



THE PERMANENT MISSION OF
THE KINGDOM OF BELGIUM TO
THE UNITED NATIONS IN NEW YORK



GRAND DUCHY OF LUXEMBOURG
Permanent Mission to the United Nations

Side event

Rule of Fear: Silencing Dissent and Anti-War Expression in the Name of National Security

Monday, 27 October 2025, 1:15-2:30pm | New York, UNHQ, ECOSOC Chamber

Concept Note

This side event is organized by the Permanent Missions of Belgium, the Kingdom of the Netherlands and Luxembourg to the United Nations. It will take place in the margins of the presentation by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Ms. Mariana Katzarova, of her second thematic report to the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly.

Background

Over the past three years, the Russian Federation has increasingly invoked its national security and public safety legislation to suppress dissent against its war of aggression on Ukraine and to criminalize freedom of expression.

The latest report to the General Assembly by the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation (A/80/382) exposes how the abuse of legal frameworks on counter-terrorism, extremism, espionage, and treason has evolved into a widespread and systemic strategy—marked by arbitrary detention, politically motivated criminal prosecutions, lengthy imprisonment, and gross human rights violations, including torture and ill-treatment. Targeted groups include journalists, lawyers, and human rights defenders persecuted for the lawful conduct of their professional activities, as well as ordinary citizens expressing views critical of the war. Religious minorities, LGBT persons, Indigenous Peoples, and national minorities have similarly been targeted, in stark violation of the Russian Federation's obligations under international human rights law.

The report exposes the abuse of the Russian Federation's public safety and national security legislation against detained Ukrainian prisoners of war (POWs) and civilians, including those forcibly transferred within the occupied territories or deported to the Russian Federation—perpetrated with impunity and lack of accountability inside the Russian Federation.

The side event will provide a platform for Member States, experts, and civil society to discuss how the abuse of national security and public safety legislation erodes civic space and the rule of law, and to hear from the UN Special Rapporteur and victims' first-hand testimonies on politically motivated criminal prosecution, imprisonment, and gross violations such as torture in Russian detention. It will also explore avenues for accountability and protection measures for affected groups.

Programme of the side event

Opening Remarks from the organizing Missions

Panelists

1. **Mariana Katzarova** - UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation
2. **Ivan Pavlov** - exiled Russian human rights lawyer and founder of “First Department”
3. **Dmitry Bykov** - exiled prominent Russian literary figure: writer, journalist, poet and literary critic
4. **Pavel Sulyandziga** - exiled Russian Indigenous Peoples’ leader, Chairperson of the Board of the International Development Fund of Indigenous Peoples in Russia (BATANI)
5. **Vladyslav Yesypenko** – Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Ukrainian journalist for Crimea.Realities, former political prisoner released from Russian detention in June 2025
6. **Diliara Gafurova** - Sphere Foundation for the defence of the LGBT+ community rights in Russia

Remarks and Questions from the Floor

Concluding Remarks