



Plenary sitting

B9-0020/2019

16.7.2019

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

with request for inclusion in the agenda for a debate on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law

pursuant to Rule 144 of the Rules of Procedure

on Russia, notably the situation of environmental activists and Ukrainian political prisoners
(2019/2734(RSP))

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on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group

European Parliament resolution on Russia, notably the situation of environmental activists and Ukrainian political prisoners (2019/2734(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and the Russian Federation, which entered into force in 1997 and has been extended pending its replacement by a new agreement,
 - having regard to Rules 128(5) and 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas “Ecodefence!” is one of the oldest environmental NGOs in Russia campaigning against building of nuclear power stations, pollution caused by coal industry and supporting environmental education;
- B. whereas in July 2014, the Ministry of Justice registered Ecodefence as a foreign agent after its successful campaign against the construction of a nuclear power plant in the Kaliningrad Region; whereas Ecodefence refused to comply with the discriminatory requirements towards organisations labelled as foreign agents and is currently appealing the decision of the Ministry of Justice at the European Court of Human Rights;
- C. whereas in December 2018 and January 2019 environmental organization “Ecodefence!” was fined over 2 million roubles (EUR 28,176) and the organization’s bank accounts were blocked; whereas in May 2019, five criminal cases have been opened against the NGOs’ director Aleksandra Korolyova in connection with unpaid fines;
- D. whereas in December 2017 Andrey Rudomakha, the head of the NGO Environmental Watch for the North Caucasus (EWNC), and his colleagues were brutally attacked by masked men; whereas although the authorities have substantive evidence at their disposal, including CCTV footage and the assailants’ fingerprints, the investigation has produced no tangible results; whereas instead, Mr Rudomakha faces an ongoing criminal investigation for “slander” of a member of the State Duma;
- E. whereas in April 2019, the Environmental Watch for North Caucasus (EWNC) was fined 80,000 roubles (EUR 1,130) for reposting the blogs of EWNC activists on environmental issues;
- F. whereas since the enactment of the 2012 Law on Foreign Agents, several Russian NGOs receiving foreign funding have been compelled to register as “organizations performing the functions of foreign agents”, whereas these NGOs are legally obliged to mark their

public documents accordingly as “foreign agents”, a label that has seriously undermined their public image;

- G. whereas since 2012, dozens of NGOs have chosen to close down, unwilling to accept the toxic label; whereas those NGOs that remain on the register face harassment and are at constant risk of penalties for “not observing” the provisions of the “foreign agents” law;
 - H. whereas human rights defenders in Russia are routinely the target of physical attacks and death threats; whereas the situation is particularly dire in the North Caucasus, including in the Chechen Republic, where a climate of impunity has created fertile ground for further attacks on human rights and the human rights community;
 - I. whereas the 2015 “undesirable organizations law” empowered the Prosecutor General to ban foreign and international organizations deemed “undesirable” without any judicial proceeding; whereas this law is increasingly being used to penalize Russian NGOs and civil society activists; whereas the Russian authorities have recently expanded the use of this law to also criminally prosecute human rights defenders for their alleged cooperation with “undesirable organizations”;
 - J. whereas Russia’s Memorial human rights group currently estimates there are 297 political prisoners in Russia, up from 50 four years ago, including filmmaker Oleg Sentsov;
 - K. whereas as a member of the Council of Europe since 1996 and party to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) since 1998, also the Russian Federation has strict and clear obligations to respect the right to freedom of association;
1. Calls on the Russian Federation to guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, including judicial harassment.
 2. Calls on the Russian authorities to immediately drop all charges against Andrey Rudomakha, Mikhail Benyash and Aleksandra Korolyova and lift the administrative fines issued against Ecodefense, as it is believed that they are solely motivated by the activists’ and organisation’s legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights;
 3. Calls for the lifting of the foreign agent status assigned to Ecodefense;
 4. Expresses deep concern at the prosecution of human rights defenders under the “foreign agents” law and the law on “undesirable organizations” and calls on the Russian Federation to review or abolish these laws; advises to review Article 284.1 of the Criminal Code which is used to prosecute human rights defenders for their alleged cooperation with “undesirable organizations” and Article 330.1 of the Criminal Code used to prosecute for alleged violations of the “foreign agents” law;
 5. Calls for the release of all political prisoners in Russia, including Oleg Sentsov;

6. Calls on the Russian Federation and Ukraine to uphold their obligations under the Minsk Protocol on the results of consultations of the Trilateral Contact Group;
7. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the President, Government and Parliament of the Russian Federation, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe.