



EU-RUSSIA CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM ГРАЖДАНСКИЙ ФОРУМ ЕС-РОССИЯ

Fight Against Terror Should in No Way Be an Excuse for Violation of Fundamental Rights

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 about the adoption of amendments to the Russian federal anti-terror legislation, also known – after its author - as the “Yarovaya Law Package”. We call on the international community to raise its voice against those amendments, which violate several fundamental rights and freedoms.

‘By requiring Internet service providers to store all content and metadata for six months and grant access to security services to all encrypted communications, the Russian authorities show a profound disrespect for the right to privacy. This new legislation represents an excess of discretionary powers transferred to security services and a threat to the Russian society, civic organisations and their supporters’, says Simon Papuashvili of the Steering Committee.

By circumscribing religious activities, like preaching or praying, to “specially designated places”, the Russian legislation is limiting the religious freedoms in the Russian Federation. Finally, criminalisation of the failure to report to authorities third persons’ active or passive involvement in terrorist crimes, contribution to extremist activities, or an international terrorist act recalls one of the deplorable practices of Soviet times. It can all too easily be selectively used for repressing critical voices and will certainly add to the climate of self-censorship and growing mistrust in the Russian society.

Some of the restrictions – without having been duly reviewed by legal experts - are effective as of 20 July 2016, less than two weeks after being signed into the law by the President Vladimir Putin.

The need to fight terrorism is being widely abused around the world for cracking down on fundamental freedoms that are key for the independent operating of civil society. Lately the European Union member states have also become a part of this trend. In June 2016, Poland has passed the so-called “anti-terrorism” law, which bans public gatherings and mass events, once a terrorist attack takes place or even if a demonstration might potentially be used for organising such an attack. Simultaneously, France, Germany, and some other EU countries have been debating the need for the states’ greater access to citizens’ private data and communications – for the sake of prevention of terrorist attacks.

The Steering Committee of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum believes in the importance of a clear and transparent policy on protection of communications’ privacy. We call on international institutions – such as the Venice Commission – to review these cases and urge the Russian authorities to repeal the “Yarovaya amendments”.

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