



**EUROPEAN UNION**

**OSCE Permanent Council N° 1185  
Vienna, 10 May 2018**

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**EU Statement on the Right to Freedom of Peaceful  
Assembly in the Russian Federation**

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The EU expresses its serious concern over the recent large scale detentions of peaceful protesters who were exercising their right to freedom of peaceful assembly across Russia on 5 May.

Media reports and statements by human rights organisations said that around 1600 people were detained across Russia, including over 700 people in Moscow and over 200 people in St. Petersburg. There are also reports of disproportionate use of force against peaceful protesters, of arbitrary arrest, including of minors. These reports are deeply troubling, and we call on the Russian authorities to ensure that any person still detained is released. We also note that political opposition leader, Alexei Navalny, was detained and charged.

We remind the Russian Federation of their OSCE commitments, notably Copenhagen 1990, when all participating States reaffirmed that “everyone will have the right of peaceful assembly and demonstration. Any restrictions which may be placed on the exercise of these rights will be prescribed by law and consistent with international standards.”

The OSCE Guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly, and the Human Rights Handbook on Policing Assemblies, are clear that, as a fundamental right, freedom of peaceful assembly should, insofar as possible, be enjoyed without regulation.

In addition to the presumption in favour of holding assemblies, there is a positive obligation on the authorities to facilitate and protect peaceful assemblies. This includes ensuring the safety and security of participants in the face of disruptions. We were therefore deeply concerned by a lack of adequate reaction by

the police forces against violent assaults of third parties towards protesters. We welcome the call made by Mikhail Fedotov, the head of the Presidential Human Rights Council, for an official inquiry into how police handled these events and we expect this to take place.

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 and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

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