

Other Russia Conference Participants Letter to the G-7 Heads of State

We, the participants of the Other Russia conference, wish to make known that, prior to the G-8 meeting in St. Petersburg, a full-scale campaign of political repression has been launched in Russia. The persecution has been directed against dozens of delegates to our conference, currently taking place in Moscow, and participants of the 2nd Social Forum taking place in St. Petersburg this week.

Many of our colleagues have been unable to reach the capital. Some were arrested in airports, others removed from trains en route. The illegal methods and unjustified brutality on the part of the officials and their agents are grounds for the gravest concern. Opposition members are being detained without any reason, physically abused, and drugs and explosives planted on them.

Even the conference itself has not been free of such incidents. On July 11, in front of the doors of the conference hall, several participants were assaulted and abducted. A German journalist, an accidental witness to the incident, was also attacked by unidentified assailants. Hours later the victims were found under arrest in a local police station.

Systematic repression against the Russian opposition has become, in fact, the prelude to the G-8 summit in St. Petersburg – that is to say, part of its agenda. Therefore we must state that all of the representatives of the G-8 nations share responsibility for these events. It is apparent to us that this campaign of repression is centralized, and by all means sanctioned, by the political leadership of our country. These incidents lead us to believe that at the end of the summit, if the international community pays no mind to Russia – the country that currently chairs the G-8 – mass arrests of opposition activists will take place.

On behalf of the participants of the Other Russia conference we call upon the leaders of the free world to demand from Russian President Vladimir Putin the immediate release of all the victims of this campaign of repression and to cease all unlawful actions against the political opposition.