

**We call for an end of pressure against the All-Russian Movement
“For Human Rights” and for the cessation of its liquidation**

Statement

October 21, 2019

On October 15, it became known that the Ministry of Justice applied to the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation to abolish the All-Russian Movement “For Human Rights” for repeated violations of NGO legislation, according to the Ministry.

The movement “For Human Rights”, created in 1997, is one of the most influential, experienced and the largest human rights organizations in the country. More than a thousand activists and supporters of the Movement have protected the Constitution of the Russian Federation and the Russian citizens nationwide throughout the years, have consistently fought for primacy of law and have defended the victims of arbitrariness.

Lately, the movement “For Human Rights” has been supporting environmental activists from Moscow and Arkhangelsk, miners from Rostov and Vorkuta, monetary borrowers, deceived investors in the apartment construction, truck drivers, farmers and entrepreneurs, prison inmates and members of minority religions, participants of protest rallies and victims of police brutality, and many, many others. A great many people seek and find assistance in the organization.

We suspect that it is the Federal Security Service that might be behind the decision to liquidate the organization. Apparently, the organization is being punished for persistent exposure by Lev Ponomaryov, the movement’s leader and a public figure well known nationwide and globally, of violations made by the intelligence agency in high-profile criminal cases, including the “Network” and the “New Greatness” cases. Pressure against the human rights defender and the organizations chaired by him is in effect a form of revenge for revealing the facts of case materials falsification, abuse of power, illegal psychological and physical pressure on accused persons and many other violations by the FSB investigators.

Multiple enormous fines imposed on the Movement earlier this year for alleged repeated violations of “foreign agent” legislation indicate that this persecution was specifically orchestrated against the organization. These fines, aiming to bankrupt and paralyze the organization, were imposed on far-fetched reasons, which not only contradict common sense but also the law.

We are appalled by the fact that the Ministry of Justice, a governmental body, one of the main tasks of which is the protection of human rights and freedoms, is used as a tool for destruction of the largest Russian human rights organization. Ministry of Justice should

assist human rights organizations, not obstruct their activity by various hindrances and formalistic obstacles.

It is obvious from the Ministry's statement of claim for liquidation that the vast majority of complaints are petty and purely formal. At the same time, the Ministry of Justice acknowledged in the statement that the Movement had attempted to address the flaws, make the necessary changes to the Unified Registry of legal entities and align its charter to the current legislation; however, all these attempts were rejected by the state registrar. This indicates the lack of intent to violate the requirements of the law on the part of the Movement and the overly formalistic, malicious approach of officials and their arbitrariness.

Such formal reasons should not lead to a closure of the organization created by Russian citizens to protect public interest. According to international standards, liquidation of an organization should be the last resort, when violation of the law cannot be rectified and when harm to the society is obvious. To us, the harm of the Movement's liquidation is obvious – both to the Russian society as a whole and to thousands of Russians, the rights of whom it has been protecting over the years.

These attacks on our colleagues are a blatant attempt to stigmatize, intimidate, and obstruct the work of Russian human rights defenders that runs contrary to the fundamental right for freedom of association, guaranteed by the Constitution of the Russian Federation, the European Convention on Human Rights and other international treaties, which Russia is a party to.

We express our support and solidarity with the Movement "For Human Rights" and demand that the authorities cease any and all pressure on one of the oldest and reputable independent human rights organizations. We insist on a withdrawal of the liquidation claim by the state officials and discontinuation of the formalistic approach to their duties, and urge them to shift to positive activity and fully assist the Movement with addressing its formal violations to prevent such claims in the future.