

November 23, 2005

The Honorable Boris Gryzlov
Chairman, Russian State Duma
2 Okhotny Ryad
Moscow, RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Dear Mr. Chairman:

We write to express our profound concern regarding the proposed law "On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation." We urge the State Duma to reject this draft law because it threatens to undo years of democratic progress in the Russian Federation.

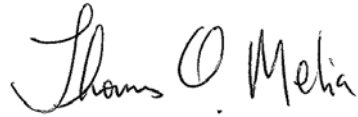
The draft law will likely paralyze rather than stabilize civil society. It will also seriously undermine valuable international cooperation and assistance, including critical humanitarian and health services to the Russian Federation. This draft law violates numerous provisions of the Constitution of the Russian Federation as well as international obligations and, if enacted, will cast doubt on Russia's suitability to lead the G-8 and the Council of Europe next year. The draft law resembles not the legislation of G-8 countries, but the onerous Kazakhstani legislation which was thrown out by its Constitutional Council several months ago.

We are particularly concerned that the draft law will:

- Violate the fundamental, universal rights of freedom of expression and association;
- Establish unified, state control over public organizations with excessive and intrusive regulations;
- Discriminate against foreign NGOs and citizens and outlaw representative branches of foreign NGOs that provide valuable assistance to Russians;
- Create an overly complicated registration procedure for NGOs and permit government officials to deny registration to NGOs arbitrarily;
- Liquidate NGOs that are unable to obtain registration and destroy thousands of jobs, dealing a heavy blow to the economy as well as to civil society in Russia;
- Isolate Russia from the international community.

Mr. Chairman, we hope that you and your colleagues will oppose this draft law and will lead Russia toward a more democratic and prosperous future in a spirit of cooperation with members of the G-8 and the Council of Europe.

Sincerely,



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Freedom House



Holly Cartner
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