

19 February 2019

Russia: Lev Ponomarev’s movement For Human Rights labelled as “foreign agent”

On 12 February 2019, the Russian Ministry of Justice registered the non-profit movement **For Human Rights**, led by the human rights defender **Lev Ponomarev**, as a “foreign agent”. According to the Russian federal law, the status of a foreign agent imposes a number of restrictions including additional obligations on financial reporting.

The movement For Human Rights keeps track of, and reports on, a wide spectrum of human rights issues including freedom of expression, refugee rights, trials monitoring and freedom of association. The movement not only works to promote and educate issues relating to human rights, but also provides social and humanitarian assistance, free legal consultations and legal representation. The movement is led by [Lev Ponomarev](#) who has been working as a human rights defender since the 1980s. He is also a member of the Moscow Helsinki Group. The human rights defender has recently been charged with repeated violations of the law on public assemblies for being an outspoken defender of human rights.

On 12 February 2019, the Russian Ministry of Justice declared For Human Rights to be a “foreign agent”. According to Lev Ponomarev, despite his other organisation, the Hot Line being open about receiving foreign funding, the movement For Human Rights was funded domestically and has been receiving the Presidential Grant for the last nine years. The Ministry of Justice cited the fact that one of the movement's branch leaders had purchased tickets to fly to a conference in Moscow using her personal card, which had funds from abroad, as one of the reasons for its decision.

On 14 January 2019, the Ministry of Justice started an unplanned document check of the movement For Human Rights on the General Prosecutor's request, giving the movement ten days to submit all the necessary documentation. The notice on the unplanned check was received by the organisation on 17 December 2018.

On 5 December 2018, Tverskoy District Court of Moscow sentenced the human rights defender Lev Ponomarev to 25 days in administrative detention for repeatedly violating the law on public assemblies. The defender’s sentence was then reduced from 25 to 16 days.

For Human Rights was previously labelled a "foreign agent" on 19 December 2014; the Ministry of Justice cancelled its decision a year after as the movement “stopped performing the functions of the foreign agent”.

Front Line Defenders is concerned about the labelling of For Human Rights as a "foreign agent" as it believes that this may be a reprisal for the peaceful and legitimate work of the movement and connected to the recent administrative sentence of its leader Lev Ponomarev for his outspoken position in defence of human rights.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities of Russian Federation to:

1. Immediately overturn the decision labelling the movement For Human Rights as a "foreign agent";

2. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Russia are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.