

**Daria Egereva and Natalya Leongardt's arbitrary detention in
Russia: organisations join call for the release of an
Indigenous climate leader and a human rights defender**

20 April 2026



The undersigned organisations are writing to express their utmost concern at the arbitrary detention of **Indigenous leader and human rights defender Daria Egereva and human rights defender Natalya Leongardt**, and stand alongside Indigenous Peoples, civil society organisations, and human rights advocates worldwide in demanding their immediate and unconditional release.

A representative of the Selkup People, one of the Indigenous Peoples in Russia with a total population of 3,500 people, Ms. Egereva has a track record as a human rights defender ready to contribute her expertise in peaceful and constructive dialogue to advance climate action and the rights of Indigenous Peoples, including through regular attendance at UN climate conferences.

On 17 December 2025, **Russian authorities raided Ms. Egereva's home and arrested her for alleged participation in the activities of a so-called "terrorist organisation"**, under Article 205.5 (part 2) of the Russian Criminal Code. Ms. Egereva's arrest was part of a

coordinated operation by the Federal Security Service (FSB), which targeted at least 17 other Indigenous leaders across different regions.¹

Among those caught in the same wave of detentions was also **Natalya Leongardt**, who worked jointly with Ms. Egereva to protect and promote Indigenous Peoples' rights.

On 11 February, the Moscow City Court dismissed Ms. Egereva and Ms. Leongardt's appeal against their pre-trial detention and upheld it without any changes. The decision to conduct the appeal hearing behind closed doors raises serious concerns regarding due process guarantees and the right to a fair trial. On 15 March, their detention was extended until 15 June. **If convicted, Ms. Egereva and Ms. Leongardt face up to 20 years of imprisonment.** At the time of this statement, Ms. Egereva and Ms. Leongardt remain in Moscow Pre-Trial Detention Centre No. 6 until their trial.^{2 3}

Charges in both cases are based on an alleged association with the Indigenous human rights defenders' network Aborigin Forum, which was arbitrarily designated an "extremist organisation" in July 2024 and immediately self-dissolved. It was then designated a "terrorist organisation" in December 2024, even though its members have never engaged in any acts that could meet the threshold of terrorism.⁴

Ms. Egereva and Ms. Leongardt's prosecution is a flagrant example of the **human rights crackdown in Russia**, which has intensified after the invasion of Ukraine. It is enabled by vague anti-terrorism legislation, instrumentalised to shrink civic space and entrench the criminalisation of peaceful civic activity and dissent.^{5 6}

Concerningly, Daria Egereva's arrest took place **just a few weeks after her return from COP30**, where she coordinated the work of the International Indigenous Peoples' Forum on Climate Change in her role as Co-Chair. The timing of the prosecution has led several Indigenous rights organisations to assess this as a **direct reprisal for her work at COP30**⁷ – a contribution to a multilateral process which should never be subject to repercussions. Her engagement has consistently taken place within internationally recognised

¹ See the [Urgent Appeal published on 6 February 2026](#) by the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a partnership of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT).

² See the [Urgent Appeal published on 18 February 2026](#) by the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders.

³ See the [12 March 2026 update](#) by the Free Daria Egereva campaign.

⁴ See the [19 December 2025 statement](#) by the International Committee of Indigenous Peoples of Russia.

⁵ See [Human Rights Council Resolution 60/21](#) (7 October 2025), "Situation of human rights in the Russian Federation".

⁶ See the 9 April 2026 statement by several UN Special Procedures, "[Strategy of blatant abuse of counter-terrorism and extremism laws to destroy Russian civil society must end: UN experts](#)".

⁷ See the [19 December 2025 statement](#) by the International Indigenous Peoples' Forum on Climate Change, the [19 December 2025 statement](#) by the International Indian Treaty Council, as well as the [20 December 2025 statement](#) by the SIRGE Coalition.

consultative processes and in the exercise of mandates established by international bodies.⁸

Adding to evidence against any qualification of her work as a terrorist activity, Ms. Egereva has served as a member of the Facilitative Working Group of the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform established under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. She has also participated in the work of the UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, and the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

Similarly, Ms. Leongardt performed practical arrangements to facilitate the participation of Indigenous defenders in crucial multilateral processes. Activities like hers, aimed at facilitating peaceful multilateral dialogue, in no way constitute a criminal offence or act of terrorism.

Indigenous Peoples are protecting our planet and society, defending a just transition away from an extractivist and fossil fuel-based model that is leading to ecological breakdown. Moreover, they advocate for sustainable solutions grounded in the respect, protection and fulfilment of all human rights.

Indigenous Peoples face increased and widespread criminalisation, intimidation, harassment and violence – by both state and businesses – for exercising their rights and voicing demands for justice. **This targeted attack appears manifestly to be in retaliation for their participation in UN processes, including those related to climate and biodiversity, and sets a dangerous precedent for the treatment of Indigenous Peoples who take part in global meetings and for those supporting their involvement.**

We join the global campaign to free Daria Egereva in their call on Russian authorities to drop all charges and immediately and unconditionally release Ms. Egereva. We further demand the liberation of Natalya Leongardt as well as all detained Indigenous human rights defenders, while also guaranteeing their physical and psychological well-being.

We call on all other States to unequivocally condemn the ongoing crackdown on human rights defenders and Indigenous leaders in Russia, and to exert their diplomatic leverage to push for an end to these arbitrary detentions.

