



# WORLD HERITAGE WATCH

To  
Dr. Mechtild Rössler  
Director, World Heritage Centre  
7, Place de Fontenoy  
75352 Paris 07 SP  
France

via email

## **Criminalization of Russian NGO**

Berlin, 08 April 2021

Dear Mechtild,

In December last year, our network member Alexandra Koroleva, on behalf of the Russian NGO Ecodefense!, sent a technical report about the situation at the Curonian Spit World Heritage Site to you for consideration. Following the procedure under §174 of the Operational Guidelines, you transmitted the report to the relevant Russian authorities for review and comment.

Subsequently Alexandra presented the findings of her report on our WHW Forum in February.

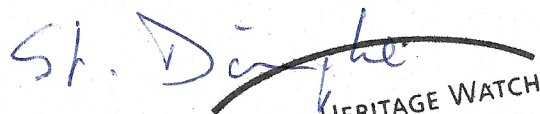
In response, the director of the Curonian Spit National Park requested the Prosecutor-General of the Russian Federation to bring charges against Alexandra for "defamation" of the Russian Federation, in clear contradiction to the facts.

The attempt of one country to silence the voice of civil society is an attack against the human right to free speech and expression of opinion, and the procedures guaranteed under §174 of the Operational Guidelines. This is unacceptable, and especially so when the State Party concerned is a member of the World Heritage Committee.

The civil society participants of the WHW Forum have therefore adopted a resolution which you find enclosed.

We urge you to give your full attention to the requests made to UNESCO and the Advisory Bodies, and to do your utmost to address them without any reservation. Please do not hesitate to alert other bodies at UNESCO if you should feel that this would be helpful. One year before the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the WH Convention, its integrity is at stake, and the WHW Network can and will not remain silent about it.

Your early response is gratefully awaited.  
With the assertion of our highest considerations  
Sincerely

  
Stephan Doempke  
Chair

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