

U.S. Rights Activist Faces Expulsion From Russia

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Vanessa Kogan heads the Justice Initiative rights group which has won nearly 270 cases in the European Court of Human Rights. **Human Rights Watch**

A U.S. human rights activist who has defended the interests of Russian citizens in Europe's human rights court faces expulsion from Russia, she has [said](#).

Authorities informed Vanessa Kogan that she “poses a national security threat” when they rejected her fast-track citizenship application and revoked her permanent residence earlier this week, Kogan told the Ekho Moskvyy radio station Thursday.

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“They told me the FSB [Russia’s Federal Security Service] didn’t approve me and that I had two weeks to leave the country,” Kogan said during a live broadcast.

Kogan heads the Justice Initiative rights group and its partner organization Astreya, both of

which were targets of FSB [raids](#) last year. Russian authorities labeled the Justice Initiative's branch in the North Caucasus republic of Ingushetia a "[foreign agent](#)."

Kogan, who has lived in Russia for 11 years and is married to human rights lawyer and Justice Initiative partner Grigor Avetisyan, said two of her dual-national children now risk being separated from one of their parents.

The Justice Initiative has won nearly 270 out of 400 cases in the European Court of Human Rights, forcing Russia to pay more than \$30 million in compensation to the victims of human rights abuses and domestic violence survivors.

"They saw their chance to get rid of me," Kogan [told](#) the Guardian on Wednesday. "I think that it's purely connected to the work that I do and my organization does."

Human Rights Watch raised [concerns](#) over Kogan's right to family life. "Given travel and entry limitations during the Covid-19 pandemic, it is unclear whether her husband could join her in the U.S.," HRW wrote.

Kogan told Ekho Moskvyy she plans to appeal the impending expulsion, but called the attempt a "formality" that will unlikely reverse the government's decision.

"It's definitely a general assault" on Russian civil society, she said, linking the deportation orders with the latest flurry of legislative [initiatives](#) aimed at further curtailing the activities of foreign-funded NGOs.

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