



United States Mission to the OSCE

Russian Federation Law on “Undesirable NGOs”

As delivered by Deputy Chief of Mission Kate Byrnes
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
May 28, 2015

On May 23, Russian President Putin signed a bill into law that gives prosecutors the power to declare foreign and international non-governmental organizations “undesirable” and shut them down. This law further restricts the work of civil society in Russia, stifles independent voices, and is another intentional step by the Russian government to isolate the Russian people from the world.

Under the new law, a foreign or international NGO may be labeled as “undesirable” by the Prosecutor General, in concert with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for posing a risk to the constitutional order, national security, or defense of the Russian Federation. These organizations may then have their assets seized, websites banned, and offices closed, and have prohibitions placed on circulating informational materials. Foreign citizens who are found to be participating in the activities of an organization deemed undesirable may be banned from entering Russia. The law also includes heavy fines for both the NGO and its employees, or anyone else seen to be “collaborating” with an undesirable organization. Members of an organization found to be engaged in undesirable activities more than twice in one year may face sizeable fines and up to six years of imprisonment.

Mr. Chair, we would like to use this opportunity to remind colleagues that it was at a 1991 meeting in Moscow that participating States committed themselves to “welcome NGO activities, including, *inter alia*, observing compliance with OSCE commitments in the field of the human dimension.” We also committed to welcome NGOs from outside of our national borders to observe compliance with human dimension commitments. We urge the Government of Russia to uphold its international obligations and OSCE commitments to respect the freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly and association, and the rule of law.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.