

## **PRESS BRIEFING**

Tuesday 17 March 2026, 15:00 CET

Location: Presseclub Concordia

Organised by



# Political Prisoners in the Russian Federation: A discussion with human rights defenders and activists

## **PANEL BIOGRAPHIES**

### **Contact**

**Dave Elseroad**

Human Rights House Foundation

Signal: +41 78 344 36 18

## Sergei Davidis

Head, Memorial Human Rights Center Support Program for Political Prisoners

Sergei Davidis is head of the “[Political Prisoners Support. Memorial](#)” Project. The project was created after the illegal liquidation of “Memorial” Human Rights Center, the oldest and largest Russian human rights organization, by a Russian court in April 2022. It continues the work that was carried out by the corresponding Program of the liquidated organization. For many years Sergei has been responsible for collecting, systematising and disseminating information about victims of contemporary political repression in Russia, supporting them and advocating on their behalf. He also served as a Co-Chair of [Human Rights Defense Center Memorial](#) from 2022-2025, before he was sentenced in absentia by a Russian court to six years' imprisonment on charges of justifying terrorism for publicly supporting Ukrainian prisoners of war who had been unlawfully convicted in Russia. Sergey studied sociology at Moscow State University and law at the Moscow State Law Academy. In 2019, he was a Galina Starovoitova Fellow on Human Rights and Conflict Resolution at the Kennan Institute, Woodrow Wilson International Center for scholars. For many years he has been one of the organizers and active participants of the democratic opposition movement (in particular in the framework of the “Solidarity” Democratic Movement, The December 5 Party, The Opposition Coordination Council). He was also a candidate in the Moscow City Duma and State Duma of the Russian Federation elections.

## Polina Kurakina

Lawyer at OVD-info

Polina Kurakina is a lawyer at OVD-info, a Russian human rights defence NGO. She specialises in civil and political rights, with a focus on freedom of assembly, freedom of speech, and political persecutions. Her work includes strategic litigation and advocacy with a focus on the UN mechanisms, ECHR and the Russian Constitutional Court.

## Victoria Maladaeva

Founder, Indigenous of Russia Foundation

Viktoria Maladaeva is a Buryat feminist, grassroots organizer, filmmaker from the Republic of Buryatia, and founder of the Indigenous of Russia Foundation. She has organized anti-war protests, Indigenous community and international solidarity-building gatherings and is actively engaged in international advocacy. Her work addresses issues of Indigenous political prisoners, forced mobilization, extractivism, systemic racism, and the role of Indigenous movements in democratic resistance in Russian. Through media work, public campaigns, and documentary filmmaking, she amplifies Indigenous voices and challenges Russian colonial narratives. She has produced two documentaries: one on the intersectional struggles of Indigenous queers, and another on the legacy of forced assimilation, cultural destruction, and systemic abuse in residential schools for Indigenous children in the North, Siberia, and the Far East.

## Dave Elseroad (Moderator)

Head of Advocacy and Geneva Office, Human Rights House Foundation

Dave Elseroad is the head of advocacy and the Geneva office at HRHF. In this role, he directs the organisation's advocacy at the UN, EU, Council of Europe, and OSCE in cooperation with Network members. Dave has worked across the Human Rights Houses Network region for more than 20 years, in roles focused on human rights, public health, and weapons nonproliferation. He earned a bachelor's degree in political science (focus on post-Soviet economic transition) from St. Mary's College of Maryland (Maryland, USA) and a master's degree in international development management (focus on civil society capacity building) from American University School of International Service (Washington, DC, USA).

# ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSE FOUNDATION AND THE NETWORK OF HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSES

Human Rights House Foundation (HRHF) envisions a world in which everyone can freely and safely promote and enjoy all human rights.

HRHF recognises that lasting human rights change can be achieved when a strong and independent civil society is united in solidarity and able to freely contribute to the promotion and protection of human rights at home and abroad. Human Rights Houses are central to HRHF's work empowering civil society and advancing its vision.

HRHF is an international non-governmental organisation that establishes and supports Human Rights Houses – coalitions of local independent civil society organisations working to advance human rights at home and abroad. Today 85+ CSOs are united in the Network of Human Rights Houses, active across Eastern and Western Europe, the Balkans and the Caucasus.

In close partnership with the Network of Human Rights Houses, HRHF advocates at international and intergovernmental level to advance and protect fundamental rights that underpin independent civil society and make it possible to hold institutions and individuals accountable. HRHF advocates for inclusion and active participation of civil society, reports on human rights trends, and works to strengthen international human rights mechanisms and standards in order to influence the situation at the national level.

HRHF holds consultative status at the United Nations, participatory status at the Council of Europe, and is a Strategic Framework Partner of the European Union's Eastern Partnership civil society initiative.

The Network of Human Rights Houses has a well-developed national and regional protection infrastructure and works to support human rights defenders at risk.

HRHF was established in 1992 and is headquartered in Oslo with an office in Geneva and representation in Brussels.