Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation; the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change; the Special Rapporteur on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment; the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; the Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples; the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism and the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls

Ref.: AL RUS 3/2026
(Please use this reference in your reply)

7 April 2026

Excellency,

We have the honour to address you in our capacities as Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation; Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change; Special Rapporteur on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment; Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples; Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism and Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 60/21, 60/8, 57/31, 55/2, 52/9, 59/4, 52/4, 60/4 , 58/14 and 59/14.

In this connection, we would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government information we have received concerning **the arbitrary arrest, detention and criminal prosecution – following a series of coordinated detentions, interrogations and searches of Indigenous activists across several regions of the Russian Federation on 17 December 2025 – of Ms. Daria Egereva, an Indigenous human rights defender of the Selkup people, and Co-Chair of the International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change (IIPFCC) which is the official Indigenous Peoples' constituency to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and Ms. Natalia Leongardt, the colleague of Ms. Egereva. The information received strongly indicates that the prosecution of Ms. Daria Egereva might constitute acts of intimidation and reprisals for engaging with the United Nations, its representatives, and mechanisms in the field of human rights.**

Ms. Daria Egereva, born on 7 April 1977, is an Indigenous human rights defender of the Selkup people, and one of the most prominent Indigenous leaders in the Russian Federation. She is internationally recognized for her decades-long, peaceful advocacy on behalf of the Selkup people – an Indigenous small-numbered nation in Tomsk Region, in Western Siberia, currently numbering approximately 3,600 persons, whose language and cultural heritage are considered endangered. Throughout her professional career, Ms. Egereva has played a central role in representing Indigenous

Peoples in multilateral processes, particularly within the United Nations system. She has served as Co-Chair of the IIPFCC, the official Indigenous Peoples' constituency to the UNFCCC. In this capacity, she participated in the Conference of the Parties (COP) 28 in Dubai, COP29 in Baku, and COP30 in Belém, where she supported constructive, orderly and peaceful engagement between Indigenous Peoples and State delegations, including the Russian Federation. She was also a member of the Facilitative Working Group of the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform (LCIPP), contributing to technical and consultative deliberations within the UNFCCC framework. In addition, Ms. Egereva engaged with the United Nations Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN EMRIP), where in 2025 she was nominated for appointment as a member and was considered in the final troika of candidates as well as she regularly took part in the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, providing expert input under their mandates.

Ms. Natalia Leongardt, born on 3 March 1968, is an Indigenous Peoples' rights defender who has provided assistance to Indigenous representatives and activists from multiple regions of the Russian Federation. Her work has included support for activities related to Indigenous rights, climate processes and cooperation with regional and international mechanisms. Ms. Leongardt contributed to facilitating Indigenous engagement in human rights and climate-related processes, and worked closely with Indigenous activists, including those participating in international fora, including at the United Nations.

According to the information received:

Between 10 and 21 November 2025, Ms. Egereva participated in the UNFCCC COP30 in Belém, Brazil, where she served as Co-Chair of the IIPFCC. She travelled back to the Russian Federation on 13 December 2025.

On 17 December 2025, Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) officers carried out coordinated and targeted operations across several Russian regions – Altai Region, Sakha Republic (Yakutia), Tomsk Region, Murmansk Region, Kemerovo Region, and Krasnoyarsk Region – during which at least 17 Indigenous activists were searched, interrogated and detained.

At 06:30 on that day, FSB officers searched Ms. Egereva's home in Moscow, confiscated her digital devices, and detained her at her residence. The colleague of Ms. Egereva, Ms. Leongardt, was also detained the same day.

While most of those detained were released the same day, both Ms. Egereva and Ms. Leongardt were transferred to the pre-trial detention centre SIZO No. 6 of the Federal Penitentiary Service in Moscow and placed in police custody. They were subsequently charged on 17 December under article 205.5(2) of the Russian Criminal Code, "participation in the activities of a terrorist organization", an offence carrying a potential sentence of 10 to 20 years of imprisonment. The charges stem from alleged involvement in Aborigen Forum, an informal association of independent experts and activists representing Indigenous peoples from 14 regions of the North, Siberia, and the Far East.

On 25 July 2024, the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation designated 55 organizations, including Indigenous rights groups, as "extremist", categorizing them as "structural divisions" of a non-existent "Anti-Russian separatist movement" declared "extremist" by the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation on 7 June 2024. The list included Aborigen Forum, as a "structural division" of this designated movement. Following this designation, the Forum ceased its activities on the same day.

On 22 November 2024, the Supreme Court further declared the "Free Nations of PostRussia Forum" and its 172 alleged "structural divisions", including the Aborigen Forum, as "terrorist organizations". The court hearing was held behind closed doors, and the text of the decision has not been made public. Russian authorities have provided no justification or evidence for linking these 172 organizations to terrorism.

Regarding the charges against Ms. Egereva and Ms. Leongardt the investigators claimed that Ms. Egereva joined Aborigen Forum "no later than April 2024" and that she thereafter engaged in "recruiting participants, coordinating their activities, and creating and administering closed channels" for communication. Reportedly, investigators have, in part, associated the accusations with Ms. Egereva's participation in negotiation processes or events organized by, or carried out in cooperation with, United Nations mechanisms.

On 18 December, the Basmanny District Court of Moscow authorized pre-trial detention for both Ms. Egereva and Ms. Leongardt until 17 February 2026. Both the court hearing, as well as the subsequent appellate hearing on 11 February 2026 before the Moscow City Court which upheld the decision, were held behind closed doors excluding even family members from being present. Defence lawyers have been refused access to key procedural documents to which they are entitled under domestic law, hindering the ability to mount an effective defence. Both women human rights defenders pleaded not guilty, denying any involvement in terrorism or any activity of a non-peaceful nature, and stating that their professional and volunteer human rights work has been strictly peaceful, facilitative in nature, and aligned with established procedures for international human rights and climate negotiations and cooperation processes.

