



EU-RUSSIA CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM ГРАЖДАНСКИЙ ФОРУМ ЕС-РОССИЯ

Stop Violence against Russian Civil Society Activists and Punish Perpetrators

Statement by the Steering Committee of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum

The Steering Committee of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum expresses its indignation at the recent escalation of politically motivated violence in Russia, including a series of violent attacks targeting civil society activists and nonprofit organisations over the past month in different parts of the country.

On 3 September 2016, an anniversary of the hostage crisis at School No. 1 in Beslan, members of the NGO “Voice of Beslan” and journalists Elena Kostiuchenko and Diana Khachatryan were forced to leave the school memorial's premises and then assaulted by two unidentified men: one of them snatched the journalists' phones while the other one doused Kostiuchenko with green antiseptic. None of the police present tried to stop the assailants, and the journalists were questioned about the attack as late as half an hour after it occurred.

On the night of 8 to 9 September in Krasnodar Region, unidentified men armed with clubs, knives and guns attacked members of the Environmental Watch on North Caucasus and Greenpeace (both NGOs are members of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum) and volunteers who had come to fight forest fires in the region. The attackers beat the firefighters, smashed their cars, and slashed the tires and tents. They threatened the environmentalists with more violence if they did not leave Krasnodar Region before the next morning and yelled insults, telling the firefighters to ‘go back to their America, their “Pindosia”.’

On 27 September in Barnaul, unidentified men attacked Grigori Pasko, journalist and director of the Community of Investigative Journalists - Foundation 19/29, another Forum's member. Grigori Pasko had travelled to Barnaul to train local journalists and bloggers in investigative journalism techniques and was assaulted outside the hotel where he was staying. One of the attackers punched him in the head and then shouted: ‘Get out of our city! We are going to get you!’ Then both assailants drove away.

On 28 and 29 September, the Sakharov Centre, also a member of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum, was subjected to a series of attacks on its exhibition of photos – winners of the Direct View photography contest. On 28 September, painter Anton Belikov came to the Sakharov Centre and sprayed paint on photos of the Ukrainian military taken during the war in the Donbas, and then escaped. On 29 September, men in camouflage and Cossacks came to the Centre; one of them was Dmitri Zakharov, member of the Yakimanka District municipal council, who carried a can of red liquid with the words “The blood of Donbas children killed by the Ukrainians” written on the can. The attackers were yelling: ‘Waste the bastards, save Russia,’ threatening to destroy the Centre.

‘We are holding on, we are working. Our programme will not change,’ Sakharov Centre Director Sergei Lukashevsky wrote courageously on his Facebook page. ‘Tolerated by the Russian authorities, these

