

Yurii Yakovlevich Chaika  
Prosecutor General's Office  
Ul. B. Dmitrovka, D.15A  
125993 Moscow GSP- 3  
RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Dear Prosecutor General:

I am writing to urge you to close the criminal case against Yekaterina Vologzheninova. Ms. Vologzheninova faces the charge of "inciting hatred or enmity" for her online criticism of Russia's annexation of Crimea and Russia's military involvement in Donbass, eastern Ukraine. In reality, Ms. Vologzheninova is being prosecuted solely for exercising her right to freedom of expression.

Since the start of her trial on 27 October, three hearings have taken place and three of the prosecution's five witnesses have been questioned. One of the prosecution's witnesses withdrew the statement he had given during the investigation and said that a Federal Security Service (FSB) officer "had perverted his words." The other two witnesses, who were staff members of Roskomnadzor (the official media and communications watchdog), did not confirm that her posts were aimed at specific ethnic groups – which is an element of the crime of which Vologzheninova is accused. The prosecution's two remaining witnesses failed to attend the hearings. Consequently, there is no clear evidence justifying these charges.

The UN Human Rights Committee's General Comment 34, on the right to freedom of expression, states that "it encompasses even expression that may be regarded as deeply offensive." In any event, criminal sanctions for private social media posts would be excessive and disproportionate under international human rights standards, infringing on the right to freedom of expression.

I urge you to ensure that Yekaterina Vologzheninova's name is removed immediately from Rosfinmonitoring's List of Terrorists and Extremists, which has resulted in her bank accounts being frozen. Furthermore, I call on you to respect and protect the right to freedom of expression for all persons in Russia

Sincerely,