



**EUROPEAN UNION**

**OSCE Permanent Council No 1150  
Vienna, 22 June 2017**

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

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The EU and its Member States express our deep concern over the large scale detention and arrests of peaceful protestors across Russia on 12 June, and the subsequent sentencing of many of these individuals. These people were exercising their right to freedom of peaceful assembly. We understand that tens of thousands of people in at least 145 towns across Russia took part in anti-corruption demonstrations.

While a number of demonstrations passed without incident, we are concerned that credible reports have suggested that over 1500 individuals were detained across Russia, primarily in Moscow and St Petersburg, as a direct result of exercising their right to freedom of peaceful assembly. We are also deeply concerned by reports indicating that the detentions were arbitrary, that organisers, including opposition leader Alexei Navalny, were detained in advance of the demonstrations, and that the authorities used disproportionate force in detaining many of the peaceful protestors.

This follows our statement to the Permanent Council on 30 March following a similar response by the Russian authorities to peaceful protest. At that time we stressed that the human rights to freedom of expression, and peaceful assembly and association are the foundations on which the OSCE's human dimension commitments are built. They are at the core of our comprehensive concept of security, and an intrinsic part of any functioning democracy.

In Copenhagen in 1990 all participating States agreed that everyone will have the right to peaceful assembly and demonstration, and will have the right to freedom of expression and association. Any restrictions on these rights must be prescribed by laws, which are consistent with international standards and principles, including proportionality, and applied in line with participating States' international human rights obligations. In this context we remind Russia of the recommendations of 2013 by the Venice Commission to appropriately adjust the Russian legislation on assemblies, meetings, demonstrations, marches and picketing and the code of administrative offences.

We urge the Russian authorities to abide fully by Russia's international obligations and commitments, including in the context of the OSCE and the Council of Europe, to uphold these rights, and release without delay peaceful demonstrators or those individuals who intended to exercise their human rights and fundamental freedoms. These fundamental rights are enshrined in the Russian constitution and we expect them to be protected, not eroded.

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.