On 12 February 2026, the Basmanny District Court extended Ms. Egereva's and Ms. Leongardt's pre-trial detention until 15 March 2026. The court held that the extension was necessary to carry out additional investigative actions; that Ms. Egereva and Ms. Leongardt were charged with a serious terrorist offence; that the grounds for maintaining them in pre-trial detention remained unchanged; and that, if released, they might obstruct the investigation. On 11 March, the Moscow City Court upheld the decision.

On 12 March, the Basmanny District Court extended the pre-trial detention of both Ms. Egereva and Ms. Leongardt until 15 June 2026, referring to the same reasons.

Ms. Egereva is currently held in pre-trial detention centre SIZO No. 6 in Moscow, where she is subjected to restrictive conditions that significantly interfere with her rights. She is denied regular telephone calls and in-person visits with her husband and children, despite repeated applications submitted through the established procedures. Over recent months, she has only been able to see her husband at three court hearings, during which Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia (FSIN) officers prohibited any personal communication or contact.

Without wishing to prejudge the accuracy of the information received, we would like to express our serious concern about the arbitrary arrest, detention and criminal prosecution of Ms. Daria Egereva and Ms. Natalia Leongardt, and the reported use of counter-terrorism legislation against them, which appear to be directly linked to their legitimate Indigenous Peoples' human rights advocacy and the exercise of their rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association and cultural rights.

We are gravely concerned that, in respect of Ms. Egereva, these measures might constitute acts of intimidation and reprisals for engaging or having engaged with the United Nations, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights, including within the UNFCCC, the LCIPP, the UNEMRIP, and the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII). Further, we are concerned about the chilling effect on Indigenous advocacy, international cooperation and engagement with the United Nations, and human rights defenders' work that their prosecution is prone to generate.

Their case appears to fit a broader pattern in the Russian Federation of abusing national security and public safety legislation, including counter-terrorism and anti-extremism related, to silence civil society, including Indigenous activists, human rights defenders, civil society representatives, media and cultural figures, lawyers, persons who engage with the United Nations as well as individuals who express their opposition to the war against Ukraine. We are also concerned about the related allegations of coordinated searches, interrogations and detention by the FSB officers of Indigenous' Peoples' advocates and human rights defenders, restricted access to legal assistance and other due process violations.

If the above allegations prove to be true, they may constitute violations of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), ratified by the Russian Federation on 16 October 1973. Their arrest and detention raise serious concerns under article 9 of the Covenant, which prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention and requires that any deprivation of liberty be lawful, reasonable, and necessary. We recall that, under article 9 of the Covenant, arrest or detention is arbitrary not only when it lacks a legal basis, but also when it results from the peaceful exercise of rights protected under the Covenant, including freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association. In this regard, the Human Rights Committee has clarified that arrest or detention imposed as a response to the legitimate exercise of such rights is per se arbitrary (General Comment No. 35, para. 17). This principle is echoed in the jurisprudence of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD), which has repeatedly found the detention of human rights defenders to be arbitrary under Category II, where the deprivation of liberty stems

directly from the exercise of their universally protected rights.[1] We further note that closed hearings without sufficient justification, impediments to defence lawyer's access to case materials, the lack of publicly available evidence, and the imposition of counter-terrorism charges without individualized assessment raise grave concerns regarding the fairness, transparency and legality of the proceedings, under article 14 ICCPR. We further note that, under article 9(3) of the Covenant, and as clarified by the Human Rights Committee (General Comment No. 35, para. 38), pre-trial detention must remain the exception rather than the rule, and may only be imposed following an individualized assessment demonstrating that it is reasonable and necessary for purposes such as preventing flight, interference with evidence, or the recurrence of crime; courts must also consider less intrusive alternatives and may not rely on vague or expansive criteria such as "public security."

We note with concern that in the present case, no individualized determination appears to have been conducted justifying pre-trial detention, nor does it appear that the authorities carried out the required periodic re-examination of whether continued pre-trial detention remained reasonable and necessary. We further note that the delays before judicial review of their pre-trial detention – 55 days between the initial detention order of 18 December 2025 and the appellate review of legality of pre-trial detention on 11 February 2026, followed by 31 days before the subsequent review on 11 March 2026, and then 1 day before the next extension on 12 March 2026 – appear incompatible with articles 9(3) and 14 of the ICCPR, which require regular, meaningful and periodic reassessment of whether continued pre-trial detention remains reasonable and strictly necessary (general comment No. 35, para. 38). We further note that the significant delay before a judicial review of their pre-trial detention was conducted appears incompatible with articles 9(3) and 14 of the ICCPR, which require prompt presentation before a judge and timely, effective judicial scrutiny of the lawfulness of detention. The reported raids on the homes of Indigenous activists and leaders and the seizure of their personal devices raise concerns under article 17 of the ICCPR, which protects individuals from arbitrary or unlawful interference with their privacy.

The prosecution of Ms. Egereva and Ms. Leongardt under article 205.5(2) of the Russian Criminal Code, in the absence of any allegation of violent behavior, also raises concerns under articles 19, 21 and 22 of the ICCPR, which protect the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and freedom of association, respectively. The cooperation of Indigenous Peoples' representatives with United Nations bodies is an exercise of protected expression and association, and criminalizing such cooperation appears incompatible with the permissible restrictions under the ICCPR, which must be strictly necessary, proportionate, and non-discriminatory.