We also demand the full respect for Indigenous Peoples' rights, including the right to engage with the United Nations without fear of reprisals or criminalisation. We invite all UN

⁸ See the [several petitions](#) addressed to Russian President Vladimir Putin by Indigenous Peoples' socio-cultural regions, organisations and institutions.

human rights bodies, including Treaty Bodies, and Special Procedures to operate for the release of defenders who are facing serious retribution for their invaluable involvement in UN-mandated activities.

Daria Egereva, Natalya Leongardt, and all Indigenous Peoples should not be punished for their efforts to see rights recognised and stand up for our common future. As their work reminds us, and now more than ever, we reaffirm: **there is no climate justice without human rights.**

Signatories:

- 1 AbibiNsroma Foundation
- 2 ActionAid France
- 3 Actions Communautaires pour le Développement de la Femme (ACODEFEM)
- 4 Adéquations
- 5 Advocatenkantoor Gaasbeek & Gaasbeek
- 6 Africa Child Care Nation (ACCN)
- 7 African Law Foundation (AFRILAW)
- 8 Amnesty International
- 9 Asociación Ciudadana por los Derechos Humanos
- 10 Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos de España (APDHE)
- 11 Association for Farmers Rights Defense (AFRD)
- 12 Association Marocaine des Droits Humains
- 13 Banka Earth Foundation
- 14 Batani Foundation
- 15 Benet Mosop Community Association (BMCA)
- 16 Black Sea Women's Club
- 17 CAEDHU
- 18 Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL)

- 19 Center for Prisoners' Rights
- 20 Centre for Human Rights and Development
- 21 Centro de Derechos Humanos y Políticas Públicas (Perú EQUIDAD)
- 22 Centro de Estudios Qullasuyu
- 23 Centro de Investigación y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos (CIPRODEH)
- 24 Child Rights International Network (CRIN)
- 25 Climate Action Network Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (CAN EECCA)
- 26 Climate Action Network International (CAN-I)
- 27 Climate Action Network Latin America (CANLA)
- 28 Climate Action Network Zimbabwe
- 29 Climate Activist Defenders
- 30 Coalition des Volontaires pour la Paix et le Développement (CVPD- RDC)
- 31 Community Action for Health and Development
- 32 COPAD Grand-Lacs RDC
- 33 CRIOLA
- 34 Cultural Survival
- 35 Dalit with Disabilities Association Nepal
- 36 Dejusticia - Centro de Estudios de Derecho, Justicia y Sociedad
- 37 Disability Peoples Forum Uganda
- 38 Doctors for Planetary Health - West Coast
- 39 Earthjustice
- 40 Ecolur Informational NGO
- 41 Emony Yefwe International
- 42 Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO)
- 43 Federación Indígena Empresarial y Comunidades Locales de México. A. C

- 44 FirecircleTT To End All Forms of Abuse
- 45 Foundation Day of the Endangered Lawyer
- 46 FSC Indigenous Foundation
- 47 Global Participe
- 48 Green Rights Coalition
- 49 Greenpeace International
- 50 Habitat Defenders Africa (HDA)
- 51 HRM “Bir Duino – Kyrgyzstan “
- 52 Human Power Organisation
- 53 Human Rights Center
- 54 Indigenous Climate Action
- 55 Indigenous Environmental Network
- 56 Indigenous Peoples Foundation for Education and Environment
- 57 International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
- 58 International Network for Sustainable Energy
- 59 International Service for Human Rights
- 60 International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA)
- 61 Kimbé Rèd FWI
- 62 League for the Defence of Human Rights in Iran (LDDHI)
- 63 Les Mêmes Droits pour Tous
- 64 Ligue Burundaise des droits de l'homme Iteka
- 65 Ligue des droits de l'Homme (LDH)
- 66 Minority Rights Group (MRG)
- 67 Movimento Nacional de Direitos Humanos (MNDH Brasil)
- 68 Mwanamke Fund

- 69 National Indigenous Disabled Women Association Nepal (NIDWAN)
- 70 Natural Justice
- 71 New Life Association
- 72 NGO "Arctida"
- 73 NGO Angel
- 74 Norwegian Helsinki Committee
- 75 Not1More
- 76 Operação Amazônia Nativa (OPAN)
- 77 Organisation Nationale des Droits de l'Homme (ONDH), Senegal
- 78 Pastoralists Indigenous NGO's Forum (PINGO's Forum)
- 79 Porgera Red Wara (River) Women's Association Incorporated (PRWWA INC.).
- 80 Public Association "Dignity"
- 81 Quakers in Britain
- 82 RADDHO
- 83 Réseau de communication et de développement de la femme sénégalaise
- 84 Réseau des organisations de défense des Droits de l'homme en Afrique Centrale (REDHAC)
- 85 Rivers & Rights
- 86 Rural Infrastructure & Human Resource Development Organization
- 87 Sinatsisa Lubombo Women and girls Empowerment organization
- 88 Socio-Ecological Fund
- 89 Sukaar Welfare Organization
- 90 Sustainable Strategic Solutions
- 91 Swedwatch
- 92 Taiwan Association for Human Rights
- 93 Talent des femmes autochtones et rurales

- 94 The Egyptian Foundation for Environmental Rights
- 95 The Woven Project
- 96 Tipping Point North South
- 97 Uganda Eyenkyia Development Project Group
- 98 Unidad de la Fuerza Indígena y Campesina
- 99 Urgent Action Fund for Feminist Activism
- 100 Voices (formerly Society for Threatened Peoples Switzerland)
- 101 Women and Modern World Social Charitable Center (CWMW)
- 102 Women for Justice and Equality
- 103 Working Group ICCAs Indonesia
- 104 World's Youth for Climate Justice