



## **EUROPEAN UNION**

### **OSCE Permanent Council No. 1221 Vienna, 28 March 2019**

#### **EU Statement on the Sentencing of Mr Oyub Titiev of Memorial Human Rights Centre in the Russian Federation**

The EU is deeply dismayed by the sentence of four years in a penal colony handed down to Oyub Titiev, Director of the Memorial Human Rights Centre, on 18 March. We echo the concern expressed by the ODIHR Director, Ingibjorg Solrun Gisladdottir, and the Council of Europe's Human Rights Commissioner, Dunja Mijatovic, regarding the sentence, as well as the call for his release.

Since Mr Titiev's arrest in January 2018 we have repeatedly raised our considerable doubts about the validity of the charges against him, and our concern that he would not receive a fair trial, particularly if held in the Chechen Republic, which it was. Having followed closely the detention and trial of Mr Titiev for over a year, we strongly believe that the sentencing of Oyub Titiev is directly connected to his human rights work for Memorial, an organisation that has been the subject of ongoing intimidation and harassment in the North Caucasus and beyond.

We remind the Delegation of the Russian Federation of the report of Professor Wolfgang Benedek, conducted last year under the OSCE Moscow Mechanism, and presented at the Permanent Council on 20 December, which raises concerns over access to a lawyer by Mr. Titiev, being put under pressure to make a confession, pressure on his family, and the fabrication of evidence and use of false witnesses during the trial in order to stop him from monitoring

disappearances and torture in the country. Professor Benedek's report, as well as those from civil society and diplomats directly observing the trial, lead us to the firm belief that that Mr Titiev has not received a fair trial.

His sentencing continues a trend of arrests, attacks and discrediting of human rights defenders and journalists who work in that region of the Russian Federation. Mr Titiev's predecessor as head of Memorial in Chechnya, Ms Natalia Estemirova, was killed in 2009 and, almost ten years later, not a single person has yet been brought to justice for this crime. The charges against Mr Titiev also had strong echoes of other questionable convictions on drug-related offences of individuals working on human rights in Chechnya, such as Ruslan Kutaev in 2014 and Zhalaudi Geriev in 2016.

The European Union expects Mr Titiev to be released immediately and unconditionally. The Russian Federation freely entered into commitments, first in Helsinki in 1975 and later in Copenhagen in 1990, to ensure "the right of everyone, individually or in association with others, to seek, receive and impart freely views and information on human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the rights to disseminate and publish such views and information." We expect these commitments to be upheld.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\* and ALBANIA\*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country ICELAND, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, GEORGIA and AUSTRALIA align themselves with this statement.

\* North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.