



International Cooperation Platform “Civic Solidarity”

STATEMENT

Further on Repressive Russian Draft Legislation on “Foreign Agents”

July 12, 2012

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On July 10, a committee of the State Duma of the Russian Federation approved amendments proposed by President Putin to draft legislation that would require Russian NGOs that receive funding from abroad and engage in “political activities” to register as “Foreign Agents.”¹ These amendments would exempt religious organizations, state-owned corporations or NGOs they have created from the requirement to register as foreign agents. They would also clarify that activities in the fields of science, culture, arts, health care, prevention and health protection, protection of motherhood and childhood, social support disabled people, promoting healthy lifestyles, physical culture and sports, protection of flora and fauna, charitable activities, as well as activities for the promotion of philanthropy and volunteerism would *not be* considered “political activities.” Finally, the amendments stripped from the draft bill provisions that would have introduced severe administrative punishments for violators. However, proponents of the bill made clear that this was simply a procedural move; they will reintroduce these changes as stand-alone legislation when the Duma returns for its fall session.

These amendments make clear the real goal of the proponents of this repressive legislation. After removing religious organizations and a number of specific activities from the scope of the law, what is left is obviously directed against human rights organizations that receive foreign financing. Even with the amendments adopted at the committee level on July 10, the members of *Civic Solidarity* continue to believe that, as a group of major Russian human rights leaders wrote in a July 5 letter to the leadership of the State Duma, “The real purpose of this bill is to discredit and *de facto* destroy the largest independent civic organizations in our country.” We continue to call on the State Duma to reverse course and reject the draft law. If passed by the Duma it should be rejected by the Federation Council or vetoed by President Putin.
