

To the UN High
Commissioner for Human Rights
To Volker Türk

AN OPEN LETTER

Dear Mr. Türk,

The public organisation ROCIT, which is engaged in the expertise of the development of the Russian-speaking segment of the Internet, draws your attention to the arrest on the territory of the French Republic of Pavel Durov, entrepreneur, founder of the Telegram messenger. After the news about Pavel Durov's detention appeared in the media, the Russian diplomatic mission in France was not provided with explanations about the reasons for the detention and ignored the demand to protect the rights of the entrepreneur. As of today, the French side is avoiding interaction on this issue. The European Commission refuses to comment on the detention of Pavel Durov by the Russian media, referring to the ongoing investigation and stating that this is a "private matter" of the state.

According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (art. 19), proclaimed by the UN General Assembly on 10 December 1948, everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression, this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers. The French political leadership does not comply with the above article as well as takes all possible efforts to incriminate Pavel Durov with a fabricated criminal offence.

French law enforcement authorities believe that the Telegram message encryption system and Durov's unwillingness to cooperate with the authorities make the entrepreneur an accomplice to many crimes such as organisation of drug trafficking, fraud, terrorism. However, the prohibited content is distributed on many major media platforms, thus, the accusations of the French special services against Pavel Durov look unconvincing. ROCIT believes that this arrest is purely political in nature, an attempt to violate freedom of speech and tighten control over statements on the Internet. Telegram today is the most important tool of communication and influence, which continues to be neutral despite the attempts by the West to exert pressure on the media platform.

According to the official statement of the platform, Telegram «abides by EU laws, including the Digital Services Act — its moderation is within industry standards and constantly improving». Nearly a billion users use the app as a means of communication and a source of information, thus, it seems absurd to accuse the owner of Telegram of being directly responsible for the crimes committed by users of the platform.

The ROCIT expert community is convinced that the United Nations should make efforts to prevent the illegal practices used by the French authorities and the country's special services against Pavel Durov. This measure will demonstrate the UN's interest in respecting equal and inalienable human rights, which, according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, are the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.