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# Human rights: A global challenge

- Archives - Archives Générales 2006 - 2022 - 2012 - N° 29. Janvier 2012 - English -

Date de mise en ligne : Sunday 15 January 2012

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The last 12 months have been characterized by political and economic discontent which found voice in mass protests across the world. Exclusively for RT, Russia's Human Rights Commissioner Konstantin Dolgov has offered his assessment of the events.

"When some of our partners try to teach [Russia] some lessons of democracy – we tell them that we are absolutely ready to listen to good advice," Konstantin Dolgov told RT. "But we are not ready for some sort of lecturing and some sort of acrimonious posturing on human rights, especially given the fact that problems in this field are pretty much ubiquitous."

Konstantin Dolgov believes that the Russian authorities have taken a very "responsible" approach to dealing with the protests which flared up after parliamentary elections in Russia in December. The reaction of the authorities was "a very measured one, unlike the reaction in some other countries."

Konstantin Dolgov believes that during the Occupy Wall Street protests in the US, there was a "sort of overreaction" that "is not to be ignored."

"The reaction of the [US] authorities to the [OWS protests] was rather rude," he said. "And we have seen – on CNN, on BBC, and other news channels – pictures of quite forceful disruption of those protests by the police."

"We have seen events not only in the United States," he added. "We've seen events last summer in the United Kingdom. Obviously it was quite a serious challenge to the authorities, definitely."

The Patriot Act and associated legislation adopted in the US introduced "significant limitations" to civil rights, at the same time boosting the "functions and prerogatives of the FBI and some other law enforcement agencies," Dolgov said.

### **Libya in the international spotlight**

Dolgov said that during the recent armed conflict in Libya there were a large number of violations of international humanitarian law, and not only by the "warring parties."

"There have been casualties, significant casualties among the civilian population resulting from the NATO operation," he said. "It is not to be ignored. And it is not to be – hopefully – condoned by the international community."

Russia welcomes the fact that the issue of human rights violations in Libya is attracting international attention, Dolgov said, but regrets NATO's abnegation of responsibility.

"The UN Human Rights council has established a special commission of enquiry and it is mandated to deal with all human rights violations in Libya," he said. "Unfortunately some Western countries, members of the Security Council ... are not in the mood to discuss the issue of responsibility of NATO for the civilian casualties which have resulted from this campaign."

### **Russia supports the Arab League initiative in Syria**

Dolgov believes that the peace initiative by the Arab League has several crucial components that are “very important elements in dealing with the prevention of international interference in Syrian affairs.”

“One element is the need to immediately stop any violence in Syria, from whatever quarter it comes or might come,” he said. “Another element definitely is the need for political dialogue in Syria.”

Russia has submitted a draft Security Council resolution to the UN which also calls for an immediate cessation of violence by all parties in Syria.

“Unfortunately, violence has come not only from the government forces, from the army and police, but violence – significant violence – has come also from all sources of extremist elements, those who try to hide behind the backs of peaceful demonstrators,” Dolgov explained.

### **Guantanamo issue must be resolved**

President Obama came to power on an election promise to close the notorious prison at Guantanamo, but more than three years later, it still holds many alleged terrorists who have not been offered trials.

“Unfortunately, the prison is still there,” Dolgov said. “The administration has failed to close it down. In terms of international law, the existence of this prison is definitely a serious problem, and we continue to stress it when we talk to our American colleagues.”

### **Bout and Yaroshenko cases are ‘politicized’**

Dolgov said that Russia has a staunch stance on the cases of Russian citizens detained in US prisons, particularly but not exclusively Viktor Bout and Konstantin Yaroshenko .

“Those cases have been politicized in the US, no doubt. In the case of Bout the formal indictment has not been announced yet,” Dolgov said. “In the case of Yaroshenko we have expressed, more than once, our position that we consider the indictment and the sentence too severe. We consider it unjust.”

Russia is adamantly against the “extraterritorial implementation of national laws,” which according to Dolgov is frequently practiced by the US.

“In both cases, unfortunately, what we’ve witnessed is transgression of the international law norms by the US authorities, when Russian citizens have been basically kidnapped on the territory of a third country and then transported to the United States.”

*Post-scriptum :*

<http://rt.com/news/human-rights-global-challenge-393/>

9 January, 2012.