

Dear ...,

We the undersigned human rights organizations address you in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, which will undoubtedly lead to unprecedented humanitarian and economic consequences.

In recent weeks, we have heard strong calls from the moral leaders across the globe to introduce ceasefires, cease armed conflicts and to lift sanctions as part of ensuring unity in fighting the pandemic.

We support calls to limit armed conflicts and we also support the lifting of sanctions that directly affect the medical capability to fight Covid-19, as requested by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. However, we do not think this should be extended more generally to measures imposed in response to human rights violations or other severe violations of international law. We call for a rejection of attempts by the government of the Russian Federation to argue that special measures imposed by the European Union as a response to Russia's annexing of Crimea and illegal occupation of territories in Eastern Ukraine should be lifted.

Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, Russia continues to illegally occupy Ukrainian territories, Russia-led forces continue to violate ceasefire agreements in Eastern Ukraine, the illegal persecution of Ukrainian citizens continues and most recently President Putin signed into law amendments allowing for the illegal seizure of Ukrainian citizens' property in Crimea. Criminal charges were brought against the leader of the Mejlis of Crimean Tatar People Mustafa Dzhemilev and the vast majority of the international community's calls on the Kremlin including resolutions from the United Nations General Assembly, the Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe and the Order from the International Court of Justice continue to be ignored.

We are concerned that Russia continues to maintain the so called "frozen conflicts" in the de-facto grey zones of Transnistria (Moldova), Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Georgia), all three constituting major obstacles to building stability and peace in these areas which see worrying levels of human rights violations.

In addition, Russia is increasingly involved in devastating violence in Syria and Libya, with both countries seeing growing death toll and increased number of displaced persons and refugees.

The RF should not be allowed to avoid responsibility for its foreign policy actions through lessening the sanctions.

Although the international community should stay committed to the common goal of fighting/tackling the global Corona pandemic and maximum decrease of losses due to it as well as to readiness for any kind of mutual humanitarian and medical support in case of need, including for people in Russia, the pandemic should not serve as a shortcut to impunity for those leaders who violate international law and human rights.

We appreciate the statements from international actors and diplomats aimed at supporting the vital role of the sanctions against Russia and underlining that the special economic measures against Russia are not going to be lifted until the aggressive policy of occupation will not be folded and Ukrainian territorial integrity is restored.

Therefore, we call on the European Union, the governments of the EU Member States and the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia and other governments who maintain sanctions against the Russian Federation to:

1. Maintain sanctions against Russian Federation in response to Russian aggression against Ukraine until the territorial integrity of Ukraine is restored and illegally detained Ukrainian prisoners are released.
2. React to human rights violations committed by Russia
  - In particular in occupied Crimea
  - by imposing new sanctions against those officials involved these grave acts.
3. We also call on EU Member States to adopt the Global Human Rights Act at the EU level as a sign of EU commitment to defense of fundamental human rights and of its condemnation of the repressive practices by different governments around the world.

**List of members of Civic Solidarity Platform supporting the statement:**

1. International Partnership for Human Rights, Belgium
2. Truth Hounds, Ukraine
3. Human Rights Center ZMINA, Ukraine
4. Center for Civil Liberties, Ukraine
5. Swedish OSCE-network
6. Citizens' Watch, Russia
7. Public Association "Human Rights Movement: Bir Duino-Kyrgyzstan"
8. Centre for the Development of Democracy and Human Rights, Russia
9. Bulgarian Helsinki Committee
10. Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, Poland
11. Macedonian Helsinki Committee
12. Kharkiv Regional Foundation Public Alternative, Ukraine
13. Albanian Helsinki Committee
14. Public Association "Dignity", Kazakhstan
15. Human Rights Monitoring Institute, Lithuania
16. Hungarian Helsinki Committee
17. Public Verdict Foundation, Russia
18. Public foundation "Golos Svobody", Kyrgyzstan
19. Helsinki Citizens' Assembly – Vanadzor, Armenia
20. SOLIDARUS e.V., Germany
21. Norwegian Helsinki Committee
22. Promo LEX Association, Moldova
23. Netherlands Helsinki Committee
24. Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and the Rule of Law
25. DRA-German-Russian Exchange, Germany
26. Crimean Human Rights Group, Ukraine
27. humanrights.ch, Switzerland
28. The Barys Zvozkau Belarusian Human Rights House, Lithuania
29. The Georgian Centre for Psychosocial and Medical Rehabilitation of Torture Victims - GCRT