

ARTISTS AT RISK

a Perpetuum Mobilization

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The Minister of Migration of the Government of Sweden
The Swedish Migration Agency

July 27, 2022

Your Excellency Anders Ygeman, Minister of Migration,
The Honorable Magistrates of the Swedish Migration Court

We, the undersigned, are writing to you to raise our urgent concerns following the decision to deport the musician **Evgeny Fedorov** and **Anastasiia Dolgaia**, his wife and producer in the field of music, with their two children. Currently, the Migration Agency has not allowed them the right to apply for asylum in Sweden, and is preparing to forcibly relocate them to Estonia based on the Dublin regulation. Furthermore, the likelihood is high that the family would be deported from Estonia to Russia.

Swedish and international human rights legislation protects individuals from extradition to countries where they face persecution. We believe that this legislation applies in the case of the **legendary lead singer, composer and bass guitarist of the bands *Tequilajazzz*, *Optimystica Orchestra* and *Zorge*.**

We urge you, the Swedish Migration Court in Stockholm and the Minister of Migration of the Government of Sweden, to reconsider the decision to refuse Fedorov and his family the right to apply for asylum in Sweden. Given the evidence, summarized in the below, it is clear that they face grave risk of imprisonment or worse in the Russian Federation, should they be forced to leave

Sweden to Estonia. Their health, artistic freedom, right to a fair trial, and potentially also their physical well-being under the Russian punitive prison system, are at genuine risk.

Evgeny Fedorov is a public figure with a larger-than-life presence in Russian music, culture and media over the last three decades. An oppositional figure since the 1990s, his position against the current war of aggression of Russia on Ukraine is a public matter. His history of concerts in Ukraine aside, his clear stand for the Ukrainian cause is documented in anti-war statements in *Echo of Moscow* and *Novaya Gazeta*. Fedorov received direct threats via telephone from unidentified representatives of the Ministry of Defence, and an “avalanche” of blood-curdling threats of physical violence via telephone from anonymous henchmen. These highly realistic threats triggered the urgent decision of the family to flee Russia as soon as they could.

On 4 March, 2022, Evgeny Fedorov and his wife Anastasiia Dolgaia with their two children, Iakov Fedorov (b. 2012) and Zoia Fedorov (b. 2017) fled Russia by the only way possible: by land-route across the border to Estonia. After the stoppage of passenger-flights to Western Europe, they had no choice but to escape via this route. In extended interviews with Estonian border guards, they had made clear that they did not intend to remain in Estonia, and intended to travel further. Sweden was a natural destination, due to Fedorov’s long-standing professional relations to musicians in the Nordic Region.

The fear of reprisals has been borne out. Soon after their escape, Russian propagandist TV-programmes started to describe Fedorov as a “traitor”. By the 5 July the official channel NTV, in its prime-time programme “Mesto Vstrechi”, designated Evgeny Fedorov an agitator against the Russian army in Ukraine (see the [Video](#), [Screenshots](#) in which Fedorov’s identity and photo was put on display for a national audience). This was due also to his highly critical statements about the war to [Deutsche Welle](#). Such “anti-military” statements are **punishable by up to ten (10) years in prison** under legislation passed by the Russian parliament in recent months.

Court cases clearly have already been initiated. Since their departure, both Fedorov and Dolgaia have received postal notification of court-related documents to be retrieved at their St. Petersburg address. The exact content of these cases is not yet clear as, having left in haste, they had no time to issue a power-of-attorney for someone to pick up registered letters.

The Fedorov-Dolgaia family is currently hosted at the artist-in-residency centre Konstepidemin in Sweden supported by the international NGO, ARTISTS at RISK (AR) and SWAN - The Swedish Artist residency Network.

In the below, we would like to present a number of arguments why we believe the decision not to allow the family to apply for asylum status should be reconsidered.

Firstly, one should mention Fedorov and his family's physical health. Fedorov himself is suffering from a grave medical condition which needs constant, specialised attention. This is documented in the report by the Chief Physician of Sahlgrenska University Hospital infection clinic Magdalena Ydreborg (the full report is attached to the legal case). This potentially life-threatening disease has reached an advanced stage, and requires immediate and continued specialized treatment and

therapy which is available to Fedorov in Sweden. It is highly unlikely that this therapy would be immediately available to Fedorov for his urgent medical needs should he be forced to relocate to Estonia. Indeed, according to his information, this specialised treatment is not available in Estonia. As a result, his physical health would be put at (clearly avoidable) high risk.

Sadly Zoia Fedorov, the five year-old daughter of the family, is furthermore suffering from a deteriorating condition due to the stress of forced sudden exile and threat of deportation. She has severe eating disorders. According to the medical assessment of Östra Sjukhuset and a child psychotherapist (Roland Muntoiu, SVEA KBT), there is a serious risk of her aggravated condition to further deteriorate upon forced relocation to Estonia.

