Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 2621 (2025)[1]

Russian democratic forces

Parliamentary Assembly

1. On 16 March 2022, the Russian Federation was expelled from the Council of Europe as a result of its war of aggression against Ukraine, which began in 2014 and escalated into a large-scale invasion. In its Opinion 300 (2022) "Consequences of the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine", adopted the day before, the Parliamentary Assembly, while calling on the Committee of Ministers to request that the Russian Federation immediately withdraw from the Council of Europe, added that "the Council of Europe should envisage initiatives to be able to continue to support and engage with human rights defenders, democratic forces, free media and independent civil society in the Russian Federation". Subsequently, in its Resolution 2433 (2022) "Consequences of the Russian Federation's continued aggression against Ukraine: role and response of the Council of Europe", the Assembly resolved "to intensify its engagement with Belarusian and Russian civil society, human rights defenders, independent journalists, academia and democratic forces respecting the values and principles of the Organisation, including the territorial integrity of sovereign member States". Similarly, meeting in Reykjavik in May 2023, the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe agreed to "find ways to strengthen co-operation with Russian and Belarusian human rights defenders, democratic forces, free media and independent civil society". In its Resolutions 2540 (2024) "Alexei Navalny's death and the need to counter Vladimir Putin's totalitarian regime and its war on democracy" and 2588 (2025) "European commitment to a just and lasting peace in Ukraine", the Assembly noted the ongoing forced russification and repression of, and discrimination against, Indigenous peoples and minorities in the Russian Federation, in breach of the United Nations International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. It concluded that genuine democracy in Russia is impossible without decolonisation, underlined that lasting peace requires the Russian Federation to abandon its imperial ambitions and called for the implementation of United Nations General Assembly Resolution 1514 (XV) (1960) "Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples".

2. On the strength of these texts, and as the outcome of a long-standing process of dialogue and engagement, the Assembly decided to set up a representative delegation of Belarusian democratic forces. As far as Russian democratic forces are concerned, some were invited to participate in hearings organised by Assembly committees. Furthermore, an informal platform for dialogue was set up, bringing together members of the Assembly holding specific functions and members of Russian democratic forces, to discuss topics of common concern. Among these were the role of Russian democratic forces in bringing the Russian Federation's war of aggression to an end and ways to strengthen sanctions against the Russian regime, ensure that Russians can have access to free and independent media and counter Russian disinformation, as well as the situation of Russian democratic forces in exile. The situation of Russian political prisoners was also addressed. Over this period, the Assembly condemned the murder of Alexei Navalny, repeatedly demanded the release of Vladimir Kara-Murza, winner of the 2022 Václav Havel Human Rights Prize, and called for sanctions against the Russian officials involved in his illegal detention.

3. The Assembly reiterates its strong condemnation of the systematic repression of Russians opposing the regime and attempts to silence them, inside and outside the Russian Federation. It honours the commitment of those Russian human rights defenders, democratic forces, free media and independent civil society that oppose the totalitarian and neo-imperialistic Russian regime, fight for democracy, human rights and the rule of law and support Ukraine, sometimes at the risk of their lives and freedom, and emphasises

1. *Assembly debate* on 1 October 2025 (33rd sitting) (see Doc. 16247, report of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy, rapporteur: Mr Eerik-Niiles Kross). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 1 October 2025 (33rd sitting).

that this fight must continue. The Assembly notes that, unlike Belarusian democratic forces, Russian democratic forces do not have a single, unified political structure. The Assembly encourages Russian groups and initiatives in exile to join forces with the aim of countering disinformation by the totalitarian and neo-imperialistic Russian regime, advocating for democratic change in the Russian Federation, exposing all international crimes committed by Russian actors in Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, and supporting Ukrainians in their struggle against the aggressor State in a variety of ways.

4. The Assembly recalls that in 2024 a General Rapporteur on Russian democratic forces was appointed with the mandate to promote the coherence of the Assembly's action aimed at building dialogue with Russian democratic forces that respect the values and principles of the Council of Europe, including the territorial integrity of sovereign member States. Also, as a result of the work of the general rapporteur, the Assembly believes that the time has come for ad hoc and informal initiatives to give way to more structured engagement with Russian democratic forces. This would help strengthen the capacity of Russian democratic forces to bring about sustainable democratic change in Russia and help achieve a lasting and just peace in Ukraine, while ensuring the responsibility of Russian actors for the international crimes committed and providing the Assembly with insight into developments in the Russian Federation and among Russian democratic forces. If an organisation or movement among the Russian democratic forces undermines these efforts, the Assembly will discontinue its engagement with that organisation.

5. In light of these considerations, the Assembly decides to establish the Platform for Dialogue with Russian democratic forces ("the Platform"), as a forum for two-way engagement between the Assembly and Russian democratic forces to address issues of common concern through exchanges in the context of the Platform, to be chaired by the President of the Assembly or a member of the Assembly delegated by the President. Participation in the Platform would also enable Russian democratic forces to attend meetings of the Assembly's committees, sub-committees and networks during part-sessions, and to take the floor when authorised by the respective chairpersons.

6. The list of "Participants of the Russian democratic forces" in the Platform shall be approved by the Bureau of the Assembly upon the proposal made by the President of the Assembly and shall be valid for the ordinary session. The list of potential candidates should be submitted to the President of the Assembly by common decision of Russian democratic forces organisations, members of which meet the criteria set out in paragraph 8. The specific modalities for the implementation of this Resolution, in particular the composition and functioning of the Platform and the participation of Russian democratic forces therein, shall be approved by the Bureau based on a memorandum to be prepared by the Secretary General of the Assembly together with the General Rapporteur on Russian democratic forces. One year after the establishment of the Platform, the Bureau shall review the implementation of this Resolution and consider possible amendments or other measures to be taken. The Bureau's decisions require ratification by the Assembly.

