51st session of the UN Human Rights Council  
Oral Statement  
General Debate on item 4: Human Rights situations requiring the Council’s attention

Mr. President,

Right Livelihood is deeply concerned by the human rights situation in the Russian Federation, where the authorities have been weaponizing their criminal code against anyone exercising their fundamental rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association.

Since the beginning of the year, more than 18,000 people have been arrested in connection with anti-war protests. Laws on discreditation of the armed forces; the Foreign Agent Law; the Law on “Undesirable organisations”, and the Fake News Law, are just some of the numerous pieces of legislation used to target protesters, civil society organisations and activists, eventually leading to censorship of newspapers and websites as well as to the liquidation of civil society organisations, including Memorial International - the backbone of Russian Civil Society.

In their latest politically motivated attempt to harass the organisation, earlier this month, the authorities imposed a preventive restriction of property rights on Memorial which had donated its premises to a friendly organisation and arbitrarily froze the private bank accounts of their respective executive directors.

Mr. President,

It is time for the international community to stand with Russian human rights defenders and those expressing dissent inside, and outside the country. As diplomatic ties get severed and sanctions are imposed on Russia, those fighting for democratic values and fundamental freedoms are increasingly at risk of isolation. Hence, we call on the Human Rights Council not to leave them behind, but rather to support them and their work through a strong mandate for a Special Rapporteur on Russia.

Thank you.