



United States Mission to the OSCE

Freedom of Peaceful Assembly in the Russian Federation

As delivered by Acting Deputy Chief of Mission Gregory Macris
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
June 20, 2019

The United States welcomes the June 11 release from custody of Ivan Golunov, a Russian investigative journalist who was detained in Moscow on June 6 on fabricated narcotics-related charges.

Nonetheless, the United States notes with concern the arrest of at least 530 peaceful protesters who were marching in support of Mr. Golunov on June 12. We call upon Russia to ensure the release without delay of any peaceful protesters still detained. We urge Russia to uphold its international obligations and OSCE commitments to ensure the rights of freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

Furthermore, while we welcome the decision by Russian authorities to dismiss several officials alleged to be responsible for the case against Golunov, we urge that there be a full investigation into the conduct of officials in his case with the goal of preventing future efforts to frame independent journalists, civil society activists, or members of the political opposition for crimes they did not commit.

The problem is larger than just this case. The respected Russian NGO Memorial's list of political prisoners now contains 297 names, including several individuals Memorial believes to have been framed on specious drug charges. This list includes the activists Mikhail Savostin, Andriy Kolomiets, Leah Milushkina, and Artyom Milushkin.

Drug charges are not the only pretexts allegedly used in Russia to imprison journalists and activists. We are troubled by the news that on June 14 in Dagestan, the editor of the independent newspaper Chernovik, Abdulmumin Gadzhiyev, was arrested on terrorism charges the Committee to Protect Journalists has called "absurd."

We urge Russian authorities to take a close look at all such cases, to release all individuals arbitrarily arrested or detained for peaceful dissent, and to respect its OSCE commitments in this regard.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.