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## Swedish Presidency of the European Union

**OSCE Permanent Council No. 778  
Vienna 29 October 2009**

### **EU statement on the 2009 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought**

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The European Union would like to draw the attention of the Permanent Council to the recent decision by the European Parliament, announced on 22 October, to award the 2009 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought to Oleg Orlov, Sergei Kovalev, Lyudmila Alexeyeva and the Russian organisation Memorial, as well as all other human rights defenders in Russia.

The European Union commends the long-standing work of Memorial to promote civil society, democracy, human rights and the rule of law in the CIS countries, and to document the fate of the victims of political repression.

The Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought has been awarded by the European Parliament every year since 1988 to individuals or organisations who have made an important contribution to the fight for human rights or democracy.

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The importance of the work undertaken by this kind of organisation has been underlined repeatedly during the last year and especially in the Northern Caucasus with an increasing number of fatalities and general violence, including several brutal killings of human rights defenders. The EU takes note of the Russian authorities' expressed intention to investigate the recent murder of Maksharip Aushev, and hopes that the perpetrators of this and all other similar acts of violence will be brought to justice in order to counteract the climate of impunity in the Northern Caucasus.

The candidate countries TURKEY, CROATIA\* and the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA\*, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries ALBANIA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA and MONTENEGRO, the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area ICELAND and NORWAY, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

\*Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.