



EU-RUSSIA CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM ГРАЖДАНСКИЙ ФОРУМ ЕС-РОССИЯ

Release Human Rights Activist Lev Ponomarev

Statement by the Board of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum

On 5 December 2018, Lev Ponomarev, renowned Russian human rights activist and Director of the “For Human Rights” Movement, a member organisation of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum, was sentenced to 25 days of administrative arrest by the Tverskoy District Court of Moscow¹. He was accused of repeatedly violating the procedure for holding meetings and rallies. It was stated that he had violated the procedure this time, through a Facebook publication informing about a peaceful rally. The rally was to take place at Lubianka Square in Moscow on 28 October² to show solidarity with young activists of the “Novoe Velichie” Movement accused of extremist activities. The accusation is based on a testimony given under torture³. Lev Ponomarev had previously sought the authorities’ approval for the rally, but that was denied⁴.

On 7 December 2018, Moscow City Court reduced the sentence of Lev Ponomarev from 25 to 16 days of administrative arrest⁵. On 10 December 2018, the court refused to let him attend the funeral of Liudmila Alexeeva, Chair of the Moscow Helsinki Group, with whom Lev Ponomarev had been working for more than 20 years.

Lev Ponomarev dedicated his whole life to defending human rights. He participated in the creation of the “Memorial” Organisation in 1988 and founded the Human Rights Movement “For Human Rights” in 1997. He was one of the founders of “Hotline” and is an active member of the “Common Action” Group. ‘I demand to stop torture and bring FSB⁶ officers to court. This is why I am being persecuted⁷,’ explained Ponomarev during the court hearing.

The Board of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum regards this case as outrageous and a mockery of justice. We call for the immediate release of Lev Ponomarev. We demand from the Russian authorities respect of the constitutional right of citizens to peaceful assembly. We also demand putting an end to torture and inhumane and degrading treatment by the law enforcement agencies.

11 December 2018

¹ See more at www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/lev-ponomarev-sentenced-25-days-administrative-detention

² See more at www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/commissioner-calls-upon-the-russian-authorities-to-release-lev-ponomarev

³ See more at www.hrw.org/news/2018/12/07/russia-human-rights-defender-jailed

⁴ See more at www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/12/russia-prominent-human-rights-defender-jailed-for-a-facebook-post

⁵ See more at www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/lev-ponomarev-sentenced-25-days-administrative-detention

⁶ Federal Security Service of Russia

⁷ See more at <https://echo.msk.ru/blog/echomsk/2329603-echo>

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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, 156 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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