



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

### **Investigate Attacks against the Joint Mobile Group and Provide Safe Working Conditions for Human Rights Defenders in the Chechen Republic**

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

The Steering Committee of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum expresses its deep concern and indignation about the recent attacks against human rights defenders from the Joint Mobile Group in the Chechen Republic of the “Committee against Torture”, the Forum’s member.

Last week, Ramzan Kadyrov, President of the Chechen Republic, urged to demolish houses and expel from the republic relatives of suspects in terrorist attacks on 4 December 2014 in Grozny, capital of the Chechen Republic. A few days later, Igor Kalyapin, Head of the “Committee against Torture”, asked the Russian General Prosecutor’s Office and the Russian Investigation Committee to check the legality of Kadyrov’s appeal. Since then, members of the “Committee against Torture” and its Joint Mobile Group in the Chechen Republic have been constantly harassed by the public and attacked by the local police.

On 11 December, Igor Kalyapin’s speech at the Moscow press conference “Collective Punishment as Means of Fighting with Armed Groups in the Chechen Republic” was interrupted by a group of unidentified men, who pelted the presenters with eggs and accused them of criticising Kadyrov. Apart from that, Igor Kalyapin received threatening phone calls and text messages.

On 13 December, thousands of people participated in a government-organised demonstration in Grozny and carried banners labelling members of the “Committee against Torture” and the Joint Mobile Group as “foreign”, or “US”, agents. They shouted slogans against the “Committee against Torture” in general and Igor Kalyapin in particular and demanded departure of the members of the Joint Mobile Group from Chechnya. Later that day, members of the Joint Mobile Group reported about armed masked men who followed them in a car.

Over the weekend 14-15 December, members of the “Committee against Torture” and the Joint Mobile Group faced even more egregious abuses. President Kadyrov in a televised speech to the members of the Chechen parliament accused the Joint Mobile Group and personally Igor Kalyapin in supporting terrorists and acting against Russia and in the interest of foreign governments, demanded departure of the members of the Joint Mobile Group from Chechnya, and threatened them. Later the office of the Joint Mobile Group in Grozny was set on fire and destroyed in what appears as a deliberate arson attack. When members of the Group called the police to investigate the incident, the police instead detained and searched human rights defenders without search warrants. Office computers, photo and video cameras as well as mobile phones of the members of the Joint Mobile

Group were confiscated. A few hours later, members of the Group were released without any official explanation.

These illegal and aggressive acts against the members of the “Committee against Torture” and the Joint Mobile Group are aimed at harassment and intimidation of human rights defenders in the Chechen Republic and pushing them to stop working in the region.

The Steering Committee of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum calls on the Russian authorities to promptly and thoroughly investigate the attacks and threats, hold accountable those responsible for the attacks on the Joint Mobile Group office and the Group members, and provide safe working conditions for human rights defenders in the Chechen Republic and across Russia. We call on the international community to give proper assessment of threats against and harassment of human rights defenders in Chechnya and call on the Russian government to ensure security of human rights defenders in accordance to the international obligations of the Russian Federation.

**Contact:**

*Natalia Taubina, Member of the Steering Committee of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum, Director at the Public Verdict Foundation, Moscow, Russia, tel.: + 7 495 951 12 01, e-mail: [nata.taubina@gmail.com](mailto:nata.taubina@gmail.com)*

*Anna Sevortian, Executive Director, Secretariat of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum, Berlin, Germany, tel. + 49 30 44 66 80 13, e-mail: [anna.anna.sevortian@eu-russia-csf.org](mailto:anna.anna.sevortian@eu-russia-csf.org)*

**The EU-Russia Civil Society Forum** was established in 2011 by non-governmental organisations as a permanent common platform. At the moment 139 NGOs from Russia and the European Union are member 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.

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

**Address (Secretariat):** Deutsch-Russischer Austausch e.V. (German-Russian Exchange) – 44, Bad St., 13357 Berlin, Germany, Tel. + 49 (0)30 44 66 80 0

**Адрес (Секретариат):** Немецко-Русский Обмен –Бадштрассе 44, 13357 Берлин, Германия, тел. + 49 30 44 66 80 0

**Website:** [www.eu-russia-csf.org](http://www.eu-russia-csf.org) **E-mail:** [info@eu-russia-csf.org](mailto:info@eu-russia-csf.org)

**Facebook:** [EU-Russia Civil Society Forum](https://www.facebook.com/EU-Russia-Civil-Society-Forum/) **Twitter:** [@EU\\_Russia\\_CSF](https://twitter.com/EU_Russia_CSF) **Vkontakte:** [Гражданский Форум ЕС-Россия](https://vk.com/graždanskiy_forum_esp)