We remind your Excellency's Government that States have a heightened duty of care for individuals deprived of their liberty by the State. Having placed Ms. Egereva and Ms. Leongardt under detention, authorities bear responsibility for ensuring that their physical and psychological integrity is protected, and that they are treated with dignity and in full accordance with international human rights standards. We also finally recall article 10 of the ICCPR, which requires that all persons deprived of liberty be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person.

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[1] See Opinion No. 56/2025, paras. 78-82; Opinion No. 8/2023, para. 69.

We further recall the provisions of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), ratified by the Russian Federation on 4 February 1969, which obliges States under article 2 to pursue by all appropriate means a policy of eliminating racial discrimination, and under article 5 to guarantee equal enjoyment of, inter alia, security of person and the freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly and association. The apparent targeting of Indigenous representatives and organizations through "extremism" and "terrorism" designations, without publicly available evidence of violent conduct, may therefore be inconsistent with these obligations. These concerns are reinforced by CERD General Recommendation No. 23, which emphasizes Indigenous Peoples' right to effective participation in decisions affecting them.

We further recall articles 2 and 16 of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), ratified by the Russian Federation on 3 March 1987. The reported proceedings' modalities and conditions of detention – prolonged restrictions on family contact, unjustified closed hearings and obstacles to the exercise of defence rights – engage the State's obligations under these provisions to which prescribe humane treatment and prohibit degrading treatment.

We further recall articles 2 and 15 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), ratified by the Russian Federation on 23 January 1981. As both individuals concerned are women human rights defenders, their alleged criminalization, intimidation, and reprisals for peaceful Indigenous advocacy and cooperation with the UN may raise concerns under these provisions. Under CEDAW, States parties have an obligation to eliminate discrimination against women in law and in practice, to ensure women's equal protection before the law, and to guarantee that women can exercise their human rights and fundamental freedoms without intimidation, harassment, or acts of retaliation. These obligations extend to women human rights defenders, whose work must be enabled and protected rather than impeded. In this regard, we recall the landmark UN General Assembly resolution 68/181 (18 December 2013) on protecting women human rights defenders, and UN General Assembly resolution 72/247 (2017) on the twentieth anniversary of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, para. 11.

We likewise recall the provisions of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), ratified by the Russian Federation on 16 October 1973, which guarantees under article 15 the right of everyone to take part in cultural life, and under article 1(2) the right of all peoples not to be deprived of their means of subsistence. Measures that dismantle Indigenous institutions, restrict their participation, or undermine their cultural survival – including through the designation of Indigenous organizations as "extremist" or "terrorist" – may therefore be incompatible with the State's obligations. Article 2(1) of the ICESCR requires States to realize rights through participatory processes, which may be undermined where Indigenous Peoples' representatives are prosecuted for peaceful advocacy.

We recall that cooperation with the United Nations is protected under international human rights law, and that reprisals for such cooperation are strictly prohibited. Allegations that Ms. Egereva's arrest occurred immediately upon her return from UN engagement, and that both cases are linked to each individual's active participation in UN fora, raise grave concerns and appear consistent with patterns

documented in the Secretary-General's most recent report on reprisals (A/HRC/60/62), where the Secretary-General warned that "more than half of the States included in the present report apply laws and regulations concerning civil society, counter-terrorism and national security that have had the effect of deterring or hindering cooperation with the United Nations." These findings underscore the seriousness of the allegations in the present case and the broader risks faced by Indigenous representatives engaging with UN mechanisms.

We would also like to recall the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), adopted by the General Assembly in 2007, which the Russian Federation voted in favour of. Article 3 affirms the right of Indigenous Peoples to self-determination, and article 18 guarantees their right to participate in decision-making in matters affecting their rights, through representatives chosen by them in accordance with their own procedures. Ms. Egereva's position as Co-Chair of the IIPFCC derives from her selection by Indigenous Peoples themselves. Her arrest therefore appears to interfere with Indigenous Peoples' collective right to determine their own representatives and leadership in international processes, contrary to the principles set out in UNDRIP.

We note with concern that the charges against Ms. Egereva and the continuing detention of both women occurred in the context of a broader campaign of repression against Indigenous Peoples' organizations in Russia. As documented in the report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation to the UN Human Rights Council in 2025 (A/HRC/60/59), in May 2025, the Russian Office of the Prosecutor-General designated the International Indigenous Fund for Development and Solidarity Batani as an "undesirable organization", citing its participation in international forums, including at the United Nations. As a reprisal for engaging with United Nations mechanisms, Russian authorities accused Batani of promoting "anti-Russian narratives" under the guise of Indigenous rights work. The designations of these organizations as "undesirable" and "terrorist" lacked justification, and their sweeping scope raises serious concerns about arbitrariness. We note that in her 2025 report to the UN General Assembly (A/80/382: "Rule of fear: silencing dissent and anti-war expression in the Russian Federation in the name of national security"), the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation documented the widespread and systematic abuse of national security and public safety legislation (namely counter-terrorism and anti-extremism related), as part of a strategy to silence dissent, including the targeting of Indigenous Peoples' associations as "extremist" and "terrorist", despite no evidence of violent conduct (paras 29, 112-115). In her report, the Special Rapporteur also found that Indigenous activists have been targeted for challenging official narratives on "traditional values" and "national identity" (para. 3). She finally concluded that Indigenous and minority rights groups are targeted as "extremist" or "terrorist", suppressing their voices and conflating peaceful advocacy with a national security threat (para. 142).

