekam> (in Russian)

⁹ See e.g. <https://meduza.io/news/2021/02/07/v-moskve-omonovtsy-otsepili-manezhnuyu-ploshchad-i-uehali-spustya-neskolko-chasov> (in Russian) and www.thetimes.co.uk/article/russian-police-shut-down-st-petersburg-for-rally-that-never-was-5nk602z9d

¹⁰ See www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/18/alexei-navalny-calls-grow-for-release-of-arrested-russia-opposition-figure

¹¹ See www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-55910974

¹² See <http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng-press?i=003-5887483-7508215>

¹³ See https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/92722/My%20visit%20to%20Moscow%20and%20the%20future%20of%20EU-Russia%20relations