

**Distinguished heads of states and governments of the Italian Republic, Canada,
the United Kingdom of Great Britain, the Federal Republic of Germany, the French
Republic, the United States of America, and Japan!**

On 6-8 June, within the framework of the annual Summit of the 8 largest industrially developed democracies of the world, you will be meeting with Vladimir Putin, the President of the Russian Federation, and – in accordance with the current Constitution of our country – the guarantor of human and civil rights and liberties.

We call upon you to explicitly and unambiguously bring to the attention of Mr Putin – your partner in diplomatic negotiations – your concern about the gross, mass, and defiant violations of the most fundamental human rights and democratic freedoms by the authorities of the country they govern.

We call upon you to renounce the practice of “*Realpolitik*”, turning a blind eye to an anti-democratic course in exchange for shifts of position with respect to political and economic issues.

The experience of the Second World War and the confrontation with totalitarianism has shown the vital importance of observing fundamental human rights in order to ensure international security. It is for this reason that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted in December of 1948. The Helsinki Act, signed in August of 1976, enshrined a most important principle – that governments do not have the right to violate rights and liberties by pleading state sovereignty.

It is precisely for this reason that we insist that the leaders of the world’s largest democracies stress that the suppressions of democracy and the repressions taking place in the Russian Federation today are unacceptable to them.

The general directionality of the political evolution of the system of power in Russia is ever more irreversibly approaching a point beyond which is found an already openly authoritarian regime, run by persons who have come from the special services and security structures.

We regard as critically dangerous for democracy in the whole world the *de facto* liquidation of democracy in Russia, and specifically:

- the creation of a managed court and law-enforcement system, which creates unlimited opportunities for persecuting political and civic activists, human rights advocates and their relatives (who in such a manner are transformed into true hostages), for broad-scale persecutions on political, ideological and ethnic grounds. There already exist dozens of persons in Russia who have been recognized as victims of political repressions by human rights advocates;
- the suppression of freedom of the press, and of the freedom of self-expression more generally, the transformation of the principal mass information media – first and foremost the nationwide television channels – into an instrument of state propaganda, based on a cult of the head of state and of military power;
- torture, and inhuman and degrading treatment, are widely practiced within the Russian penitentiary agency, and there exist special places of confinement for torture – a “new GULAG Archipelago”.

We bring attention to the scandalous situation in connection with the violation of the right of citizens of Russia to the freedom to conduct rallies and meetings and to form associations.

This is:

- the unlawful prohibitions and barbarous dispersals of peaceful demonstrations in Moscow (16 December 2006, 31 March, 14 April, 5 and 27 May 2007), in St. Petersburg (3 March and 15 April 2007) and in Nizhny Novgorod (24 March and 27 April 2007), the persecutions of participants in a rally in Samara on 18 May – that had been permitted by the authorities – and the demonstratively mocking detainings of those who were preparing to fly out to Samara;
- the mass persecution of hundreds of civic and political activists, who were suspected of a desire to participate in “Marches of the Discontented” and Social Forums.

We call upon you to:

- seek the release of Russian prisoners persecuted on political grounds – those convicted in the YUKOS case, the Chechen woman Zara Murtazaliyeva, the political essayist Boris Stomakhin and – as indicated in a PACE resolution of 19 April – the scientists Igor Sutyagin and Valentin Danilov and the lawyer Mikhail Trepashkin.
- pay the most diligent attention to the use of charges of extremism for the persecution of human rights advocates and opponents of the regime;
- call upon the President of Russia not to violate the rights – guaranteed by Russian legislation – of the participants in the peaceful Marches of the Discontented planned for 9 (St. Petersburg) and 11 June (Moscow), and to prevent new beatings and cruel detainings of the demonstrators.

Lyudmila Alekseyeva,
Chair of the Moscow Helsinki Group,
Foundation In Defence of Rights of Inmates

Elena Bonner, human rights advocate

Sergei Kovalev,
President, Human Rights Institute

Lev Ponomarev,
All-Russia Public Movement “For Human Rights”

Yuli Rybakov,
human rights advocate,
member of the Bureau of Yabloko party

Yuri Samodurov,
Director of the Andrey Sakharov Museum and Public Centre

Clergyman Gleb Yakunin,
Public Committee In Defence of Freedom of Conscience

Malva Landa,
human rights advocate

Alla Gerber,
Holocaust Foundation

Alexey Simonov,

Glasnost Defense Foundation

Ernst Cherny,
Coalition “Environmental Biology and Human Rights”

Yelena Grishina,
Director of Public Information Centre

Boris Vishnevsky,
Novaya Gazeta columnist, member of the Bureau of Yabloko party

Mikhail Gorny,
The St. Petersburg Strategy Centre

Mikhail Kriger,
human rights advocate

Elena Sannikova,
human rights advocate

Andrei Buzin,
Chair of Inter-Regional Association of Voters

Vladimir Oyvin,
“Glasnost” Foundation

Antuan Arakelyan,
Chair of the Saint-Petersburg Intersectoral Coalition “Dialogue and Cause”

Alexander Vinnikov,
Movement “For Russia without Racism”

Sergey Sorokin,
Movement against Violence

Eduard Murzin,
member of the State Assembly of Bashkiria

Vadim Belotserkovsky, author, human rights advocate

Gregoriy Amnuel, author