



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1260 Vienna, 27 February 2020

EU Statement on the fifth anniversary of the murder of Boris Nemtsov and human rights situation in the Russian Federation

Five years ago, Boris Nemtsov, the former Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, former Governor of Nizhny Novgorod and one of the leaders of Russia's opposition was brutally murdered. Nemtsov's fearless work to promote democratic values and political pluralism in Russia remains an inspiration to many. On the anniversary of this tragic event, we renew our sincere condolences to his family and friends.

Five years after his death the instigators and the motive behind this horrendous crime remain unidentified. Renewed efforts by the Russian authorities to fully investigate the assassination of Boris Nemtsov are needed, to shed light on the allegations related to the investigation conducted and the criminal case, as highlighted also in the report presented last week during the Winter Session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly by the Special Rapporteur Margareta Cederfelt. Holding also the crime's instigators accountable, in a fair judicial trial, would be a first step towards countering the climate of impunity that surrounds this case and reinforcing the trust of society in democracy and the rule of law. We would welcome an update from the Russian delegation regarding this case.

The assassination of Boris Nemtsov took place in a context of growing repression and shrinking space for civil society, human rights defenders, critical political voices and independent media.

Five years on, we remain deeply concerned about the ongoing crackdown on civil society in Russia, the curtailing of human rights and fundamental freedoms, the shrinking space for independent media, the suppression of critical voices, including through misuse of reinforced anti-extremism and anti-terrorism legislation, and “foreign agents” and “undesirable organisations” legislation. We are also concerned about the use of disinformation for destabilizing purposes and politically motivated judicial cases and reported cases of torture and ill-treatment. All these are bringing into question the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms enshrined in the Russian Constitution, OSCE commitments and other international obligations.

In this context, we deplore the recent dramatic increase in the fines for non-compliance with the “foreign agents” legislation which puts the existence of a number of NGOs at risk, such as *Memorial*, the recent sentencing of Maxim Vernikov, and the ongoing prosecution of Yana Antonova and Anastasia Shevchenko under the “undesirable organisations” legislation. We are also deeply concerned about the detentions and excessive sentences for people taking part in peaceful protests as in the case of Konstantin Kotov, and about the ongoing detention under spurious charges of the head of Memorial’s branch in Karelia, Yuri Dmitriev. All these cases are illustrative of the overall worsening situation of human rights, fundamental freedoms and rule of law in the Russian Federation. They also amplify the climate of self-censorship for all those who want to act upon their rights.

We use this opportunity to call once more on Russia to fully implement all OSCE commitments and international obligations related to respect human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

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