

URGENT ACTION

CHARGES AGAINST ACTIVIST MUST BE DROPPED

The trial against Yana Antonova, a human rights defender from Krasnodar, southern Russia, started on 7 November. She has been targeted for her peaceful activism and is being charged under the “undesirable organisations” legislation. If convicted, she will face up to six years in prison.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation

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Dear Prosecutor General,

*I am indignant about the prosecution of **Yana Antonova**, a human rights defender from Krasnodar. The charge of “cooperating” with an “undesirable organisation” has been brought against her solely for her peaceful activism. She has not committed any recognisable criminal offence, and therefore this charge should be dropped, and the criminal proceedings against her closed immediately.*

Yana Antonova has been targeted via criminal prosecution since 29 March 2019, when her house was searched, and she was taken to the Investigative Committee for questioning. On 22 May, she was officially charged under article 284.1 of the Criminal Code for “cooperating” with an “undesirable organisation”, on account of her past involvement with the Russian movement, Open Russia; which brought together people interested in activism, including promotion of human rights, rule of law and government accountability. The movement was never registered as an organisation and it ceased to exist in March 2019.

Yana Antonova has lost her job, and members of her extended family have faced harassment from Russian law enforcement agencies, in connection with the criminal proceedings against her.

By prosecuting Yana Antonova for her peaceful activism, the Russian authorities are in violation of their obligations under international human rights law, including in relation to the rights to freedom of expression and association, and the right to a fair trial.

I call on you to take all necessary steps to ensure that the criminal prosecution of Yana Antonova stops and that she is not persecuted for her activism.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The “undesirable organisations” law has made it a punishable offense to take part in any activities organised by a foreign organisation designated by the Office of the Prosecutor General as “undesirable” (and the relevant “crime” has been added into the Russian Criminal Code). Under this law’s vague language, an organisation can be arbitrarily designated “undesirable” if it “poses a threat” to the country’s “constitutional order, defence potential or state security”.

Such a decision effectively outlaws any activities by, or any cooperation with, the “undesirable” organisation in Russia. The law, adopted in May 2015, is part of the Russian authorities’ ongoing crackdown on freedom of association and expression (see details here: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur46/2223/2015/en/>). It has been used arbitrarily to banish a number of foreign organisations from Russia, most of them civil society funders.

On [26 April 2017](#), the Prosecutor General’s Office declared three organisations as “undesirable”, the UK-based Open Russia and Open Russia Civic Movement, and the US-based Institute of Modern Russia, which was followed by the authorities’ crackdown against activists of the Russia-based, unregistered Open Russia movement.

On 18 January 2019, police filed a case against the, then Open Russia local coordinator in Krasnodar, Yana Antonova, for posting a video about the shortage of schools in the region. The video bore Open Russia’s logo, which became the grounds for her being accused of “participation in the activities of an undesirable organisation”. By law, in the first instance, association with an “undesirable organisation” is an administrative offence. When “committed” for the second time, this is a criminal offence punishable by up to six years of imprisonment.

In May 2019, a criminal case was opened against Yana Antonova. This was the third instance in which Russian authorities have opened a criminal case against an individual under the “undesirable organisations” law. [In January 2019](#), the first-ever criminal case, under the respective Article 284.1 of the Criminal Code, was opened against Anastasia Shevchenko, also on account of her association with the Open Russia movement. The criminal case against Anastasia Shevchenko is still being investigated; in the meantime, she remains under house arrest. Anastasia Shevchenko is a prisoner of conscience prosecuted solely for attempting to exercise her rights to freedom of expression and association.

Yana Antonova is not under arrest, but the investigation against her has been concluded and the trial in her case began on 7 November. The verdict in her case may be delivered within several days or weeks.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Russian, English.

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 23 December 2019

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Yana Antonova (she/her)

ADDITIONAL TARGETS: Embassy of Russia, 6/7 Kensington Palace Gardens, Kensington, London W8 4QP