

Notice: Undefined index: et_header_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1214

Notice: Trying to access array offset on value of type null in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1214

Notice: Undefined index: et_header_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1215

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RUSSIA-UKRAINE : Civil society is under siege by Putin in Russia

Civil society is under siege by Putin in Russia but we have our weapons

By Willy Fautré, director of Human Rights Without Frontiers

HRWF (16.03.2022) – The spaces of communication with and expression of civil society in Russia have been under siege for years by Putin. The shameful instrumentalization of the vague concept of “extremism” and “foreign agents” has made it possible to criminalize any idea or action that goes against Putin’s propaganda, to close down NGOs defending or promoting human rights as well as places of remembrance and research on the past atrocities of communism such as Memorial. Media outlets have been closed down the one after the other, especially since the outbreak of the war. Eighty peaceful and apolitical Jehovah’s Witnesses have been sentenced to heavy prison terms as “extremists.” Public demonstrations are suppressed. Protesters have lost their jobs and students have been kicked out of university for publicly denouncing Putin’s war as a war in Ukraine, not a “special operation.”

However, there is still a number of channels through which the truth about the war in Ukraine can be introduced and spread in Russia. Novaya Gazeta, Nobel Peace Prize 2021, is still active and some other non-governmental media as well, like OVD-Info. However, they are very careful in their coverage of certain events to avoid censorship and one has to read between the lines. *Human Rights Without Frontiers* republishes in English in the West important news that have been unreported or underreported here. It is also useful to send information from the West to these Russian media outlets, especially videos copied from our TV screens.

A second channel of communication includes Russian non-governmental organizations that have their own social networks and channels of communication in their country. It is important to send them by What’sApp, email or internet general information in English, possibly with Russian translation, including videos, in order to combat official disinformation

and propaganda.

A third channel concerns churches and other religions in the West. They should inform their contacts in Russia at all levels about their perception of the war in Ukraine and their official position.

A fourth channel should not be neglected either: whoever in Ukraine, in the European Union and in North America has family or friends in Russia should forward them information censored by Putin. Mixed Russian-Ukrainian families, wherever they are in the world, have a crucial role to play in contributing to the end of this war.

The consciences anesthetized or hypnotized by Putin's ideology in Russia must be awakened from their artificial sleep or their torpor and revitalized. This can be done and this can lead, even individually, to heroic acts. The best example is provided by Marina Ovsyannikova, a Russian state TV Channel One employee who is from a Russian-Ukrainian family. She demonstrated live on her TV Channel with a poster denouncing the Russian-led fratricidal war in Ukraine and she courageously testified in a video broadcasted by OVD-Info.

The power of information in the West is our best weapon. Our voices and our words are our best ammunitions. Let us share them, all of us and each of us, with all those in Russia and Ukraine who defend our values of democracy, rule of law and human rights.

Photo credits : <https://reports.ovdinfo.org/>

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