**Russia**

**Advocacy Offices’ Engagement**

1. **General approach:**

* Advocating with the U.S., European Governments and the EU to push back more strongly against the current repressive trend in Russia;
* Assisting Russian advocates to conduct public outreach to broaden the base of support for human rights defenders and involve more young people in the rights debate;
* Stimulating the engagement of Russian partners with policy makers and civil society in other countries in the region (Belarus, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Central Asia etc.) and in reforms and debates in international organisations covering Russia as part of their mandate (Council of Europe, OSCE, G20);
* Connecting and plugging Russian actors into broader international efforts, such as in the areas of freedom of expression. Have more Russian voices in international debates;
* Encouraging solidarity of civil society actors both nationally and internationally.

1. **Specific initiatives in the past 6 months:**

Broadening the support base for human rights advocacy

In cooperation with members of the Civic Solidarity Platform and Russian journalists, the International Youth Human Rights Movement is producing a series of short videos -- including interviews with prominent Russian civil society actors, human rights defenders and activists. This project is based on the belief that among the main threats to Russian human rights NGOs are not only the new barriers imposed by the government, but also the fact that the Russian public is generally supportive of attempts to limit NGOs work because ordinary people do not feel included in civil society initiatives.

The DC and London advocacy offices have engaged in training and mentoring the Russian partners to develop a more strategic approach to advocacy in Russia and other countries in the region such as Belarus and Ukraine.

Supporting outreach to international audiences and donors

Advocates have engaged the international community, including the U.S. government, EU officials and parliamentarians, and the Council of Europe, urging them to react to the avalanche of restrictive new Russian laws and underlining the threat that these developments pose to other countries in the region. A major focus has been on work with key civil society partners to develop an analysis of the situation and recommendations for a strategy for supporting civil society in Russia, including mechanisms for transfers of funds and strategies advocacy in light of the new amendments on treason. This analysis will be shared with donors and policy makers by November 20.

Council of Europe

As a part of a broader strategy to strengthen the Council of Europe’s role as a robust and effective protector of human rights, we have been supporting Russian Platform members’ advocacy in Strasbourg. Most recently we have been focusing on cooperation with the Venice Commission, which is now preparing an opinion on amendments to Russia’s laws on freedom of assembly and has agreed to pro-actively prepare a compilation of its previous reviews on freedom of association legislation. This can serve as a guide when the Russian law is challenged in courts.

G20

The International Advocacy team has been exploring OSF’s ability to shape the G20 agenda during Russia’s presidency. This is a long shot, although we’ll continue to pursue some minor openings through engagement with the T20 and Russian Civil 20 to create space for discussions on migration and transparency. To this end we are working with partners to develop the following discussion papers ahead of the T20 and Civil 20 meetings in December:

1. We are working to identify a partner organisation that could draft a short evidence-based paper that would lay out current global initiatives that promote budget transparency and make an argument for the economic benefits that are associated with it.  It would illustrate these benefits with existing examples from emerging powers where budget transparency efforts have already gained some degree of traction; and
2. We are commissioning a short discussion paper would be to set out what we know - and what we don't on the economic impact of migration liberalisation, and draw out the potential implications for policy.

Engagement on Internet with the Media and Information programs

We are exploring opportunities to engage Russian partners in the international debate on freedom of the internet. The growing concern over the import and export of Internet surveillance equipment in Russia is at the heart of the Agentura.ru [project](https://www.privacyinternational.org/blog/privacy-international-and-agenturaru-launch-the-joint-project-russias-surveillance-state) but links need to be made with policy discussions in Europe on the role of western companies. These efforts could be strengthened through engaging more investigative reporters globally to show links between different regions on import and export of surveillance technologies. At the same time, a number of articles have spotlighted Russia’s troubling role in proposing and advocating on global Internet policy issues at the International Telecommunications Union, prior to their decision-making meeting on global internet governance in December in Dubai. Russia’s influence has not been sufficiently explored and Russian partners are eager to be more engaged.