

By email
(mail@fparf.ru)

Mr Yury PILIPENKO
President
Russian Federal Bar Association
43 Sivtsev Vrazhek lane
119002 Moscow
Russian Federation

Geneva, 9 March 2022

The Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine

Dear Mr President,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Geneva Bar Association (ODAGE), which represents more than 1,500 lawyers in Geneva. The Geneva Bar Association is a member, among others, of the Swiss Federation of Lawyers, the "*Union Internationale des Avocats*" and the International Bar Association.

The Geneva Bar Association places great emphasis on the respect for human rights, the rule of law and the protection of lawyers in the exercise of their activity. As such, we condemn the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine as well as the violation of international law and the Geneva Conventions.

We are also deeply concerned by accounts of numerous arrests and detentions of anti-war protesters in Russia. We would like to express our solidarity to all Russian citizens and lawyers who are taking a stance for the rule of law and opposing the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation.

In this context, we strongly encourage the Russian Federal Bar Association and its members to uphold the rule of law and in particular the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, as warranted by international treaties subscribed to by the Russian Federation (Art. 20 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Art. 21 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Art. 11 European Convention of Human Rights). We draw your attention to the UN Guidelines for lawyers in support of peaceful assemblies¹ which is a set of key principles on the role of lawyers in upholding the rights to freedom of assembly and association but also a non-exhaustive list of practical recommendations for lawyers, aimed at supporting them in their work to provide access to justice in the context of peaceful assemblies. It is of utmost importance that those who want to express their support against war in a peaceful way are able to do so.

¹ UN, General Assembly, Guidelines for lawyers in support of peaceful assemblies, A/HRC/47/24/Add.3, 29 June 2021, available here: <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/47/24/Add.3>

Our thoughts are with all our colleagues of the Russian Federal Bar Association who are working towards peace.

I thank you for your attention to this very serious matter. The Geneva Bar Association will continue to monitor the situation closely.

Yours sincerely,



Philippe COTTIER
Chair of the Geneva Bar Association

- cc. Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Mrs Mary LAWLOR, 8-14 Avenue de la Paix, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland (defenders@ohchr.org);
- Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers, Mr Diego GARCÍA-SAYÁN, OHCHR-UNOG, 8-14 Avenue de la Paix, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland (ohchr-SRindependencejl@un.org);
- Special Rapporteur on the Rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and associations, Mr Clément NYALETSOSSI VOULE, Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland (ohchr-freeassembly@un.org).