



EU-RUSSIA CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM ГРАЖДАНСКИЙ ФОРУМ ЕС-РОССИЯ

Persecution of members of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum – the Association GOLOS and the Kostroma center for support of community initiatives – should be stopped immediately

The Steering Committee of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum expresses its serious concern of the legal pressure on the Association of non-profit organizations for the protection of the rights of voters GOLOS and Kostroma center for support of community initiatives, and demands an immediate end of the persecution and withdrawal of the charges.

On the 9th of April 2013 the Ministry of Justice initiated an administrative case against the Association GOLOS and its executive director Lilia Shibanova. A similar case was brought against the organization in Kostroma on the 16th of April. Prosecutors claim that these NGOs had to register as "foreign agents" in accordance with the recently adopted Russian law because they receive foreign funding and engage in political activity. Legal pressure has been applied also in cases of some other NGOs in Russia.

Thus the representative of the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation at a meeting of the Human Rights Council under the President of the Russian Federation held on the 15th of April recognized that the definition of "political activity" in each case will be considered individually and subjectively. Such approach cannot be considered as legal and it is unacceptable in a modern democratic state. Today, the protection of the electoral rights of citizens and election observation was acknowledged as "political activity". Tomorrow, the same can happen with any other activities of NGOs in Russia.

The country's leaders have repeatedly stated that Russia is developing as a democratic state where the rule of law is dominant. The persecution of non-governmental organizations on the ground of their sources of funding is contrary to this statement, it is discriminatory and violates the international obligations of the Russian Federation. In particular, the UN General Assembly resolution dated 21st of March 2013 on the protection of human rights defenders and the Fundamental principles of the status of NGOs in Europe, adopted in 2002 by the Council of Europe. These documents recognize the right of NGOs to freely receive funding both from national and foreign individuals and legal entities, and not being discriminated on the ground of the origin of their funding sources.

Association GOLOS and Kostroma Center for Support of Community Initiatives play an important role in the development of an independent civil society in Russia. If the court acknowledges claims of the prosecutors to these organizations, they will face high fines, which could lead to their closure.

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

Website/ Веб-сайт: www.eu-russia-csf.org

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

Secretariat/ Секретариат: DEMAS – Association for Democracy Assistance and Human Rights / DEMAS – Ассоциация по поддержке демократии и прав человека, Pohorelec 6 , 118 00 Praha 1, Czech Republic / Чешская Республика



EU-RUSSIA CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM ГРАЖДАНСКИЙ ФОРУМ ЕС-РОССИЯ

The Steering Committee of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum calls on the Russian authorities:

- to stop the persecution of the Association of non-profit organizations for the protection of the rights of voters GOLOS and the Kostroma center for support of community initiatives;

- to ensure compliance of the Russian legislation with the international commitments voluntarily taken by the Russian Federation regarding the work of NGOs in Russia, and to end the discriminatory practice of Russian NGOs according to their funding sources;

- to publish the full list of NGOs which have been inspected by prosecutors and other state authorities in Russia in 2013, and the amounts of their foreign funding. According to Vladimir Putin's words during his interview on the 5th of April 2013, 654 Russian NGOs received around \$ 1 billion from foreign sources from November 2012 to March 2013. Meanwhile, in the opinion of many Russian NGOs, this amount is far too high due to the inclusion in the statistics such organizations as the Chamber of Commerce and the Russian state-owned corporations. The publication of this information in the public domain is necessary for establishing a dialogue between the state and society.

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

Website/ Веб-сайт: www.eu-russia-csf.org

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

Secretariat/ Секретариат: DEMAS – Association for Democracy Assistance and Human Rights / DEMAS – Ассоциация по поддержке демократии и прав человека, Pohorelec 6 , 118 00 Praha 1, Czech Republic / Чешская Республика