These serious concerns also appear consistent with the larger pattern of repression in the Russian Federation, as established by the findings of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation. In her 2025 report to the UN General Assembly (A/80/382: Rule of fear: silencing dissent and anti-war expression in the Russian Federation in the name of national security) the Special Rapporteur stressed that national security and public safety legislation in Russia has

been systematically used as part of a strategy to suppress dissent as well as to dismantle civil society, including through arbitrary prosecutions under counter-terrorism and anti-extremism provisions. The Special Rapporteur concluded that the designation of entire Indigenous networks as "terrorist" or "extremist", despite the absence of substantiated evidence, forms part of this strategy. In her 2025 report to the UN Human Rights Council, This pattern, when viewed in the context of the present case, suggests that the charges against Ms. Egereva and Ms. Leongardt reflect an apparent attempt to silence Indigenous voices and deter engagement with international mechanisms, thereby creating a chilling effect on all Indigenous Peoples' representatives in the Russian Federation.

We express our serious concern that in the case of Ms. Egereva and Ms. Leongardt, it appears that counter-terrorism provisions have been used to justify actions aimed at restricting their legitimate participation in Indigenous Peoples' governance, climate diplomacy, and United Nations advocacy, and advocacy for the rights of Indigenous Peoples. The absence of individualized evidence, the opaque basis for the designation of their alleged organizational affiliations as "terrorist", and the broader pattern of abuse of national security and public safety frameworks, including counter-terrorism, raise serious doubts as to the legality and legitimacy of their prosecution. We wish to remind your Excellency's Government that any measures taken to combat terrorism or violent extremism must comply with the obligations of States under international law, in particular international human rights law, international humanitarian law, and refugee law.[2] Counter-terrorism measures must conform to fundamental requirements of legality, necessity, proportionality and non-discrimination and should not be abused by being invoked against individuals exercising rights protected under international law.

We remind your Excellency's Government that, as noted by the Special rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, "the term 'extremism' has no purchase in binding international legal standards" and "when operative as a criminal legal category, is irreconcilable with the principle of legal certainty; it is therefore per se incompatible with the exercise of certain fundamental human rights" (A/HRC/43/46).

In light of the above, we urge your Excellency's Government to immediately and unconditionally release Ms. Egereva and Ms. Leongardt from detention, to drop all charges against them as stemming from their peaceful human rights activities, and to ensure that they are able to continue their legitimate human rights work and their cooperation with the United Nations' bodies and mechanisms without fear of intimidation or reprisals. We respectfully call on your Excellency's Government to ensure that the treatment of Ms. Egereva and Ms. Leongardt adheres to international human rights standards, to guarantee their rights to liberty, security, expression, peaceful assembly and association, and to ensure that any legal proceedings are conducted in full compliance with the principles of fairness, transparency, legality and necessity under international law.

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[2] Security Council resolutions 1373 (2001), 1456 (2003), 1566 (2004), 1624 (2005), 2178 (2014), 2242 (2015), 2341 (2017), 2354 (2017), 2368 (2017), 2370 (2017), 2395 (2017) and 2396 (2017); Human Rights Council resolution 35/34; and General Assembly resolutions 49/60, 51/210, 72/123 and 72/180, among others.

In connection with the above alleged facts and concerns, please refer to the **Annex on Reference to international human rights law** attached to this letter which cites international human rights instruments and standards relevant to these allegations.

As it is our responsibility, under the mandates provided to us by the Human Rights Council, to seek to clarify all cases brought to our attention, we would be grateful for your observations on the following matters:

1. Please provide any additional information and/or comment(s) you may have on the above-mentioned allegations.

2. Please provide detailed information on the legal and factual bases for the arrest, detention and prosecution of Ms. Egereva and Ms. Leongardt under article 205.5(2) of the Russian Criminal Code and explain how their alleged conduct meets each constitutive elements of "participation in the activities of a terrorist organization", including the specific acts attributed to them and the evidentiary materials relied upon, as well as how this is compatible with Russia's obligations under international law, including articles 9, 14, 19, 21 and 22 of the ICCPR.

3. Please provide comprehensive information on the procedure, criteria and evidentiary basis through which Aborigen Forum, the International Committee of Indigenous Peoples of Russia and other Indigenous associations were designated "extremist" and/or "terrorist", including:

   - whether the designations were based on judicial or administrative proceedings;
   - whether directly affected individuals and organizations were notified and given access to evidence;
   - whether they had access to legal representation, hearings, and the ability to challenge the designations before an independent tribunal; and
   - whether any periodic review, sunset clause or appeal process exists for such designations.

4. Please explain what measures have been taken to guarantee Ms. Egereva and Ms. Leongardt's rights to a fair trial, including access to counsel, adequate time and facilities to prepare their defence, and examination of evidence by an independent and impartial tribunal. Please also provide the legal basis for holding court hearings in closed sessions.

5. Please explain how the application of counter-terrorism legislation to the peaceful human rights activities of Ms. Egereva and Ms. Leongardt complies with the Russian Federation's obligations under articles 9, 14, 19, 21 and 22 of the ICCPR, including the principles of legality, necessity, proportionality and non-discrimination. Please specify how the prosecution of each individual aligns with the jurisprudence of the Human Rights Committee regarding the abuse of counter-terrorism laws against freedom of expression and association.

6. Please provide detailed information on the steps taken to ensure the protection of Indigenous rights defenders and all individuals cooperating with United Nations mechanisms – including the UNFCCC, LCIPP, EMRIP, UNPFII, Special Procedures and treaty bodies. Please clarify what safeguards exist to prevent intimidation, surveillance, criminalization and reprisals arising from their engagement.

