



CONFERENCE OF INGOs  
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

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CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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**Recommendation adopted on 27 January 2012  
CONF/PLE(2012)REC2**

**The Protection of Human Rights Defenders in the Russian Federation**

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**The Conference of International Non Governmental Organisations (INGOs) of the Council of Europe**, meeting in Strasbourg on 27 January 2012

**Following** with attention the evolution of the situation of human rights defenders in the Russian Federation;

**Referring** to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the Declaration of the Committee of Ministers on Council of Europe action to improve the protection of human rights defenders and promote their activities (adopted on 6 February 2008) and the Resolution of the Parliamentary Assembly 1660 (2009) "Situation of human rights defenders in Council of Europe member states" (adopted on 28 April 2009);

**Recalling** its own Recommendation CONF/PLE(2009)REC5 adopted on January 28, 2009, as well as the Recommendations of the Roundtable "Development of the National Human Rights Institutions and Enhancing Cooperation of Human Rights Defenders and the State Bodies" held under the auspices of the Conference in the city of Voronezh, Russia on April 7-8, 2011;

**Underlining** the invaluable importance of personal engagement in the defense of human rights and the rule of law and the threats under which numerous human rights defenders are working in the Russian Federation;

**Welcomes** the release on parole of human rights defender Aleksei Sokolov, arrested in May 2009 and convicted in May 2010 to 5 years of prison on charges, that many leading human rights organizations and experts believed to have been fabricated in response to his human rights work in defense of prisoners' rights.

**Welcomes**, as well, the termination on 20 January 2012 by the Khamovniki district court of Moscow of the criminal proceedings against Oleg Orlov, head of the Human Rights Centre "Memorial", on charges of libel towards the head of the Chechen republic Ramzan Kadyrov; Welcomes the sentences passed in 2011 to murderers of human rights defender and lawyer Stanislav Markelov and journalist Anastasia Baburova and to murderers of scholar and human rights defender Nikolay Girenko;

**Is concerned** by the lack of progress in investigation of other murders of human rights defenders, including those of the journalist of "Novaya Gazeta" Anna Politkovskaya in 2006 and the head of the Grozny office of the Human Rights Centre "Memorial" Natalia Estemirova in 2009;

**Is also deeply concerned** by the reports it receives on cases of threats and harassment towards Russian human rights defenders, especially those who are working in the Northern Caucasus. Among particularly worrying recent cases are several instances of harassment towards one of the leading human rights organizations in Russia, the Inter-regional Committee against Torture, laureate of a number of prominent human rights awards, including 2011 PACE Human Rights Prize.

**Deplores** the fact that in January 2012 a statement had been filed with the investigative authorities in the Chechen Republic accusing the Committee Chairman Igor Kalyapin, founder and president of the Joint Mobile Group, created to investigate torture and disappearances in Chechnya, of disclosing State secrets.

**Deplores**, as well, the fact, that on 21 January 2012, a lawyer with the Committee Anton Ryzhov was temporarily detained in Nizhny Novgorod on his way back from 5-week mission in Chechnya as head of the Joint Mobile Group. All his electronic equipment, containing confidential information relating to cases of human rights violations and correspondence with the European Court of Human Rights on cases against the Russian Federation was seized.

**Urges the appropriate Russian authorities to:**

1. **Terminate** the criminal proceedings against Igor Kalyapin and to return all seized equipment to Anton Ryzhov, as well as to ensure assistance and support for the work of the Joint Mobile Group to investigate cases of torture and disappearances in Chechnya and to bring perpetrators to justice.

2. **Take all the necessary measures** to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity of all human rights defenders working in the country and to ensure favourable conditions for their activities.

**Urges the members of the Conference to contribute to the work of its Human Rights Committee's working group on human rights defenders.**

**Requests** its Bureau to follow the evolution of the situation and to cooperate with the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe and the Rapporteur of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) on the situation of human rights defenders in Council of Europe member states.

Recommendation proposed by the Human Rights  
Committee of the Conference of INGOs