



## EU-RUSSIA CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM ГРАЖДАНСКИЙ ФОРУМ ЕС-РОССИЯ

### **A Call to Release Alexey Gorinov and to Stop Political Pressure Against Local Opposition Politicians in Russia**

#### **Statement by the Working Group “Citizens in local self-governance” and the Board of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum**

The members of the Working Group “Citizens in local self-governance” and the Board of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum are saddened and outraged by the verdict given on July 8 2022 to Alexey Gorinov.

Gorinov, a 60-year-old independent Local Council representative of Moscow Krasnoselsky district, was sentenced to 7 years of prison for “discrediting the Russian army”<sup>1</sup> under the new article 207.3 of the Federal Law N32-FZ published on March 4, 2022<sup>2</sup>. He was detained on April 26, 2022 after having openly disagreed at the March 15th local council meeting with organising a competition of children’s drawings on Children’s Day saying “our children die every day – and for your information, about a hundred children have been killed in Ukraine. Children become orphans, grand- and great-grandchildren of those who fought the Second World War are now in the middle of the war on the territory of Ukraine. I think that all the effort of the civil society should be channelled towards stopping the war in Ukraine and the withdrawal of Russian troops from the territory of Ukraine”<sup>3</sup>.

The head of the Krasnoselsky district Local Council Elena Kotenochkina has left Russia and was trialed and arrested in absentia on April 29, 2022<sup>4</sup>.

Boris Romanov, a local activist and trainer of civic education and human rights from Saint Petersburg, was detained on May 11, 2022 and is now under arrest awaiting trial<sup>5</sup>. He is accused of spreading “fake news” (article 207.3) while giving a speech at the Svetlanovskoe district Local Council meeting. Romanov was a candidate in the 2019 Local Council elections and in the elections to the St. Petersburg Legislative Assembly in 2021. He is a vocal critic of local pro-government politicians.

In view of the upcoming regional and municipal elections on September 11, 2022 the pressure against independent local and regional council representatives and candidates is building up. While the article 207.3 has been used hundreds of times against activists all over Russia, the main target group is journalists and local council representatives. On July 13, Ilya Yashin, a well known opposition figure and an independent local council representative of Krasnoselsky district in Moscow was put on remand until September 2022, awaiting trial on charges of discrediting the Russian army<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://zona.media/article/2022/07/08/gorinov>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons\\_doc\\_LAW\\_410887/3d0cac60971a511280cbba229d9b6329c07731f7/#dst100029](https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_410887/3d0cac60971a511280cbba229d9b6329c07731f7/#dst100029)

<sup>3</sup> <https://zona.media/article/2022/05/05/gorinov>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/5338579>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.severreal.org/a/zaklyuchenie-rezhim-neizvestnost-v-sizo-za-feyk-ili-grazhdanskuyu-pozitsiyu-/31861611.html>

<sup>6</sup> <https://zona.media/chronicle/yashin>

Apart from the “fake news” article 207.3 of the Criminal Code, other articles of the Administrative Violations Code, such as 20.3 (demonstration of extremist symbolics)<sup>7</sup> and 19.3 (disobeying police orders)<sup>8</sup> are being actively used to detain opposition politicians. Several detentions and administrative cases of high profile local opposition politicians, including Mikhail Lobanov<sup>9</sup>, Alexander Zamyatin<sup>10</sup>, Andrei Morev<sup>11</sup>, Yulia Scherbakova<sup>12</sup> and others indicate the difficulties that they will have to face at their electoral campaigns and later as Local Council representatives if elected for the new term. Despite that, many independent politicians have registered their candidacies and are still willing to run in the September 11th elections.

The members of the Working Group “Citizens in local self-governance” and the Board of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum consider all the above mentioned cases politically motivated and insist that freedom of speech and expression is one of the fundamental rights of any citizen of the Russian Federation as well as the right to be fairly elected.

We call for the immediate release of Alexey Gorinov, Boris Romanov and Ilya Yashin and for the abolition of repressive policies against independent politicians.

Please spread the information about Alexey Gorinov’s arrest and support local deputies and activists under political pressure by signing the petition for Alexey Gorinov: <https://chng.it/fCmMYcZzwk>.

To follow the cases of Alexey Gorinov and Boris Romanov, please join their support Telegram channels:

“Free Alexey Gorinov” [https://t.me/alexei\\_gorinov\\_2022](https://t.me/alexei_gorinov_2022)

“Free Boris Romanov” [https://t.me/free\\_boris\\_romanov](https://t.me/free_boris_romanov)

13 July 2022

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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, 190 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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<sup>7</sup> [https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons\\_doc\\_LAW\\_34661/e3620d183bd6d1fe2ab8b0c912809857217325a2](https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_34661/e3620d183bd6d1fe2ab8b0c912809857217325a2)

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons\\_doc\\_LAW\\_34661/616c3e1ac3523ad0b345b51f7c9e3131c936fd3c](https://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_34661/616c3e1ac3523ad0b345b51f7c9e3131c936fd3c)

<sup>9</sup> <https://zona.media/news/2022/06/07/lbnv>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.24liveblog.com/live/UaUkr?n=3085726958565667204>

<sup>11</sup> <https://ovd.news/express-news/2022/07/07/glavu-municipalnogo-okruga-yakimanka-zaderzhali-na-vyhode-iz-suda>

<sup>12</sup> <https://ovd.news/express-news/2022/06/14/v-moskve-zaderzhali-dvuh-mundepov-po-okrugu-cheremushki>