



Plenary sitting

B9-0259/2019

17.12.2019

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 The Russian « Foreign Agents » Law
(2019/2982(RSP))

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on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group

B9-0259/2019

**European Parliament resolution on The Russian « Foreign Agents » Law
(2019/2982(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Russia and on EU-Russia relations;
 - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in particular Article 19 on the right to freedom of opinion and expression and Article 20 on the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association;
 - having regard to the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders;
 - having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, in particular Article 22 on the right to freedom of association;
 - having regard to the Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms;
 - having regard to the European Convention on Human Rights and the Protocols thereto, in particular Article 10 on the right to freedom of expression and Article 11 on the right to freedom of assembly and association;
 - having regard to the Statement by the HR/VP Spokesperson on amendments to the “foreign agents” law in the Russian Federation of 23 November 2019;
 - having regard to Rule 144 of its Rules of Procedure;
- A. whereas the rights to freedom of thought and speech, association, and peaceful assembly are enshrined in the constitution of the Russian Federation;
 - B. whereas the Russian Federation is a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights, as well as a member of the Council of Europe, and has therefore committed itself to international standards and principles of rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms;
 - C. whereas existing Russian laws require NGOs and media outlets that receive funding from foreign sources to identify as "foreign agents" in their offline or online publications, imposing onerous administrative and financial burdens;
 - D. whereas the amendments to the Law on “Foreign Agents”, which expands the status of “foreign agents” to private persons, including bloggers and independent journalists, also those merely spreading information of news outlets labeled as “foreign agents”, was signed into law on 2 December 2019 by Russian President Vladimir Putin; and whereas the amended law foresees punishment for non-compliance with the new regulations, including fines of up to 5 million Rubles;

- E. whereas the amended law violates international standards on freedom of expression and association and will have a detrimental impact on the already restrictive environment for independent journalism in Russia;
 - F. whereas quality media, independent from governmental or pro-governmental structures, like RFE/RL which works with many Russian correspondents across the country and is often the only source of reliable information and an alternative to state media in remote regions, are targeted by the law, impeding their work and the access to impartial media coverage;
 - G. whereas Russia continuously breaches international law and commitments; whereas legislative restrictions and targeted prosecutions under the law on foreign agents in Russia have taken more repressive forms in recent months, with the result of limiting the media's and civil society's access to independent funding, tarnishing their reputation and obstructing their activities, thus restricting the exercise of fundamental freedoms and reducing the space for independent and dissident actors in Russia;
 - H. whereas the free and independent work of civil society organisations and the media is a cornerstone of a democratic society based on the rule of law;
 - I. whereas a total of approximately 80 NGOs are considered "foreign agents" under this law, including virtually all leading human rights NGOs in Russia;
1. Condemns the recently approved amendments to the Law on "Foreign Agents";
 2. Condemns the Russian authorities' continued efforts to restrict online and offline debate as well as independent journalism;
 3. Calls on the Russian authorities to repeal the Law on "Foreign Agents" and bring existing legislation in line with Russia's constitution and obligations under international law;
 4. Considers this law and the excessive use of fines and liquidations against the media and civil society to be deliberately forcing them to focus their entire resources on paying fines and judicial defence; is deeply concerned by the targeting of human rights organisations and defenders, which adds to the deteriorating situation of human rights in Russia; condemns specifically the dissolution of the legendary movement "For Human Rights";
 5. Calls on the Russian authorities to stop criminally prosecuting individuals and organisations under these laws, in particular Article 330.1 of the Criminal Code used to prosecute alleged violations of the Law on "Foreign Agents" but also based on alleged links to "unwelcomed foreign organisations"; notes with concern specifically the situation around Anastasiya Shevchenko in Rostov on Don;
 6. Expresses its support with all individuals and organisations who are targets of repression; urges the Russian authorities to stop harassment, intimidations and attacks on civil society, media, human rights organisations and activists; condemns the Russian

authorities' failure to protect these actors against attacks, harassment and intimidation by third persons and to impartially investigate such attacks against them;

7. Expects the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Council and Commission to raise concerns with the Law on "Foreign Agents" in all contacts, meetings and communications with Russian representatives, including at the highest levels, and asks them to report back to the Parliament on their exchanges with the Russian authorities;
8. Encourages the EU to continuously call on Russia to repeal or amend all laws incompatible with international standards; stresses the importance of cooperation between the EU and Russia in the international rules-based order and underlines that any dialogue with Russia must be based on the respect of international law;
9. Calls on the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to use every possibility to support civil society that promotes democratic values, rule of law, fundamental freedoms and human rights in Russia and strengthen people-to-people contacts with the citizens of Russia;
10. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to 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, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the OSCE and to the President, Government and the Parliament of the Russian Federation.