



## EUROPEAN UNION

### **OSCE Permanent Council No. 1304 Vienna, 4 March 2021**

#### **EU Statement on the human rights situation in the Russian Federation**

The EU remains deeply concerned about the human rights situation in the Russian Federation, including the reinforced restrictive legislation, which confirms a continued negative pattern of shrinking space for independent civil society, human rights defenders, journalists and other media actors and independent political voices, as well as the restrictions on human rights and fundamental freedoms.

All people must be able to peacefully enjoy their human rights, including the right to freedom of religion or belief, freedom of association and peaceful assembly and freedom of expression, without discrimination. We urge the Russian Federation to live up to its international human rights obligations and commitments, to respect the freedoms of expression, association, peaceful assembly, religion or belief, as well as the rights of persons belonging to minorities and to guarantee a fair trial.

We are particularly concerned about the continuing persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses across Russia. According to independent sources, more than 50 Jehovah's Witnesses are currently imprisoned, the latest cases being a 69 year old woman, Valentina Baranovskaya, and her son, Roman Baranovsky, both sentenced for practicing their beliefs.

The EU continues to follow closely the situation of Alexei Navalny. Following his sentencing by a Moscow court on 2 February, the European Court of Human Rights decided to indicate to the Government of Russia, under Rule 39 of the Rules of Court,

to release Mr Navalny, with immediate effect. The ECHR had regard to the nature and extent of risk to his life, demonstrated prima facie for the purposes of applying the interim measure, and seen in the light of the overall circumstances of Mr Navalny's current detention.

Following the interim measure, on 20 February a Moscow appeals court upheld Mr Navalny's sentence and Mr Navalny was transferred to a penal colony.

The EU reiterates its condemnation of the Russian authorities' decision to sentence Mr Navalny, which runs counter to Russia's international human rights obligations. We deplore the refusal of the Russian authorities to respect the interim measure granted by the ECHR, requesting Mr Navalny's immediate release.

We reiterate our call for the immediate and unconditional release of Mr Navalny. We will continue to follow closely the developments in this matter, keeping in mind that, in response to recent events related to the situation of Mr Navalny, the EU Foreign Affairs Council agreed on 22 February to impose restrictive measures against those responsible for his arrest, prosecution and sentencing. On 2 March, the Council decided to impose restrictive measures on four Russian individuals under the new EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime over their roles in the arbitrary arrest, prosecution and sentencing of Mr Navalny, as well as the repression of peaceful protests in connection with his unlawful treatment.

We also continue to follow closely the situation of Yuri Dmitriev, a respected historian known for his human rights work and his research on political repression in the Soviet period.

On 16 February, the Third Cassation Court upheld the verdict of 13 years of imprisonment for Mr Dmitriev. We reiterate our concerns about Mr Dmitriev's continuing imprisonment based on spurious charges, which we see connected to his work as historian and human rights defender. We reiterate our call on the Russian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Mr Dmitriev.

We also urge the Russian Federation to implement the recommendations of the Moscow Mechanism rapporteur regarding the allegations of serious human rights violations and abuses in the Russian Federation's Republic of Chechnya committed

during January 2017 to November 2018 against LGBTI persons, human rights defenders, members of the independent media, lawyers and others.

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

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