

Statement by the Finnish-Russian Citizens' Forum

September 30, working session 11 (Democratic Institutions)

On September 18th, Greenpeace took action at Prirazlomnaya oil rig where Gazprom intends to become the first company to pump oil from Arctic waters. Over a day later the ship was illegally boarded by Russian armed special forces before being towed to Murmansk.

30 activists, including 3 journalists have been refused bail while an investigation into the action.

A number of legal experts have commented on the boarding and seizure of the Greenpeace international Arctic Sunrise ship and on the potential piracy charges against the Greenpeace team.

The Greenpeace webpage quotes great number of experts, including Prof. Kirchner, from the University of Lapland, Finland. He states in his analysis,

"Russia's action with regard to the Arctic Sunrise are incompatible with the international law of the sea as it is codified in the Law of the Sea Convention, The European Convention on Human Rights, the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations and possibly other international treaties. It appears that Russia has violated the human rights of the crew members as well as the rights of the flag State which is the Netherlands and of the crew members' respective home states. In order to comply with the international law, Russia has to ensure the speedy release of the vessel and its crew".

The Human Rights Commissioner for the Council of Europe Nils Muiznieks, stated, commenting on the detention of the Arctic Sunrise that the denial of bail "clearly raises human rights concern" saying pre-trial detention should be used in exceptional circumstances when there is no alternative.

The fate of the imprisoned members of the Arctic Sunrise is of major concern as well as suffering of their relatives. My moral duty is to present you the letter I have received from Maggy Willcox, Captain Willcox's wife.

"I am Captain Peter Willcox's wife and writing to you on his behalf and that of his crew. Peter has worked for Greenpeace for 30 years and in all that time, no one else has ever been harmed nor has their property. Greenpeace has suffered losses but no one else. This was a peaceful demonstration and does not merit the resulting response. I am asking for all governments involved to make this frightening situation a priority. I am demanding, in the name of common sense and decency, that the Russian authorities drop all charges against the individuals involved and now incarcerated. I am begging the human rights community in Russia to closely monitor the situation. Several of the crew have health conditions that require medication, including my husband and reports have come out that they are not receiving their medication. Please help resolve this soon and send our family members home. We pray for guidance for you all.

Sincerely, Maggy Willcox"

I can't but add my voice to this appeal on all the OSCE member states to regard the Arctic Sunrise crisis as one of political priorities.