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*Plenary sitting*

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**B9-0322/2021**

8.6.2021

## **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 listing of German NGOs as 'undesirable organisations' by Russia and the detention of Andrei Pivovarov  
(2021/2749(RSP))

**Clare Daly**  
on behalf of The Left Group

**European Parliament resolution on the listing of German NGOs as 'undesirable organisations' by Russia and the detention of Andrei Pivovarov (2021/2749(RSP))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966,
  - having regard to the European Convention on Human Rights of 1950,
  - having regard to the Constitution of the Russian Federation, in particular Chapter 2, and in particular Article 29, which protects freedom of speech,
  - having regard to Rule 144 of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas an active civil society sphere is a crucial aspect of a democratic and open society, as well as for safeguarding human rights and the rule of law; whereas the mutual presence of foreign-funded civil society organisations within neighbouring countries can, in the right circumstances, promote and facilitate cultural dialogue and exchange;
- B. whereas on May 4, 2021, Russian lawmakers adopted three new bills restricting the work of civil society organisations; whereas two of the bills expand the scope of the Russian law on “undesirable” organisations and facilitate criminal prosecution; whereas the third bill enables authorities to ban potential candidates for Duma seats if they were or are associated with a group designated as “undesirable”;
- C. whereas on 26 May, the Russian Prosecutor General’s Office added three German NGOs to the list of “undesirable” organisations: Forum Russischsprachiger Europäer (Forum of Russian-Speaking Europeans), Zentrum für die Liberale Moderne (Center for Liberal Modernity) and Deutsch-Russischer Austausch (German-Russian Exchange);
- D. whereas on 21 April, 2021, the Russian Prosecutor General’s Office added three NGOs to the list of “undesirable” organisations: the UK-based Open Russia, its sister organisation Open Russia Civic Movement and the US-based Institute of Modern Russia; whereas these NGOs are all either founded by or linked to the exiled Russian former-oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky, who has openly called for and supported a policy of “regime change” in Russia, including “by force”; whereas Open Russia’s operations within the Russian Federation were dissolved in anticipation of the passage of the new bills, according to its Executive Director Andrei Pivovarov, to protect supporters from criminal prosecution;
- E. whereas on May 31, 2021, law enforcement officers boarded a plane in St Petersburg, and arrested Mr Pivovarov; whereas it was reported that a criminal case was opened against Mr. Pivovarov on charges of involvement with an “undesirable” NGO; whereas on June 2, 2021, it was reported that a Russian court ruled to keep Mr Pivovarov in custody for two months pending trial.

- F. whereas civil society interaction between the EU and Russia is becoming increasingly difficult; whereas in 2001, Germany and Russia launched the annual Petersburg Dialogue format, a bilateral forum gathering civil society groups, think tanks and decision-makers from the two countries to maintain a dialogue through various channels; whereas the recent ban of the three German NGOs has confronted the two countries; whereas, consequently, the joint board meeting planned for July 2021 has been cancelled, and the board stated that the main event, to be held on October 14 and 15, will only take place if the banned organisations are able to participate without being hindered in their work;
- G. whereas political and military tensions between the US, NATO, the EU and Russia have been growing to a dangerous level, representing the most severe security crisis in Europe; whereas there is an urgent need for military de-escalation and political dialogue; whereas internal political problems of the respective countries seem to force leaders to reorient the public debate towards alleged foreign threats; whereas the hostile rhetoric and lack of political dialogue have deepened the mutual mistrust and misunderstandings;
- H. whereas relations between the EU and Russia continue to deteriorate, as illustrated by the EU's several waves of sanctions and Russia's counter-sanctions, most recently those imposed on four Russian individuals by the EU, and Russia's decision to ban the entry in its territory of eight EU high officials; whereas sanctions have not lead to any policy changes;
- I. whereas restrictions on the foreign funding of activities by civil society actors, where they are aimed at influencing politics in a given country, exist in multiple jurisdictions including EU Member States; whereas some EU Member States can impose penalties for non-compliance including criminal prosecution and imprisonment<sup>1</sup>;
1. Calls on the Russian authorities to refrain from unwarranted reprisals against political opponents and other critical voices of the government; calls on the Russian authorities not to prejudice the right to a fair trial of Andrei Pivovarov; believes that Mr Pivovarov's interests are best served if his case is not instrumentalised by the EU or its Member States to pursue geopolitical or foreign policy objectives;
  2. Expresses concerns about the recent Russian bills restricting the work of civil society organisations; highlights that many civil society organisations facilitate intercultural dialogue and exchange; calls on Russia to create and maintain, in law and in practice, a safe and secure environment for civil society organisations and citizens, enabling them to carry out their legitimate and useful work without undue interference – such as the threat of violence, harassment, financial, and economic, legal and political pressure; stresses the need to guarantee efficient legal recourse procedures for civil society organisations whose freedom to work has been threatened;
  3. Deplores the decision of the board to cancel the Petersburg Dialog; calls on Germany and Russia to de-escalate tensions, reopen appropriate relations and unblock the platform for civil society organisations;

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<sup>1</sup> Electoral Act, 1997 (as amended), Ireland, <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1997/act/25/enacted/en/html>

4. Calls on foreign actors and organisations, including the EU and its Member States, to refrain from subverting or interfering in the internal affairs of Russia, including through civil society associations and NGOs; in particular, calls on the EU to refrain from instrumentalising Russian civil society to pursue any policy of regime change in Russia;
5. Expresses its utmost concern at the escalation of the confrontation between the US, NATO, the EU and Russia; calls urgently for an end to the threats of force and hostile rhetoric that only increase tensions; demands that the US, NATO, the EU and Russia end the policy of military pressure, and calls for the reduction of military presence in the conflict regions; warns that the failure to re-open a results-oriented dialogue with Russia could have dangerous consequences for peace and security in Europe and the world;
6. Is particularly concerned about the deteriorating relations between the EU and Russia, and about their detrimental effects on both parties, their economies as well as citizens and their human rights; calls on both the EU and Russia to put an end to the spiral of tensions and engage in a constructive dialogue to overcome their differences, pursue mutual criticism in a respectful manner, and create shared understanding of interests, concerns and approaches; in this light, calls for the immediate abolition of mutual sanctions;
7. Underlines that the EU-Russian inter-parliamentary dialogue is an instrument for raising concerns, exchanging arguments and promoting mutual understanding and trust; notes that this instrument is used in relations with many other partners with whom deep differences persist; notes that the inter-parliamentary relations with the Russian Duma have been frozen for over six years, and takes the view that this lack of dialogue has contributed to the deepening of mutual mistrust; calls for the restoration of the normal functioning of the inter-parliamentary dialogue between the Russian Duma and Parliament;
8. Calls on the EU and its Member States to hold themselves, as well as third countries with which they share tighter ideological affinities, to the same standards they demand of Russia concerning democracy, human rights and the rule of law;
9. 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 Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the President, Government and Parliament of the Russian Federation.