7. Please explain how the legal framework governing "extremist" or "terrorist" designations – particularly its vague scope, lack of publicly accessible evidence, and absence of procedural guarantees – complies with the Russian Federation's obligations under the ICCPR, CERD, ICESCR, CEDAW and CAT, including the principles of legality, foreseeability, non-arbitrariness and non-discrimination. Please provide information on any plans to amend, suspend or repeal provisions that allow for the designation of civil society organizations – including Indigenous organizations – without transparent, evidence-based procedures.

This communication, and any response received from your Excellency's Government, will be made public via the communications reporting website at the 60 days mark. Should your Excellency's Government respond within 60 days, both the communication and the response, may be published before the 60 days mark. The communications and responses will also be made available in the subsequent periodic report to be presented to the Human Rights Council.

While awaiting a reply, we urge that all necessary interim measures be taken to halt the alleged violations and prevent their re-occurrence and if the investigations support or suggest the allegations to be correct, to ensure the accountability of any person(s) responsible for the alleged violations.

In light of the allegations of intimidation and reprisals for cooperation with the United Nations in the field of human rights, we reserve the right to share this communication – and any response received from Your Excellency's Government - with the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights as the senior United Nations official designated by the Secretary General to lead the system-wide efforts to address this issue.

We may publicly express our concerns in the near future as, in our view, the information upon which a press release will be based is sufficiently reliable to indicate a matter warranting immediate attention. We also believe that the wider public should be alerted to the potential implications of the above-mentioned allegations. The press release will indicate that we have been in contact with your Excellency's Government to clarify the issues in question.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Mariana Katzarova
Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation

Matthew Gillett
Vice-Chair of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention

Elisa Morgera
Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change

Astrid Puentes Riaño
Special Rapporteur on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment

Irene Khan
Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression

Gina Romero
Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association

Mary Lawlor
Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders

Albert K. Barume
Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples

Ben Saul
Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism

Claudia Flores
Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls

Annex

Reference to international human rights law

In connection with the above alleged facts and concerns, we would like to refer your Excellency's Government to the principles and international standards applicable to this communication, particularly articles 9, 14, 15, 17, 19, 21 and 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), ratified by the Russian Federation on 16 October 1973, and articles 19 and 20 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) which provide that "[e]veryone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers" and "[e]veryone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association."

Right to liberty and security

Article 9 of the ICCPR protects the right to liberty and security of person and prohibits arbitrary detention. It establishes in particular that no one shall be deprived of his or her liberty except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedure as are established by law, and that anyone who is arrested shall be informed, at the time of arrest, of the reasons behind such arrest and be brought promptly before a judge to determine the lawfulness of the detention. Paragraph 3 requires that detention in custody of persons awaiting trial be the exception rather than the rule. The Human Rights Committee has noted that pre-trial detention must remain the exception rather than the rule, and may only be imposed following "an individualized determination that it is reasonable and necessary, taking into into account all the circumstances, for such purposes as to prevent flight, interference with evidence or the recurrence of crime"; courts must also consider less intrusive alternatives and may not rely on vague or expansive criteria such as "public security" (para. 38). In its general comment No. 35 on the Right to Liberty and Security of Person, the Human Rights Committee recalled that when national security functions as a legal basis for criminal sanction it must meet the requirements of precision and clarity under the ICCPR (article 9(1)), be expressly linked to a defined set of criminal acts and not criminalize acts and entitlements which are lawful under international law (CCPR/C/GC/35).

An arrest or detention may be authorized by domestic law and nonetheless be arbitrary. The notion of "arbitrariness" is not to be equated with "against the law" but must be interpreted more broadly to include elements of reasonableness, necessity and proportionality, as well as compliance with the interactional human rights obligations (see Human Rights Committee, general comment No. 35 (2014), para. 12).

Right to freedom of expression and opinion

Article 19 of the ICCPR guarantees the right to hold opinions without interference and the right to freedom of expression, which includes the right "to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media". This right applies online as well as offline and includes not only the exchange of information that is favourable, but also that which may criticize, shock, or offend. In its general comment No. 34, the Human

Rights Committee stated that States parties to the ICCPR are required to guarantee the right to freedom of expression, including "political discourse, commentary on one's own and on public affairs, canvassing, discussion of human rights, journalism, cultural and artistic expression, teaching, and religious discourse" (CCPR/C/GC/34, para. 11).

The Committee further asserts that there is a duty of States to put in place effective measures to protect against attacks aimed at silencing those exercising their right to freedom of expression (para. 23). Recognizing how journalists and persons who engage in the gathering and analysis of information on the human rights situation and who publish human rights-related reports, including judges and lawyers, are frequently subjected to threats, intimidation and attacks because of their activities, the Committee stresses that "all such attacks should be vigorously investigated in a timely fashion, and the perpetrators prosecuted, and the victims, or, in the case of killings, their representatives, be in receipt of appropriate forms of redress" (para. 23).

Any restriction on the right to freedom of expression must be compatible with the requirements set out in article 19(3) ICCPR. Under these requirements, restrictions must (i) be provided by law; (ii) pursue one of the legitimate aims for restriction, which are the respect of the rights or reputations of others and the protection of national security or of public order (ordre public), or of public health or morals; and (iii) be necessary and proportionate for those objectives. The State has the burden of proof to demonstrate that any such restrictions are compatible with the Covenant, and restrictions must always be "the least intrusive instrument among those which might achieve their protective function" (CCPR/C/GC/34, para. 34).

