



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

### **We Need to Hold on to the Principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders**

#### **Statement by the Solidarity Group of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum**

Ahead of the 20th anniversary of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders<sup>1</sup> and the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>2</sup>, the Solidarity Group of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum would like to stress the importance of the international documents defending human rights defenders and activists<sup>3</sup>, as well as the necessity for governments and societies to endorse and implement those principles.

It is one of the goals of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum to cooperate in order to reinforce existing networks and help ensure safe and favourable conditions for the work of all civil society organisations and activists across Europe.

Quite a few civil society actors are currently under threat. To name a few, Oyub Titiev, Director of the Regional Branch of the Human Rights Centre “Memorial” in Grozny (Chechen Republic), is going through a semi-closed trial in the Shali City Court on the charges of the illegal possession of large amount of marijuana<sup>4</sup>. On 14 June 2018, Yuri Dmitriev, Director of the Karelian Branch of “Memorial”, saw his acquittal overturned by judges after the Petrozavodsk City Court had found him ‘not guilty’<sup>5</sup>; subsequently, the prominent historian has been put on trial again<sup>6</sup>. The murders of investigative journalists persist, including cases in the EU member states, in particular Ján Kuciak (Slovakia)<sup>7</sup> in February 2018 and Daphne Caruana Galizia (Malta)<sup>8</sup> in October 2017.

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://undocs.org/en/A/RES/53/144> and <http://undocs.org/en/A/C.3/72/L.50/Rev.1>

<sup>2</sup> See [http://undocs.org/A/RES/217\(III\)](http://undocs.org/A/RES/217(III))

<sup>3</sup> See inter alia the “Guidelines on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders” published by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights ([www.osce.org/odihr/guidelines-on-the-protection-of-human-rights-defenders?download=true](http://www.osce.org/odihr/guidelines-on-the-protection-of-human-rights-defenders?download=true)) and the Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders published by the European Union ([https://cdn2-eeas.fpfis.tech.ec.europa.eu/cdn/farfuture/Wfr3kXSdgy2iSGLatF5XVPSDZ\\_dtYCuZgrUoLRnZ-s/mtime:1488794258/sites/eeas/files/european\\_union\\_guidelines\\_on\\_human\\_rights\\_defenders.pdf](https://cdn2-eeas.fpfis.tech.ec.europa.eu/cdn/farfuture/Wfr3kXSdgy2iSGLatF5XVPSDZ_dtYCuZgrUoLRnZ-s/mtime:1488794258/sites/eeas/files/european_union_guidelines_on_human_rights_defenders.pdf))

<sup>4</sup> See the statement by the Board of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum of 11 October 2018:

<https://eu-russia-csf.org/fileadmin/Statements/StatementOyubTitiev11.10.2018.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> See <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/civil-society-and-media/2018/06/supreme-court-overturns-acquittal-yuri-dmitriev>

<sup>6</sup> See more at <https://dmitrievaffair.com>

<sup>7</sup> See [www.euronews.com/2018/09/27/at-least-one-suspect-arrested-in-the-murder-of-journalist-jan-kuciak-local-reports-say](http://www.euronews.com/2018/09/27/at-least-one-suspect-arrested-in-the-murder-of-journalist-jan-kuciak-local-reports-say)

<sup>8</sup> See [www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/daphne-caruana-galizia-murder-three-charged-ten-arrested-video-footage-a8095166.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/daphne-caruana-galizia-murder-three-charged-ten-arrested-video-footage-a8095166.html)

As Solidarity Group, we continue to call for the prompt efficient investigation into all the cases of the persecution of the civil society actors, ensuring access to justice for them, punishing the perpetrators.

In the next months, we are planning to contribute to solidarity work by:

- monitoring the situation with civil society in the EU member states and Russia, including facilitating observers' missions to court hearings, especially those based on fabricated matters, on cases targeting civil society actors and ensuring their release;
- advocating for measures to stop repression against civil society actors and journalists and ensuring that perpetrators of the violent attacks against them were brought to justice;
- prompt assistance to organisations and activists in danger.

The Solidarity Group of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum invites other civil society actors, like-minded international organisations and stakeholders to jointly pursue this important mission for the sake of a just and prosperous society.

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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, 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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