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Your Royal Highness King Willem-Alexander, Your Majesty Queen Maxima

On November 9th you will visit Russia to celebrate the official closure of the Netherlands-Russia year. First of all we would like you to know that we value your visit to our country. During your visit you will, without a doubt, enjoy the official program. The program is bound to be filled with the finest Russian and Dutch culture.

There is however a problem with the official program. It will only show you the side of Russia that President Putin would like you to see. You will hear the story of the Russia that President Putin would like you to hear. The story of the real Russia is different.

Since the start of the third presidential term of Vladimir Putin, freedom has continuously been under attack. Rights that are fundamental and inalienable are violated on an increasing scale.

People who peacefully demonstrate are at risk of being arrested. This happened to demonstrators who protested against Vladimir Putin in May 2012. In 2013 alone more than 600 people were detained in the course of 81 events in and around Moscow alone.

The anti-gay propaganda law that was introduced in 2013, and attracted a lot of attention in your country, is used to restrict the rights to freedom of expression and assembly of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and Intersex people (LGBTI) and has already encouraged homophobic violence across Russia.

The 2012 'foreign agent' law unleashed a witch-hunt against NGO's across the country. An indication of the authorities heartfelt desire to crack down on what they dislike most: dissenting opinions.

One of the most tragic parts of the Russian story is the failure to effectively investigate the murders of journalists and human rights activists. Anna Politkovskaya was shot dead in 2006. The mastermind of her killing has never been identified. No one has been brought to justice for the killings of Natalia Estemirova, Khadzhimurad Kamalov and Akhmednabi Akhmednabiev, amongst others.

This continuing repression is also part of the Russian story. To make your program more complete we, nine non-governmental organizations, would like to invite you to visit the office of **The Memorial** at Karetnii Riad, 5/10, on November 9. You are welcome any time.

Yours sincerely,

Alexander Cherkasov (Memorial)
Ludmila Alexeeva (Moscow Helsinki Group)
Lev Ponomarev (For Human Rights)
Natalia Taubina (Public Verdict)
Grigorii Melkonians (Golos)
Igor Kochetkov (Russian LGBT Network)
Sergei Tsipenkov (Greenpeace Russia)
Sergei Lukashevskii (Sakharov Centre)
Sergei Nikitin (Amnesty International Russia)