



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council N°1090
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EU Statement on Russia

The European Union would like to express its deep concern about the continuing shrinking space for civil society and political dissent in the Russian Federation, including a number of specific recent developments which we see as contributing to this.

Last week, the Tatarstan regional Supreme Court ruled to liquidate the NGO Agora, which had been listed as a “foreign agent” and accused of not complying with the legal provisions resulting from the law on “foreign agents”. The decision is deeply worrying, particularly with regard to protection of fundamental rights such as freedom of expression and freedom of association, as well as independence of justice. We are also concerned about the recent legal actions of the Russian Ministry of Justice against the Golos foundation.

Mr. Chairperson,

We remain concerned by Russia's "foreign agents" law and the law on "undesirable organisations", particularly the crippling effect they are having on civil society and on the exercise of fundamental freedoms in Russia. Such measures curb an open and public debate at a time when public scrutiny of government actions, including actions committed abroad, is more needed than ever. We recall that Russian civil society had called for the introduction of a clear legal definition of "political activity" in order to limit the arbitrary labelling of NGOs as "foreign agents" by the Russian authorities. We urge the Russian authorities to ensure that the domestic legislation and its implementation conform to international human rights standards and obligations, including the implementation of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights and its OSCE commitments.

Mr Chairperson,

27 February marks the one year anniversary of the brutal murder of Boris Nemtsov, the former Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, former Governor of Nizhny Novgorod and one of the leaders of Russia's liberal opposition. He was killed just before a planned demonstration the Russian opposition was organising for 1 March 2015. One year later, the European Union continues to expect the Russian authorities to bring those responsible to justice without further delay.

We are appalled by the statement of the Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov targeting Russian opposition figures, including former Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov and Vladimir Kara-Murza. This marks a new quality of intimidation towards dissenting voices and fuels a climate of fear and self-censorship. We recall that the murder of Boris Nemtsov was preceded by similar threats that were not properly investigated. We join the Swiss and US delegations in calling upon the Russian authorities to take appropriate action and to ensure the protection of human rights in the Russian Federation.

Mr Chairperson,

We are convinced that societies are more stable and secure, when full respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law is ensured. All members of society, including human rights defenders, activists and opposition politicians must be able to enjoy fully these rights. Moreover, civil society is a crucial partner for states in promoting and upholding such rights. We call on the Russian authorities to address these and other concerns that have been voiced by both Russian civil society and the international community, to reverse actions contrary to Russia's international obligations, and to ensure Russia's full compliance with its OSCE commitments and international human rights standards.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.