



Statement of the Human Rights Agenda platform: stop copying the Russian policy regarding the "foreign agents act"

There have been recent appeals by members of the largest parliament factions for legally enshrining the term ‘foreign agents’ in order to apply it to civic organisations and media which "directly or indirectly serve the interests of the aggressor state, i.e. the Russian Federation". In his annual address to the parliament, the President of Ukraine also called upon people’s deputies to support this initiative.

The initiators of these legislative changes justify them by the necessity to counter Russia’s illegal interference with the Ukrainian domestic policy which will predictably gain momentum during the next election year. Meanwhile, in Russia itself, the enactment of such law has resulted in the nearly complete destruction of the independent civil society and contributed to the establishment of an authoritarian state.

Policies like the Foreign Agents Registration Act (enacted in the United States in 1938 as a means of controlling the Nazi propaganda) are simply impossible to implement in Ukraine, where systemic problems with judicial independence still exist.

Human rights organisations have registered an increase in politically motivated actions of the state bodies against civic organisations which [expose corruption](#) or conduct [protest rallies](#) against high-rank officials. It is therefore foreseeable that the mechanism for identifying foreign agents would be used, first and foremost, against the civil society members who are disloyal to the authorities. It would endanger those who expose abuse of power in the government, criticise the inefficiency of officials or publicly voice an opinion different from that of the government. These are the very organisations that will be labelled as “Kremlin agents” and enemies of Ukrainian nationhood and sovereignty if the “foreign agent” status is legally enshrined.

Human rights organisations wish to draw the attention of the Parliament and the President of Ukraine to the fact that the best way of countering the illegal interference of the Russian Federation is increasing competence and technical aptitude of the state bodies in charge of combating external threats. It is important that these bodies be able to carry out effective investigations of any manifestations of such interference, unmask the actual instigators and perpetrators of crimes against the national security and ensure that the penalty is imposed

This is what the Ukrainian authorities should be working on, not the implementation of the Russian “foreign agent law” policies.

The Human Rights Agenda platform is an informal coalition of human right organisations focused on systemic problems of legislation and practices for defending fundamental human rights. The participants of the platform are as follows: Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union, Center for Civil Liberties, Amnesty International Ukraine, Human Rights Information Center, Centre of Law Enforcement Activities Research (CLEAR), Project "Without Borders", Euromaidan SOS. The platform is coordinated by the Center for Civil Liberties. You can contact us at human.rights.agenda.ua@gmail.com

List of organisations who signed the Statement:

Center for Civil Liberties

Human Rights Information Center

Luhansk Regional Human Rights Center “Alternative”

Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group

Open Dialogue Foundation

Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union

Ukrainian Center for Independent Political Research (UCIPR)

NGO "Human Rights Vector"

Kharkiv Regional Foundation “Hromadska Alternatyva” (Public Alternative)

Ukrainian Human Rights Institute

Project "Without Borders"

Ukrainian Legal Consulting Group

Kharkiv Institute of Social Researches

Association of Ukrainian Human Rights Monitors on Law Enforcement (Association UMDPL)

Charitable Foundation “Vostok SOS”

Eastern-Ukrainian Center for Civic Initiatives

Crimean Human Rights Group