Article 19(3) may never be invoked to justify the muzzling of any advocacy of democratic tenets and human rights (para. 23). Nor, under any circumstance, can an attack on a person, because of the exercise of their freedom of opinion or expression, including such forms of attack as arbitrary arrest and torture, be compatible with article 19 (para. 23). Furthermore, in her report A/HRC/50/29, the Special Rapporteur for the right to freedom of opinion and expression expressed her concern about the criminalization of journalists including through laws that prohibit the criticism of state institutions or officials, negatively impacting media freedom and damaging democratic discourse and public participation.

Right to a fair trial and due process

Article 14(1) of the ICCPR sets out a general guarantee of equality before courts and tribunals and the right of every person to a fair and public hearing by a competent, independent and impartial tribunal established by law. In addition, article 14 of the ICCPR provides a set of procedural guarantees that must be made available to persons charged with a criminal offence, including the right of accused persons to have access to, and communicate with, a counsel of their own choosing.

In its general comment No. 32 (2007), the Human Rights Committee explained that the right to communicate with counsel enshrined in article 14(3)(b) requires that the accused is granted prompt access to counsel. Counsel should be able to meet their clients in private and to communicate with the accused in conditions that fully respect the confidentiality of their communications. Counsel should also be able "to advise and to represent persons charged with a criminal offence in accordance with generally

recognized professional ethics without restrictions, influence, pressure or undue interference from any quarter" (CCPR/C/GC/32, para. 34). Principle 9 and guideline 8 of the United Nations Basic Principles and Guidelines on Remedies and Procedures on the Right of Anyone Deprived of Their Liberty to Bring Proceedings Before a Court provide that the right to legal assistance is applicable at any time during the detention, including immediately after apprehension. All persons apprehended must be promptly advised of this right and access to legal counsel must be provided without delay.

The Human Rights Committee has also noted that the right to "adequate time and facilities" under article 14 of the ICCPR "must include access to documents and other evidence", including all inculpatory and exculpatory materials that the prosecution plans to offer in court. In that regard, guideline 5 of the UN Basic Principles and Guidelines provide that "[t]he factual and legal basis for the detention shall be disclosed to the detainee and/or his or her representative without delay so as to provide adequate time to prepare the challenge. Disclosure includes a copy of the detention order, access to and a copy of the case file, in addition to the disclosure of any material in the possession of the authorities or to which they may gain access relating to the reasons for the deprivation of liberty."

Abuse of counter-terrorism and anti-extremism legislation

Although no universal treaty generally defines "terrorism", States should ensure that counter-terrorism legislation is limited to criminalizing conduct which is properly and precisely defined on the basis of the international counter-terrorism instruments,[3] the General Assembly's Declaration on Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism (1994), and Security Council resolution 1566 (2004). Based on these authoritative sources, the model definition of terrorism advanced by the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism provides clear, "best practice" guidance, by identifying conduct that is genuinely terrorist in nature and precisely defining the elements (A/HRC/16/51 as revised by A/80/284).

The "principle of legal certainty" under article 15(1) of the ICCPR requires that criminal laws are sufficiently precise so that it is clear what types of behaviour constitute a criminal offence and what would be the consequence of committing such an offence. This principle seeks to prevent ill-defined and/or overly broad laws which are open to arbitrary application and abuse, including to target civil society on political or other unjustified grounds (A/70/371, para. 46(b)) and suppress the exercise of fundamental rights and freedoms (A/HRC/40/52) and may lead to arbitrary deprivation of liberty.

States must ensure that counter-terrorism legislation is limited to criminalizing properly and precisely defined conduct, for example based on the provisions of international counter-terrorism instruments and is strictly guided by the principles of legality, necessity, proportionality and non-discrimination. Any measures taken to combat terrorism or violent extremism must comply with the obligations of States under international law, in particular international human rights law, refugee law and

[3] See https://treaties.un.org/Pages/DB.aspx?path=DB/studies/page2_en.xml.

international humanitarian law. [4] We would like to stress that counter-terrorism legislation with penal sanctions should not be misused against individuals exercising their rights protected under international law. States must ensure that measures to combat terrorism and preserve national security do not hinder the work and safety of individuals, groups and organs of society engaged in promoting and defending human rights (A/HRC/RES/22/6, para. 10(a)). We remind your Excellency's Government that the General Assembly has unanimously recognized that effectively combatting terrorism and ensuring respect for human rights are not competing but complementary and mutually reinforcing goals in the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (A/HRC/60/288).

Further, according to the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, "the term 'extremism' has no place in binding international legal standards and, when operating as a criminal legal category, is irreconcilable with the principle of legal certainty; it is therefore per se incompatible with the exercise of certain fundamental human rights" (A/HRC/43/46, para. 14).

The designation of "terrorist" individuals or organizations must satisfy the grounds for listing, and ensure due process and judicial protection, under international human rights law, as set out by the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism (A/HRC/16/51, para. 35 and A/80/284, paras. 17-39). Specifically, the criteria for listing must be clearly established by law and publicized. There must be reasonable grounds to believe, based on credible and convincing evidence, that the individual or entity: (a) has knowingly carried out, participated in or facilitated a terrorist act; (b) intends to engage further in terrorism; and (c) is capable of so engaging. A higher standard of proof, such as the balance of probabilities, is recommended. The definition of terrorism must be limited to conduct that is genuinely terrorist in accordance with best practice international standards. To list an organization, it must have the substantial purpose of engaging in terrorist offences. Even where an individual or entity meets the formal criteria, listing must still be necessary and proportionate in the circumstances, including by demonstrating that less invasive means, such as surveillance and criminal investigation, would be ineffective.

