

Declaration in Solidarity with Russian Environmental NGO Ecodefense!

Ecodefense is one of the oldest environmental groups in Russia, founded in 1989 in Kaliningrad. It works in various regions of Russia including Moscow, Kaliningrad and Siberia (Kuzbass) and has already successfully stopped nuclear power plants and coal mines.

In 2014 the Russian government officially labeled Ecodefense as a “foreign agent”, because the organisation convinced a number of investors from Europe not to invest in a nuclear plant near Kaliningrad, which stopped the plant’s construction in mid-2013.

The Russian Ministry of Justice initiated 28 legal (administrative) cases against Ecodefense for non-compliance with the law, leading to fines totaling Euro 30,000, which the organization did not pay until now. Ecodefense turned to the European Court on Human Rights (ECHR) in the collective case “Ecodefense and Others vs Russia” together with 61 Russian civil society groups that were affected by the law on foreign agents.

In May 2019, the situation worsened even further: Russian authorities launched 5 criminal cases against Ecodefense. These charges could mean a jail-sentence of up to two years for the organisation’s director, Alexandra Koroleva.

Though Ecodefense is not the first NGO to refuse to pay its fines, it is the first case so far in which the authorities have launched a criminal case against a civil society organization. This is a dangerous precedent, which could lead to further crackdowns on the civil society of Russia!

Declaring Ecodefense a foreign agent as well as the criminal charges against the organization are clearly driven by political motives.

In solidarity with Ecodefense...

...we demand all charges against Alexandra Koroleva and her organization to be dropped immediately.

...we will actively spread information on the political repression of Ecodefense, to make sure their case stays in the public realm.

...we are collecting donations for Ecodefense to pay their – wrongfully imposed - fines, as this could help to ease their current situation.

Signed by:

Arbeitsgruppe Schweiz-Kolumbien, Schweiz

Banktrack

Bürgerinitiative Lüchow-Dannenberg, Germany

Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe

Coal Action Network, UK

Colombia Solidarity Denmark

Dachverband der Kritischen Aktionärinnen und Aktionäre, Germany

FERN, Belgium/UK

Fundacja "Rozwój TAK - Odkrywki NIE", Poland

groundWork, Friends of the Earth South Africa

Les Amis de la Terre, France

London Mining Network, UK

Ökumenisches Netz Rhein-Mosel-Saar, Germany

Re:Common, Italy

Umweltinstitut München, Germany

urgewald e.V., Germany