

Rights in Russia

June 2013

Right of assembly On 6/6 hearings began in the Moscow trial of 12 people charged with violence against police and alleged riot in the “Bolotnoye case.” On 20/6 the Investigative Committee said opposition activists Sergei Udaltsov and Leonid Razvozzhaev pleaded not guilty to charges of planning alleged riots in May 2012 on Bolotnaya Square. The court extended by 6 months pre-trial detention for 10 of the 12. On 12/6 an estimated 10,000 Muscovites marched to Bolotnaya Square, demonstrating against President Putin.

‘Foreign agent’ law On 6/6 the St Petersburg-based LGBT film festival Side by Side was fined under the ‘foreign agent’ law. On 6/6 UN experts expressed concern that two NGOs providing information to the UN Committee Against Torture had been charged under the ‘foreign agent’ law. On 17/6 Ombudsman Vladimir Lukin announced proposals to amend the ‘foreign agent’ law. On 18/6 chair of the Civic Assistance Committee Svetlana Gannushkina was fined 2,000 roubles for ‘failure to comply with the demands of a prosecutor.’ On 21-22/6 private security guards, police and officials raided and evicted For Human Rights from their Moscow government-owned office (they subsequently got three days to take their property). On 26/6 election monitor Golos was suspended for six months for refusing to register as a ‘foreign agent.’ Earlier Golos had said it would close and then re-register to prepare observers for Moscow’s 8/9 mayoral elections. On 29/6, the Justice Ministry said Golos activists could face sanctions if they continued activities after suspension.

Activists On 1/6 Pussy Riot member Maria Alekhina ended her hunger strike at the Perm colony. Two lawyers in Dagestan, Sapiyat Magomedova and Musa Suslanov, received death threats. On 5/6 Krasnodar region court extended pre-trial detention for Mikhail Savva until 11/8 (on 17/6 Krasnodar Region Court upheld the ruling). On 11/6 the trial of Moscow mayoral candidate Aleksei Navalny on embezzlement charges entered its 12th day. On 29/6 Moscow police said they had seized Navalny’s election leaflets.

LGBT rights On 7/6 the Council of Europe’s Committee of Ministers invited Russia to present an action plan on right of assembly for LGBT minorities. On 11/6 the State Duma passed a law banning ‘propaganda’ of homosexuality to people under 18 as gay rights campaigners clashed with anti-gay activists outside the Duma. The bill was passed by the Federation Council on 27/6 and signed by President Putin on 30/6. On 21/6 the State Duma passed a bill barring same-sex foreign couples from adopting Russian children. On 29/6 a sanctioned gay pride gathering in St. Petersburg ended in the detention of dozens of activists.

Justice system On 4/6 there were reports of violence against prisoners at a penal colony in Nizhny Novgorod region. On 19/6 Inal Berov, abducted and tortured by police in Kabardino-Balkaria, was reported to have been threatened by police. On 21/6 President Putin announced plans to combine the Supreme Court and the Supreme Arbitration Court in a single body.

Freedom of expression On 6/6 the European Court of Human Rights held the rights of Jehovah’s Witnesses had been violated over disclosure of medical records. On 30/6 President Putin signed into law a bill against “blasphemy” (approved by the State Duma on 11/6 and by the Federation Council on 26/6). An Ulyanovsk court ruled a state-run Internet provider to block access to 15 websites. On 26/6 the OSCE Media Representative expressed concern over moves to criminalize speech casting a negative light on the Soviet army’s WWII role.

Yukos case On 24/6 NTV aired a documentary alleging Yukos’ founders, including Mikhail Khodorkovsky, were involved in the 1998 killing of the mayor of Nefteyugansk. On 24/6 ex-Constitutional Court judge Tamara Morshchakova said investigators plan to interview her over the independent report into the second Yukos prosecution.