7. In case of a substantiated complaint about the non-compliance of a participant with the criteria set out in paragraph 8, the President of the Assembly shall immediately suspend the participation of the person concerned until the Bureau takes a decision, which shall be published together with the reasoning no later than ten days after the Bureau takes the decision on suspension.

8. The "Participants of the Russian democratic forces" must be persons of the highest moral standing who are currently in exile and who meet the requirements listed below, to be verified by the Bureau of the Assembly at the time of approval of the list, or at any other time following a decision to that effect by the Bureau (the criteria set out in paragraph 8.8 shall not apply to representatives of Indigenous peoples and national minorities, or to those on active duty fighting in the Ukrainian military). These persons must fulfil the following criteria:

8.1. be Russian political leaders, civil society representatives, human rights defenders, independent journalists, scholars and/or other members of the Russian resistance against the totalitarian and neo-imperialistic regime in the Russian Federation;

8.2. share the values of the Council of Europe and be willing to promote them;

8.3. unconditionally recognise and respect the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders, including the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol City, and the Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions;

8.4. have a record of publicly opposing the totalitarian and neo-imperialistic regime in the Russian Federation and work towards regime change with the goal of establishing a democratic political system in the Russian Federation that adheres to international law and principles of peaceful and good-neighbourly relations;

8.5. respect the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and other States;

8.6. have not advocated non-democratic policies in the Russian Federation or neo-imperialistic policies towards Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine or other sovereign States; or have denounced previous statements in a credible and convincing manner; have not justified international crimes committed by Russian actors either abroad or within the Russian Federation, nor encouraged to commit violations of international law;

8.7. clearly denounce all international crimes committed by Russian actors and support international mechanisms for accountability and justice;

8.8. have signed the Berlin Declaration of Russian Democratic Forces before agreeing to participate in the Platform, and continue to uphold the principles it sets forth;

8.9. submit a declaration of the absence of conflicts of interest and accept verification by the Assembly secretariat;

8.10. have not held, after 2014, any position in the State bodies of the Russian Federation or, if they have, have publicly and convincingly renounced these bodies' activities and contributed to their accountability;

8.11. have not held, after 2014, any position in Russian occupation administrations in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine;

8.12. have never disseminated or publicly rejected narratives that deny the Russian Federation's crime of aggression against Ukraine or other international crimes committed there;

8.13. recognise and respect unconditionally the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Republic of Belarus, as well as the Belarusian nation's aspiration for a democratic future and European choice;

8.14. have not received funding or material support from State or State-controlled entities of the Russian Federation or Belarus, or related persons or foundations, and shall submit annual declarations of sources of funding;

8.15. publicly support the establishment of the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine, as well as an international compensation mechanism, including the Register of Damage Caused by the Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine and an international claims commission for Ukraine.

9. The "Participants of the Russian democratic forces" shall not use, display or reproduce State symbols of the Russian Federation, including its flag, coat of arms, anthem or other official insignia, at the Assembly's premises or events. The white-blue-white colours are recognised by the Russian democratic forces as a symbol of resistance.

10. The question of the rights of the Indigenous peoples and national minorities of the Russian Federation and the preparedness to engage in a meaningful dialogue with their representatives and representatives of Russia's national and ethnic groups, will play a critical role in shaping a democratic political system that adheres to international law and the principles of peaceful and good-neighbourly relations. The issue of overcoming the colonial legacy of the Russian Federation would have to be addressed, including the concerns and interests of Indigenous and colonised peoples residing in the territories of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation. The Assembly is committed to establishing a platform for dialogue with the representatives of Indigenous peoples and national minorities of the Russian Federation. Until a platform for dialogue with the representatives of Indigenous peoples and national minorities is established, one third of the seats for the Platform shall be reserved for the representatives of Indigenous peoples and national minorities of the Russian Federation, reflecting their share of the population of the Russian Federation. When a platform for dialogue with the representatives of Indigenous peoples and national minorities of the Russian Federation is established, this quota will be terminated.

11. The Assembly refers particularly to its Resolution 2605 (2025) "Legal and human rights aspects of the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine" and reiterates that, in violation of international humanitarian law, the Russian Federation continues the colonisation of the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine by encouraging hundreds of thousands of its own citizens to settle there, including through federal programmes. These initiatives form part of the aggressor State's policy aimed at the forcible alteration of the demographic

composition of the population, thereby significantly complicating the processes of de-occupation and the restoration of peace. Such actions constitute a violation of the Russian Federation's international obligations, amount to crimes under international law and should entail appropriate legal consequences.

12. The Assembly welcomes other parliamentary initiatives supporting Russian democratic forces and encourages synergies between its Platform and other initiatives, in particular those undertaken by the European Parliament.

13. The Assembly calls on Council of Europe member States to:

13.1. provide administrative, legal and logistical support to facilitate the functioning of the Platform, including assistance with travel, visas, temporary residence issues and digital engagement;

13.2. support the functioning of the Platform, notably through voluntary contributions, by developing training programmes and workshops;

13.3. strengthen the visibility and impact of the Platform, and encourage partnerships with other international organisations and democratic institutions.