Any restriction of rights resulting from listing, including financial and criminal law measures, must be necessary and proportionate in pursuit of the counter-terrorism aim and be non-discriminatory. Measures must be applied individually and not automatically or en masse. The protracted or indefinite maintenance of restrictive measures, including asset freezes and travel bans, may become disproportionate and quasi-punitive over time. Protracted listings should also be more intensively scrutinized because they will likely have reduced the threat over time.

The following minimum due process rights should apply to listings: (a) A right to be promptly informed of the listing (ordinarily ex ante, exceptionally ex post facto) and its factual grounds, the consequences of listing and the procedural rights. There must be sufficient disclosure of the information supporting the listing to enable the

[4] Security Council resolutions 1373 (2001), 1456 (2003), 1566 (2004), 1624 (2005), 2178 (2014), 2242 (2015), 2341 (2017), 2354 (2017), 2368 (2017), 2370 (2017), 2395 (2017) and 2396 (2017); Human Rights Council resolution 35/34; and General Assembly resolutions 49/60, 51/210, 72/123 and 72/180, among others

person to effectively challenge it, instruct their lawyer and enjoy equality of arms in proceedings; (b) A right to apply to the decision maker for delisting or non-implementation of the measures, and a subsequent right to re-apply for such relief where there is a material change of circumstances or new evidence; (c) A right to judicial review of the listing, affording due process, legal assistance and legal aid as required. The court must have the power to suspend the listing pending final decision. Judicial review should be prompt and automatic, not only on application; (d) The listing should be regularly reviewed, at least every six months, 39 to determine whether the listing and the measures are still lawful, necessary and proportionate; (e) The listing should lapse automatically after 12 months, unless renewed afresh; (f) Reparation, including compensation, must be available for wrongful listing, including for affected third parties.

Right to peaceful assembly and association

Article 21 of the ICCPR recognizes that everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly, (see also article 2 of the ICCPR and resolutions 15/21, 21/16 and 24/5 of the Human Rights Council). In its resolution 24/5, the Council reminded States of their obligation to respect and fully protect the rights of all individuals to assemble peacefully and associate freely, online as well as offline, including in the context of elections, and including persons espousing minority or dissenting views or beliefs and human rights defenders (A/HRC/26/29, para. 22).

Article 22 of the ICCPR protects the right to freedom of association, which includes the right of everyone to associate with others to pursue common interests. Freedom of association is closely linked to the rights to freedom of expression and to peaceful assembly and is of fundamental importance to the functioning of democratic societies. These rights can only be restricted in very specific circumstances, where the restrictions serve a legitimate public purpose as recognized by international standards and the restrictions must be a necessary and proportionate means of achieving that purpose within a democratic society, with a strong and objective justification. The Siracusa Principles on the Limitation and Derogation Provisions in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights also state in para. 30 that national security cannot be invoked as a reason for imposing limitations to prevent merely local or relatively isolated threats to law and order.

We furthermore wish to recall that the Human Rights Committee indicated that restrictions on peaceful assemblies must not be used, explicitly or implicitly, to stifle expression of political opposition to a government (CCPR/C/MDG/CO/4, para. 51), challenges to authority, including calls for democratic changes of government, the constitution or the political system, or the pursuit of self-determination (CCPR/C/GC/37, para. 49).

The former Special Rapporteur on freedom of peaceful assembly and of association has also emphasized that protection measures of national security should seek to strengthen, not compromise, rights and freedoms, and other democratic values. National and regional security policies should be centered on the protection of human rights and should prioritize inclusive civil participation of all segments of society, including women and youth, which contribute to the building of sustainable peace and democratic transitions. Robust national security policies require legitimacy and

credibility, which can only be effectively achieved when the voices of all segments in society are reflected, and rights and freedoms are upheld (A/HRC/56/50, para. 90).

Equality and non-discrimination

Article 2 of the ICCPR requires that States respect and ensure to all individuals within their territory and jurisdiction the rights protected under the Covenant without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Article 26 of the ICCPR further provides that all persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law. It requires that the law "prohibit any discrimination and guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection against discrimination on any ground such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status."

We further wish to recall your Excellency's Government's obligations under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), ratified by the Russian Federation on 4 February 1969. Under articles 2 and 5, the State must guarantee the equal enjoyment of human rights without discrimination on grounds of ethnic or Indigenous origin. CERD general recommendation No. 23 specifically calls upon States to ensure that Indigenous Peoples can participate in decision-making and defend their rights and interests freely, and without discrimination or reprisals.

We additionally recall the obligations arising under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), ratified by the Russian Federation on 23 January 1981. Under articles 2 and 15, States must eliminate discrimination against women "in all matters" and ensure equality before the law. The CEDAW Committee has clarified that these obligations extend to women human rights defenders, who must be protected from gender-specific forms of intimidation, harassment and reprisals, including in contexts where national security or counter-terrorism frameworks are invoked.

We also recall the landmark UN General Assembly resolution 68/181 (18 December 2013) to protect women human rights defenders and UN General Assembly resolution 72/247 (2017) on the 'Twentieth anniversary and promotion of the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms', para. 11.

