



The 7th International NGO Forum on World Heritage at Risk

Baku, Azerbaijan, 29 June 2019

Resolution

On the Criminalization of Civil Society Activists in the Russian Federation

We, the Civil Society Organizations who have attended the 7th International NGO Forum on World Heritage at Risk organized by World Heritage Watch on 29 June in Baku, Azerbaijan, coming from 19 countries in 5 continents, as active and concerned citizens dealing with Natural and Cultural World Heritage properties at different places, would like to bring the following to the attention of the World Heritage Committee:

Five criminal cases were imposed on Alexandra Koroleva, director of Ecodefence and a member of the WHW network, who had been protecting the Curonian Spit world heritage property in the Kaliningrad region. She was forced to emigrate. All cases were opened on May 30 within 40 minutes under Article 315, Part 2 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation "Failure to execute the verdict of the court that entered into force", which provides the punishment of up to two years in prison.

Ecodefence has never participated in politics and the struggle for power; nevertheless, the Ministry of Justice accused it of "political activity" as a foreign agent, levied fines, and then demanded punishment.

All cases are a direct continuation of the sanctions that were imposed on the organization due to its inclusion in the "foreign agents" register. After its inclusion in the register, the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation initiated 28 cases against Ecodefence due to violations of the Law on Foreign Agents. Some of the cases ended in fines. The organization could not pay them due to the fact that it is non-profit and does not receive profits, and all its funding is targeted. Five criminal cases were opened in May 2019 because of the inability of the organization to pay five different fines. In the future, the number of such cases may increase. Earlier, the Presidential Human Rights Council criticized the Foreign Agents Law, noting it is necessary to clarify the concept of "political activity".

Meeting participants call on Russian authorities to stop criminal prosecution of defenders of the world heritage in Russia.

We have resolved to:

- *Applaud* the exemplary work of Alexandra Koroleva, director of Ecodefence, in working ceaselessly to protect Russian parts of the world's natural and cultural heritage, in particular the Curonian Spit;

- *Recognise* her work in communicating with the Russian community, UNESCO and international advisory bodies in promoting the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the Curonian Spit;
- *Recognise* the work of Alexandra Koroleva and Ecodefense in promoting sustainable development;
- *Encourage* the Russian Government to recognize the unstinting work of Alexandra Koroleva in promoting sustainable development and the OUV of a critical Russian World Heritage property;
- *Encourage* UNESCO and IUCN to recognize the exemplary efforts of Alexandra Koroleva;
- *Demand* that certain authorities review their criminal prosecution of Russian citizens engaged in protecting Russian heritage.

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