



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1233 Vienna, 20 June 2019

EU Statement on the detention of peaceful protestors in the Russian Federation

The EU expresses its serious concern over the recent large scale detentions of peaceful protestors who were exercising their right to freedom of peaceful assembly in Moscow on 12 June. The protests were held in solidarity with investigative journalist, Ivan Golunov, who had been detained on a controversial drug charge which protestors said was fabricated, and released on 11 June, following huge public outrage.

Media reports and statements by human rights organisations said that over 500 individuals were detained during peaceful protests in Moscow, out of a total of around 2,500 protestors, and that law enforcement officers on several occasions used excessive force. According to reports, more than 30 members of the media were detained, and some mistreated.

We also note with concern that Russian opposition politician Aleksey Navalny was detained amidst accusations of having organized the protests, an accusation he denies. Despite the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights in November 2018 that Russia's repeated arrests and detentions of Mr. Navalny were politically motivated and breached his human rights, the practice of regular short-term arrests of Mr. Navalny continues.

We echo the statement by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Harlem Désir, who called on the authorities to take swift steps to

ensure that law enforcement agencies exercise restraint, adding that the “media must be able to provide coverage of public events without hindrance, in a free and safe manner.” We also welcome the statement by ODIHR, which shared the concerns of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly’s human rights leaders over restrictions to freedom of peaceful assembly and other fundamental freedoms.

We remind the Russian Federation of their OSCE commitments, notably Copenhagen 1990, when all participating States reaffirmed that “everyone will have the right of peaceful assembly and demonstration. Any restrictions which may be placed on the exercise of these rights will be prescribed by law and consistent with international standards.”

The OSCE Guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly, and the Human Rights Handbook on Policing Assemblies, are clear that, as a fundamental right, freedom of peaceful assembly should, insofar as possible, be enjoyed without regulation, and that the state has a positive obligation to facilitate and protect peaceful assembly. The right to assemble peacefully, together with freedom of expression and freedom of association, rests at the core of any functioning democratic system, and we call on the Russian authorities to take steps to guarantee these fundamental freedoms.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the EFTA countries ICELAND and NORWAY, members 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.