

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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Amnesty International urges Russia to respect fundamental freedoms

Human Rights Council adopts Universal Periodic Review outcome on Russia

This statement was delivered on behalf of Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

Russia's refusal to accept recommendations to protect freedoms of expression, association and assembly is deeply disappointing.¹ The recent arbitrary arrests and excessive use of force by police against peaceful protesters, including children, underscores the significance of these recommendations. Russia has also refused to accept recommendations to amend its counter-terrorism and so-called "anti-extremism" legislation, which the government increasingly uses to stifle freedom of expression.²

Amnesty International also regrets that Russia rejected recommendations to repeal the laws on "foreign agents" and "undesirable organisations",³ both of which negatively impact independent civil society across the country. The government is conducting smear campaigns against human rights defenders and is failing to effectively investigate attacks against them or to create an enabling environment for human rights work.

In Chechnya, the authorities have launched an attack against human rights defenders referring to them as "public enemies." Oyub Titiev, director of the Memorial Human Rights Center's office in Grozny, remains behind bars since January, on bogus drug-related charges. Despite accepting recommendations to investigate enforced disappearance and torture and ill-treatment of gay and bisexual men, suspected members of armed groups, alleged drug users and government critics,⁴ such allegations are never effectively investigated.

During its recent review of Russia, the Committee Against Torture highlighted the widespread use of torture and other ill-treatment by law enforcement and prison officials and the lack of effective criminalisation of torture.⁵ Leaked videos of torture in a Yaroslavl penal colony, including of Yevgenyi Makarov, graphically illustrate the severity of these violations.

¹ Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, Russian Federation, A/HRC/39/13, recommendations 147.54 (Costa Rica); 147.55 (Latvia); 147.61 (Spain); 147.63 (Australia); 147.64 (Canada) and 147.65 (Sweden).

² A/HRC/39/13, recommendations 147.66 (Sweden), 147.67 (USA).

³ A/HRC/39/13, recommendations 147.61 (Spain); 147.62 (Sweden); 147.63 (Australia); 147.64 (Canada); 147.67 (USA)

⁴ A/HRC/39/13, recommendations 147.96-147.98 (Netherlands, New Zealand, Germany), 147.109-147.112 (France, Austria, Australia, Argentina), 147.123-147.129 (Montenegro, UK, Chile, Canada, Norway, Lithuania, Luxembourg).

⁵ UN Committee Against Torture, Concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of the Russian Federation, CAT/C/RUS/CO/6. 28 August 2018, https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CAT%2fC%2fRUS%2fCO%2f6&Lang=en

Amnesty International deeply regrets Russia's rejection of recommendations to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.⁶ The organization calls on Russia to effectively investigate all allegations of torture and other ill-treatment and to hold those responsible to account in line with the accepted recommendations.⁷

Background

The UN Human Rights Council adopted the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review of Russia on 21 September 2018 during its 39th session. Prior to the adoption of the report of the review Amnesty International delivered this oral statement.

Public Document

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⁶ A/HRC/39/13, recommendations 147.7 (Liechtenstein), 147.8 (Poland, Hungary), 147.10 (Portugal).

⁷ A/HRC/39/13, recommendations 147.110 (Austria), 147.113 (Germany), 147.125 (Chile), 147.126 (Canada)