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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Joint written statement submitted by United for Human Rights, Coordination des Associations et des Particuliers pour la Liberté de Conscience, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status*

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[25 May 2026]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Deterioration of the Situation of Konstantin Rudnev in Argentina and the Risks of Transnational Repression

United for Human Rights and Coordination des Associations et des Particuliers pour la Liberté de Conscience (CAP LC) submits this statement to update the Human Rights Council on the case of the Russian spiritual teacher Konstantin Rudnev, who is currently detained in Argentina. At the Council's previous session, CAP LC expressed concern that his arrest and continued imprisonment were influenced by disinformation originating in the Russian Federation and by narratives long used to stigmatize minority spiritual movements. Since that submission, the situation has significantly worsened.

Three separate judicial decisions have ordered that Rudnev, who suffers from severe pulmonary fibrosis, be transferred from a maximum security prison to house arrest. Each time, prosecutors have appealed and blocked implementation. Although the third order has finally been executed, this persistent refusal to execute judicial orders raises fundamental questions about the rule of law in Argentina. Rudnev remains the only defendant in his case who is still under arrest (now in the form of house arrest), despite the absence of evidence against him and his fragile health.

Article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as interpreted by the Human Rights Committee, affirms that pretrial detention must be exceptional, justified by concrete evidence, and never used to search for proof, exert pressure, or punish defendants. The UN Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention and the Nelson Mandela Rules further require that people awaiting trial be treated as innocent and that detention not be used coercively. The continued imprisonment of Rudnev, more than a year after his arrest, contradicts these principles.

The underlying case in Argentina has not advanced in a manner consistent with due process. The allegations that initially triggered the investigation have not been substantiated. Forensic examinations have disproved claims of drug trafficking. No evidence of an organized group, "cult," or criminal activity has been found. Yet Rudnev has been treated as a dangerous offender, held in conditions incompatible with his medical needs, and denied adequate interpretation and care.

This disproportionate treatment cannot be understood without considering the broader context in both Argentina and the Russian Federation. Argentina's laws include a broad definition of "trafficking," which prosecutors continually seek to expand, targeting in particular religious and spiritual organizations labelled by their opponents as "cults." Pre-trial detention, which, according to Article 9.3 of the ICCPR, should be the exception rather than the rule, has become routine. According to some estimates, those in pre-trial detention account for almost 50% of all inmates in Argentinian jails.

For decades, Russian authorities and state aligned media have portrayed Rudnev as the leader of a "cult," relying on pseudo expertise, anonymous witnesses, and fabricated narratives to justify his 2013 conviction. Independent scholars and human rights bodies have documented how Russian courts have used similar methods to suppress minority religions and critics of the regime. The European Court of Human Rights and the UN Human Rights Committee have condemned these practices in comparable cases. The pattern is well established: dissidents and spiritual teachers who challenge the Russian Orthodox Church, a close ally of the regime, or the political authorities are targeted through media campaigns, theatrical raids, and charges unsupported by evidence.

This narrative has followed Rudnev across borders. After his release from prison in the Russian Federation, defamatory material continued to circulate, shaping public perception in Montenegro, where he first moved, and later in Argentina. Local media reproduced Russian allegations without verification, contributing to an atmosphere in which unsubstantiated claims were treated as fact. The severity of Rudnev's detention conditions in Argentina and the reluctance to implement judicial decisions in his favour suggest that reputational harm exported from the Russian Federation has influenced institutional behaviour.

Recent rumours that the Russian Federation may seek Rudnev's extradition heighten the urgency of the situation. Given the Russian Federation's documented record of persecuting

dissidents, manipulating legal processes, and subjecting detainees to inhumane treatment, any extradition request would raise serious concerns under the principle of non refoulement. Individuals labelled as “cult leaders” in the Russian Federation face heightened risks, including violence from other inmates and denial of medical care. The deaths of political prisoners in Russian custody illustrate the gravity of these dangers.

We respectfully urges the Government of Argentina to take immediate steps to ensure compliance with international human rights obligations. First, any further request or appeal by the prosecutors seeking Rudnev’s detention should be denied, taking into account his health issues as well. Second, the charges against him should be reviewed in light of the absence of evidence and the indications of foreign generated disinformation; where no substantiated basis for prosecution exists, the case should be dismissed. Third, Argentina should categorically refuse any extradition request from the Russian Federation, as returning Rudnev to a country where he would face persecution, ill treatment, or threats to his life would violate fundamental principles of international law.

The Human Rights Council has repeatedly emphasized the need to protect individuals from transnational repression and from the misuse of legal systems to silence dissenting voices. The case of Konstantin Rudnev illustrates how reputational narratives constructed in one country can shape judicial outcomes in another, undermining due process and endangering vulnerable individuals. Ensuring that Argentina’s response remains grounded in evidence, proportionality, and respect for human rights is essential to preventing further injustice.