Additionally, we wish to bring your Excellency's Government's attention to the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls' report to the Human Rights Council on eliminating discrimination against women in political and public life with a focus on political transition (A/HRC/23/50). In this report, the Working Group underlined that stigmatization, harassment and outright attacks are used to silence and discredit women who are outspoken as leaders, community workers, human rights defenders and politicians. Women defenders are often the target of gender-specific violence, such as verbal abuse based on their sex, sexual abuse or rape; they may experience intimidation, attacks, death threats and even murder. Violence against women defenders is sometimes condoned or perpetrated by State actors. The Working

Group called upon States to eliminate all forms of violence against women in order to fulfil women's human rights and to improve the enabling condition for women's participation in political and public life. Moreover, in its report to the Human Rights Council on women deprived of liberty (A/HRC/41/33), the Working Group underscored the increasing risk faced by women human rights defenders of criminalization and detention as a result of their legitimate work. Women who work specifically to combat gender stereotypes and advance women's rights are most likely to be targets for criminal persecution and imprisonment. Those risks are heightened for women who experience intersectional forms of discrimination, such as indigenous women, who face additional layers of harmful and debilitating stereotypes and are disproportionately targeted for control. Certain laws, including 'complicity' laws, 'public order' laws and anti-terrorism laws, may be particularly instrumentalized to target women human rights defenders. The Working Group recommended States to eliminate any laws or policy measures designed to criminalize the public roles of women, and to initiate targeted policy measures and programmes to tackle the disproportionate criminalization and incarceration of racial, indigenous or other marginalized groups.

Prohibition of torture and ill-treatment

We would also like to draw attention to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), ratified by the Russian Federation on 3 March 1987. Pursuant to articles 2 and 16, States must take effective measures to prevent torture and ill-treatment, including through ensuring that conditions of detention fully respect human dignity. Prolonged isolation, denial of family contact, closed or opaque proceedings, and other restrictive detention conditions may raise serious concerns under these provisions, particularly when applied to individuals detained for the peaceful exercise of their human rights.

Indigenous People's rights, including cultural rights

Furthermore, the Russian Federation, as a State party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), ratified on 16 October 1973, is obliged to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of all peoples to take part in cultural life (article 15) and not to be deprived of their means of subsistence (article 1(2)). In its general comment No. 21, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights emphasized that these obligations include ensuring the continuity, integrity and functioning of Indigenous Peoples' institutions and cultural practices. Measures that criminalize Indigenous advocacy or restrict Indigenous organizations may impair these rights and run contrary to the Covenant.

We further recall the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), adopted by the General Assembly on 13 September 2007, which reflects a global consensus on the minimum standards for the dignity, survival and well-being of Indigenous Peoples. Articles 3, 18, 19 and 33 protect Indigenous Peoples' rights to self-determination, participation in decision-making, free, prior and informed consent, and to maintain their own institutions. Measures criminalizing Indigenous representatives for participating in UN forums and climate processes appear inconsistent with these standards.

Reprisals and intimidation for cooperation with the United Nations

Regarding allegations indicating that the violations could constitute an act of intimidation and reprisals for cooperation with the United Nations in the field of human rights, we recall the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted by the General Assembly on 9 December 1998, which affirms the right of all individuals and groups to promote and protect human rights. In particular, articles 1, 2, 5 and 12 guarantee the right of everyone to engage with international bodies, including the United Nations; to seek, receive and disseminate information on human rights; and to participate in public affairs and peaceful activities. The Declaration further requires States to ensure the protection of human rights defenders against any form of violence, threat, retaliation, discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action resulting from the legitimate exercise of their rights. Criminalizing or otherwise penalizing Indigenous representatives for participation in United Nations mechanisms or climate processes appears inconsistent with these obligations and raises concerns of prohibited reprisals.

We would also like to refer to Human Rights Council resolutions 12/2, 24/24, and subsequent ones reaffirming the right of everyone, individually or in association with others, to unhindered access to and communication with international bodies, particularly the United Nations, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights. In these resolutions, the Human Rights Council urges States to refrain from all acts of intimidation or reprisals, to take all appropriate measures to prevent the occurrence of such acts. This includes the adoption and implementation of specific legislation to promote a safe and enabling environment for engagement with the United Nations on human rights and to protect those who cooperate with the United Nations. The Council also urges States to ensure accountability for reprisals by providing access to remedies for victims and preventing any recurrence. It calls on States to combat impunity by conducting prompt, impartial and independent investigations, pursuing accountability, and publicly condemning all such acts.

Right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment

Furthermore, we would like to recall that on 8 October 2021, the Human Rights Council adopted resolution 48/13, recognizing the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment, reaffirmed by the General Assembly in July 2022 with resolution A/RES/76/300. A safe climate has been identified as one of the substantial elements of this right (A/74/161 and A/79/270). Other substantial elements of the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment include clean air, safe and sufficient water, healthy and sustainable food, non-toxic environments, and healthy biodiversity and ecosystems. Additionally, the right to a healthy environment also includes procedural elements, namely access to information, citizen participation, and access to justice, which are also autonomously recognized human rights.

In addition, the International Court of Justice, in its Advisory Opinion on the Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change of 23 July 2025, in its article 393 clarified that the human right to a healthy environment is a precondition and essential for the enjoyment of all human rights, and therefore fundamental for States in order to fulfill their obligation to guarantee the enjoyment of all human rights.

The Framework Principles on Human Rights and the Environment, submitted to the Human Rights Council in March 2018 (A/HRC/37/59), set out States' core obligations under human rights law with regard to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. They underscore States' substantive responsibilities in this regard, including the obligation to prevent violations of the right to a healthy environment or other human rights. Furthermore, in A/79/176, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change highlighted that “States have heightened obligations to protect climate activists, scientists and journalists as environmental human rights defenders (see A/HRC/54/25). Instead, 70 per cent of environmental journalists are being attacked for their workand there are an increasing number of cases of vilification, smear campaigns and disinformation about climate activists (see A/76/222). States should urgently develop, in coordination with civil society, positive narratives on the contributions of environmental human rights defenders to the protection of human rights in the context of climate change (see A/HRC/56/50).”