



EU-RUSSIA CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM ГРАЖДАНСКИЙ ФОРУМ ЕС-РОССИЯ

The Riot in Angarsk Penal Colony: Call to Conduct Public Investigation and Answer the Questions

Joint statement by the Solidarity Group and the Working Group “Human Rights in Places of Imprisonment” of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum

On 10 April 2020, numerous messages about a riot in FKU IK-15 (Federal Government Institution, Prison Colony - 15) in Angarsk, Irkutsk region, as well as about the fire in the work yard there appeared in Russian media, social networks and on YouTube. For subjection of the prisoners, the special forces of Main Directorate of the GUF SIN (Federal Penitentiary Service) were called and violently put down the protest.

Russian human rights defenders, lawyers, representatives of the public monitoring commissions, civil society activists have called on the authorities to carry out a comprehensive and public investigation of the incidents with independent observers; to check the legitimacy and validity of the actions by the administration and staff of the colony; as well as the propriety and proportionality of the use of force and means of restraint applied towards the prisoners. Complaints to the international human rights protection institutes have also been submitted regarding these incidents¹.

However, already on 14 April 2020, in the interview to Rossiiskaya Gazeta, the Minister of Justice of the Russian Federation, said that the riot had been initiated by the opponents of the new Irkutsk GUF SIN management: *“there is an information about the fact that this riot has been directed from outside, the same people payed to the so-called “human rights defenders”, who are still trying to stir the situation up in the media”*².

We believe that such public statements by the head of the federal ministry, which fulfills the law enforcement as well as control and surveillance functions are unacceptable. The opinion of the Russian minister of justice strengthened by the publication on the website of the Russian government (and official publisher of the legal documents), at the very beginning of the investigation, cause serious concerns regarding independence, fairness, objectivity and comprehensiveness of the further proceedings. Besides, mentioning the human rights defenders in a negative way by the person, who has a managerial position in the body that oversees NGOs’ activity, can be viewed as a potential threat towards future work of the human rights organisations that publicly articulate their independent opinion on the situation with human rights in places of imprisonment. It is also important that the riot in in the FKU IK-15 has taken place in an extraordinary situation when curbing the pandemic of COVID-19 leads to multiple restrictions of rights of the persons deprived of their liberty.

Taking this into account, we demand:

¹ See, for example, statement by the Public Verdict Foundation:

https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=2869255653169346&id=108044812623791; joint statement by the human rights defenders and journalists: https://memohrc.org/ru/news_old/pravozashchitniki-i-zhurnalisty-trebuyut-provesti-nezavisimoe-rassledovanie-obstoyatelstv

² See <https://rg.ru/2020/04/14/reg-sibfo/ministr-justicii-rf-rasskazal-podrobnosti-o-sobytiiah-v-kolonii-v-angarske.html>

- to carry out the investigation, together with independent observers, of the reasons that provoked the riot and the incidents as such, and to provide public with the results of this investigation as well as the information about the situation with the prisoners currently staying in the prison colony and those, who were taken out of it
- to conduct an effective public investigation on the use of force towards the convicts on 9-10 April as well as regarding the messages about the presumable cases of torture of those suspected in orchestrating the riot
- to take immediate action in order to comply with the international recommendations on maintaining of the psychological and physical well-being of the prisoners during the pandemic of COVID-19
- to ensure the inadmissibility of the value judgements by the civil servants about the incidents in FKU IK 15 in Angarsk, Irkutsk region on 9-10 April until the end of investigation of both: the developments in the penal colony and the propriety and proportionality of the use of force and means of restraint by the law enforcement officials.

To find out more about the situation in Angarsk, please consult the [document with additional information to the statement](#).

23 April 2020

Contacts:

Olga Salomatova, *Solidarity Group member, EU-Russia Civil Society Forum / Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (Warsaw, Poland)*, olga.salomatova@hfhr.pl

Alexandra Iwanowska, *Coordinator of the Working Group "Human Rights in Places of Imprisonment", EU-Russia Civil Society Forum / Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (Warsaw, Poland)*, aleksandra.iwanowska@hfhr.pl

The EU-Russia Civil Society Forum was established in 2011 by non-governmental organisations as a permanent common platform. At the moment, 182 NGOs from Russia and the European Union are members or supporters of the Forum. It aims at development of cooperation of civil society organisations from Russia and EU and greater participation of NGOs in the EU-Russia dialogue. The Forum has been actively involved, inter alia, in the questions of facilitation of visa regime, development of civic participation, protection of the environment and human rights, dealing with history and civic education.

EU-Russia Civil Society Forum e.V.
Berliner Volksbank
IBAN:DE07100900002706439008
BIC BEVODE33

EU-Russia Civil Society Forum
44, Bad St., 13357 Berlin,
Germany
Tel. +49 30 46 06 45 40
www.eu-russia-csf.org · info@eu-russia-csf.org

Гражданский Форум ЕС-Россия
Бадштрассе 44, 13357 Берлин,
Германия
Тел. +49 (0) 30 46 06 45 40
www.eu-russia-csf.org · info@eu-russia-csf.org