

Russia: A call for days of international solidarity 18-26 January

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A year and a half has passed since the beginning of the political case that has become synonymous with police arbitrariness and the denial of citizens' rights in today's Russia. Dozens of people have been or may soon be imprisoned in a country that is now preparing to showcase its prosperity and power during the Winter Olympics [1].

The tragic story of the so-called Bolotnoe case perfectly maps the criminal story of Vladimir Putin's third presidential term. It was precisely on 6 May 2012, on the eve of his inauguration, that tens of thousands went out to demonstrate in the centre of Moscow, only to become victims of an enormous police provocation. Hundreds of demonstrators were arrested, with dozens beaten up. Putin, who had held on to power through massive electoral fraud, had clearly decided to inflict a fatal blow on the mass protest movement that had emerged during the election campaign.

A few weeks later, in May 2012, the arrests began. As a result, 15 people are now in prison and 3 more are under house arrest. Even more activists had to leave the country to avoid detention.

And while the right hand of Putin's regime has continued campaign of repression against the opposition, its left hand has organized waves of aggressive xenophobia and reactionary policies. When, for example, in October 2013, a racist pogrom took place against a largely immigrant-operated fruit-and-vegetable market in a Moscow suburb called Biriuliovo, the authorities reacted by conducting a police raid on "illegals" on an unprecedented scale. Acting upon direct instructions from the Kremlin, journalists from the main media channels poisoned mass consciousness with stories of "ethnic crime" or "homosexual propaganda" which "threatens our traditional values". The state and its media forcibly are create in front of our very eyes a conservative "silent majority", ready to close ranks in the struggle against foreign and domestic enemies.

The astonishing cynicism of Putin's "right turn" is closely linked to the continued flow of Russian capital to offshore zones and West European countries. Not only the economic elites but also top state bureaucrats no longer link their future with Russia and purchase instead castles from English lords and miles of Florida's shoreline. Xenophobia is the cheap product for consumption by the poor while the elites prepare their retreats in the face of the deepening stagnation of the Russian economy.

In this situation, we - representatives of the Russian left - need the help of our comrades from Western Europe, the USA and worldwide as never before. You are the ones who can inflict painful and effective blows to the self-confidence of Russia's elite, especially when they have to face the questions that they can easily brush off at home. Recently we have seen some brilliant examples of such actions: on 20 November French activists interrupted the lecture held by Alexander Bastyrkin, the head of the Investigative Committee and chief architect of the Bolotnoe case. A few days later, in Germany, the appearance of Elena Mizulina - the main lobbyist of the "struggle against gay propaganda" - was met with massive protests.

A month ago, upon the initiative of leftist deputies from the Swedish Riksdag, a parliamentary resolution was passed, calling upon the Russian state to free its political prisoners.

All of these are important elements of the struggle, which must be multiplied. On 19 January 2014 [\[2\]](#), a day when Moscow will be the site of a demonstration against the racism and xenophobia of the authorities, we call upon our comrades to conduct actions in solidarity with Russian political prisoners.

We call for pickets in front of the Russian Federation's foreign consulates, as well as in front of institutions of your own governments calling for resolutions condemning political repressions.

Please, send your reports on solidarity action and any other information or questions to this email: [russiasolidarity2014 gmail.com](mailto:russiasolidarity2014@gmail.com)

Russia Solidarity

Footnotes

[\[1\]](#) Second version of this call with some corrections to the English

[\[2\]](#) January 19 has become since 2010 a day of action against the far right, in commemoration of two anti-fascist activists murdered on that day.