

Council of Europe
The Secretary General

Strasbourg, 25 September 2023

Minister,

I note with deep concern that despite my previous letters regarding the interim resolutions and decisions adopted by the Committee of Ministers at its quarterly human rights meetings, the Russian authorities fail to respect their international law obligation to execute the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights. I firmly reiterate that although the Russian Federation ceased to be a member of the Council of Europe on 16 March 2022, and a High Contracting Party to the European Convention on Human Rights as from 16 September 2022, it is required to implement them.

At its human rights meeting held on 19-21 September 2023, the Committee of Ministers reviewed the following groups of cases:

- In the Catan and Others group, concerning violations of the rights of children, parents and staff members of Latin-script schools located in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova, the Committee deeply deplored once again that notwithstanding its repeated calls, the Russian authorities have not paid the just satisfaction, nor have they submitted an action plan; recalling that the measures for the execution of these judgments include the revocation of the “regulatory framework” at the origin of the violations, the return of the Latin-script schools to their former or to alternative premises, and measures to eliminate the harassment and intimidation, the Committee strongly exhorted again the Russian authorities to pay the just satisfaction and the default interest accrued and to provide an action plan setting out their concrete proposals as regards the execution without any further delay.

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- In the Dmitriyevskiy group, concerning violations of the right to freedom of expression on account of unjustified prosecution for alleged hate speech and/or extremism, the Committee underlined the obligation of the Russian authorities to eliminate unjustified, arbitrary and disproportionate restrictions on freedom of expression, which notably stifle legitimate criticism of official policies, political opposition and religious beliefs, as a result of the misuse and abuse of anti-extremism legislation, and to review this legislation to ensure its clarity and foreseeability.
- In the Taganrog LRO and Others group, concerning violations of various rights of the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Committee noted with gravest concern that the Court's unequivocal indications were fully and deliberately ignored by the Russian authorities, and reiterated the authorities' obligation to repeal immediately the 2017 ban, which has an alarming effect of mass persecution of the Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia, as well as to review the anti-extremism legislation to address its vague nature and to prevent its further arbitrary application.

The relevant interim resolution and decisions adopted by the Committee are enclosed.

On behalf of the Council of Europe, I strongly urge, once again, the Russian authorities to comply with their unconditional obligation to abide by the final judgments of the European Court of Human Rights with regard to the Russian Federation.

Yours sincerely,


Marija Pejčinović Burić