**Universal Periodic Review Working Group – 30th Session**

**Universal Periodic Review of Russian Federation**

**Statement by Australia**

Australia is concerned about restrictions on civil society in Russia, which limit freedoms of association and expression. Human rights defenders, such as Memorial, are subject to legal and physical harassment. **Australia recommends Russia repeal laws on ‘foreign agents’ and ‘undesirable’ organisations, and amend vague and overly broad ‘extremism’ legislation to prevent this from being used to target those exercising their right to freedom of expression and association.**

We remain concerned about reports of enforced disappearance, unlawful detention, torture, and extrajudicial killings in the North Caucasus. We are also concerned at reports of mass arrests, and in some cases violence against individuals in the Chechen Republic due to their actual or perceived sexual orientation. **Australia recommends Russia ensure independent and credible investigations of alleged human rights violations in the North Caucasus, and hold accountable anyone found responsible**.

Australia is concerned about the banning of religious groups as ‘extremist’ for peacefully practicing their beliefs, including the Jehovah’s Witnesses in Russia. **Australia recommends Russia observe constitutional guarantees of freedom of religion and ensure religious groups are not subject to discrimination**.

Australia remains concerned about the impact of Russia’s interventions in Ukraine and Georgia on human rights in those countries. **Australia recommends Russia end its illegal occupation of Crimea, and end its support for separatist groups in eastern Ukraine and the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Australia also recommends that Russia use its influence to facilitate unimpeded access by international observers to those regions**.

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