



EU-RUSSIA CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM ГРАЖДАНСКИЙ ФОРУМ ЕС-РОССИЯ

The Decision on Liquidation of the “Environmental Watch on North Caucasus” Contradicts with the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms

Statement of the General Assembly of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum

The EU-Russia Civil Society Forum expresses its deep concern about the decision of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Adygea dated 24 October 2014, which acknowledged the request of the Bureau of the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation in the Republic of Adygea on the elimination and exclusion from the register of legal entities of one of the most active non-governmental environmental organisations in Russia, member of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum the Interregional Environmental and Human Rights Charity Public Organisation “Environmental Watch on North Caucasus”.

A matter of particular concern is that the judgment was held in the absence of representatives of the organisation, which has not received a copy of the request from the Bureau of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Adygea depriving the organisation the opportunity to speak in its protection.

“Environmental Watch on North Caucasus” raises a large number of hard-hitting questions in the field of environmental protection and environmental rights of citizens before the authorities, such as environmental impact of the Olympic Games in Sochi, plans for the economic development of the territory of a World Natural Heritage Site “Western Caucasus”, construction of recreational facilities for VIPs in protected natural areas and on the Black Sea coast, implementation of various megaprojects without consulting the local population. Thus, there is a reason to conclude that the decision of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Adygea was politically motivated and its true purpose was to stop the work of one of the most effective environmental non-governmental organisations in the South of Russia.

Interdiction of official activities of such NGOs and activists, who - based on their competences and law - are trying to solve important problems in the public interest, contradicts not only with the common European legal norms but also with common sense. Imputed violations on the organisation have formal and technical nature and can be removed without forced liquidation of the organisation.

The decision on liquidation of the “Environmental Watch on North Caucasus” is another step in the campaign against NGOs launched by the Russian authorities - initially under pretext of identifying NGOs as “foreign agents” and continued in the form of harassment of public associations, whose activities are contrary to the official position of the Russian leadership. Such methods of influence on the institutions of civil society are absolutely unacceptable.

Currently, the “Environmental Watch on North Caucasus” challenges the decision on its liquidation in the Supreme Court of Russia. The EU-Russia Civil Society Forum calls on the Russian Supreme Court to hold an objective consideration of the complaint and take into account that the decision to liquidate the public organisation contradicts with the norms of international law, in particular the article 11 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms as well as creates a dangerous precedent of "legitimate" elimination of undesirable NGOs.

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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 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.

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