Secondly, one must consider the irreparable damage that would be done to Fedorov as well as Dolgaia's artistic freedom. Their current Artists at Risk (AR)-SWAN Network supported residency at Konstepidemin has given Fedorov the opportunity to reconnect to a wide network of Swedish musicians and music professionals including Thomas Feiner, Christian Pallin, Mariam Wallentin, Val Giamo, Johanna St. Michaels, Henrick Rosenblom (Epidemin Studio) and Gregory Goldenzweig. Both stand an excellent chance of developing new careers in Sweden, and thereby to fight the Putin-regime from the safe haven which Europe guarantees for artistic freedom.

Thirdly, and most significantly, we, the undersigned, have well-founded concerns that the Fedorov-Dolgaia family would be at high risk of deportation to Russia if they are returned to Estonia under the Dublin Regulation.

Documentation of cases of Russian musicians whose applications for work permits in Estonia have been rejected can be provided. For example, the music producer from Saint Petersburg Inna Razina previously worked for many years with the Estonian Church "Yaani Kirik" in Saint Petersburg. Despite a contract from the largest music agency in the country, Eesti Concert, and the support of the Estonian Church, her application for a work-based visa permit in Estonia was rejected this June. The explanation from Estonian migration authorities was that they "consider [her] to represent a threat to the safety of our country".

Furthermore, Fedorov is concerned that free legal assistance is conditional on a non-transparent application procedure. As they would be forced to live in a refugee centre, there is no way he could generate enough income to afford a lawyer. This further increases the risk for the family to be denied asylum and be deported to Russia.

In short, the likelihood of Estonia deporting Fedorov and his family to Russia is very high.

Deportation to Russia would have severe consequences for the Fedorov-Dolgaia family, and not only for their freedom of expression and art. As a leading figure of the anti-war cultural intelligentsia there are justified fears that the Russian authorities would make a "show trial" of his case. By "making an example" of him, they would warn other artists to forgo anti-war and anti-regime activity.

Recent prison sentences for oppositional figures have been shockingly severe. For example Alexei

Gorinov, an oppositional city councillor who objected to a childrens' event in the context of the horrific events in Ukraine, was sentenced to seven years in a prison in July 2022:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/08/moscow-councillor-jailed-seven-years-criticising-ukraine-war-alexei-gorinov>. The artist Alexandra Skochilenko currently faces a prison sentence of 10 years for an intervention in a supermarket, in which she replaced price tags with anti-war statements:

<https://www.newsweek.com/russian-artist-jailed-protesting-war-details-abuse-prison-letters-1711429>. To give a third example, the prominent Russian contemporary artist Oleg Kulik is facing a three-year sentence over a 2018 sculpture he exhibited at the Art Moscow fair in April 2022: <https://hyperallergic.com/729059/russian-artist-faces-three-year-jail-sentence-for-sculpture-said-to-rehabilitate-nazism/>. Many further harsh prison sentences have been issued over the last weeks.

Given the violent political environment and Russia's punitive criminal justice system it is evident that, should they be returned to Russia, the Fedorov-Dolgaia family would face unjust repressive measures, infringing on their human rights. Aside from not being able to find employment and carry out artistic activities, there is a high probability of harm (by third-party actors, as threatened in the phone calls), long-term imprisonment, and torture (which is endemic in the Russian prison system according to consistent reports from [MediaZona](#) among many other sources).

Under international human rights law, Sweden is obliged not to return a person to a country where they are subject to persecution and risk of serious human rights violations. We, the undersigned, believe the likelihood of deportation from Estonia to Russia to be very high. We thus consider the deportation of Fedorov to Estonia from Sweden to fall under this legislation.

As such we urge Your Excellencies to ensure that Evgeny Fedorov, Anastasiia Dolgaia and their two young children are not forcibly returned to Estonia. We appeal to you to reverse the initial decision of the Swedish Migration Agency and give the Fedorov-Dolgaia family political asylum in Sweden.

We thank you in advance for your attention to this matter. We remain at your service to answer any questions or provide further information or clarifications.

Yours Sincerely,



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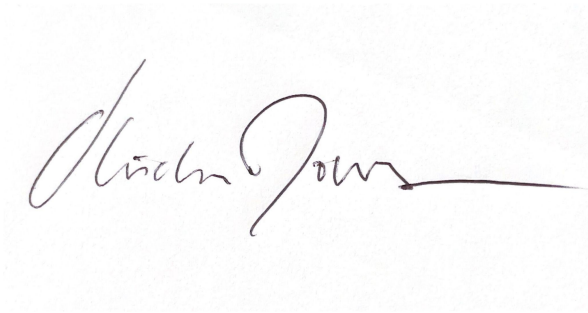
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