



**Statement prepared by the Steering Committee
of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum**

**On the persecution of independent civic organisations in Russia in the framework of
the legislation on “foreign agents”**

For the CSF Steering Committee, the observation of human rights and freedoms in accordance with international conventions, beneficial conditions for civic activism and the activities of the non-profit sector are key factors for the development of democratic societies in our countries, a guarantee for peace and well-being on the European continent and a precondition for the successful development of the cooperation between Russia and the European Union.

In this context, we emphasise the growing persecution of independent civic organisations in Russia in the course of the implementation of the repressive legislation on “foreign agents”. We are deeply concerned about the results of lawsuits and court proceedings and the judgment of “foreign agents” with enormous penalties for the Association “Golos” (CSF member) and its partner, the Regional NGO “Golos”, the Kostroma Support Centre for Public Initiatives (CSF member) and the NGO “LGBT Film Festival Side by Side”. These are the four first verdicts in the course of the implementation of the law on “foreign agents” that have recently taken place.

Furthermore, we are deeply concerned about an administrative lawsuit for the denial to register as “foreign agent” and pending procedures against the Anti-discrimination Centre “Memorial” (CSF member), Centre “Grani” (CSF member), the LGBT organisation “Vykhod”; the same applies to the prosecution's demand that at least 11 NGOs have register as “foreign agent” within 30 days, and many of them are also CSF members. Moreover, almost 40 more Russian NGOs are threatened - many of them are CSF members: the received a “warning” from the prosecution that they had to register as “foreign agents” if they continue to perform their “political activism” and again receive financial support from abroad. Some couple of hundreds Russian NGOs are waiting to receive the results of the prosecutors' inspections.

In all cases without exception, the prosecution claims legitimate civic action and work supporting human rights, fighting corruption, protecting the environment, and civic control of the state powers as “political activism” performed by the NGOs. The position of Russian NGOs is unanimous - all of them refuse to accept the insulting, discriminating status as a “foreign agent” that does not correspond with reality, no matter if they risk that their organisation is closed and that the leaders might be charged with offences of the criminal code. We fully support them in their principal position.

If this campaign of pressure and prosecution of independent non-governmental organisations will not stop in the very near future, the consequence will be that over the next months, dozens of the most active organisations that are crucial for civil society will be

closed by the state or forced to close themselves. In the end the Russian civil society will have to face irrecoverable losses.

We demand that the leadership and the law enforcement authorities in the Russian Federation stop the repressive measures without delay that damage first of all Russia. Moreover we want to appeal to the civil societies of the European states and the political leadership of the EU member states to support Russian NGOs to assert their rights and the possibilities to continue their important work without the fear of persecution.

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