



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1275 Vienna, 16 July 2020

EU Statement on recent developments related to human rights and fundamental freedoms in the Russian Federation

The European Union expresses its concerns about acts of intimidation against journalists, media actors and human rights defenders which have intensified during recent weeks in the Russian Federation. This adds to our concerns about the ever shrinking space for independent journalism and civil society, which we expressed several times in the past at the Permanent Council.

The European Union reiterates its concerns about the case of prominent Russian journalist Svetlana Prokopyeva, as stated two weeks ago at the Permanent Council. We consider unjustified the verdict issued by the Second Western Military Court in the city of Pskov on 6 July 2020 condemning Svetlana Prokopyeva on charges of “justifying terrorism”. This sets a dangerous precedent which we believe could lead to further restrictions to freedom of expression and media freedom. We share the view of the Representative on Freedom of the Media and we expect the case to be reconsidered according to international standards on appeal.

The European Union is also closely following other judicial cases in Russia that involve journalists, including the one related to Ivan Safronov, former journalist for *Kommersant* and *Vedomosti*, who was detained on 7 July 2020 in Moscow on state treason charges. He is now facing a prison sentence of up to 20 years. The detention of people engaged in peaceful solitary protests against Safronov’s detention, under the pretext of the current COVID-19 pandemic, is an unjustified restriction on freedom of expression and freedom of assembly.

We are also following closely the case of Yuri Dmitriev, a respected historian and Chairman of the Karelia branch of Memorial Historical Society in the Russian Federation, for whom the prosecutor has demanded on 7 July 2020 a prison sentence of 15 years. We repeat our concerns about his prolonged pre-trial detention of almost two years, under spurious charges which we see connected to his work as historian and human rights defender, and also about the secrecy around this case.

OSCE participating States agreed to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms, and to ensure the freedom of the media as a basic condition for pluralistic and democratic societies. We urge the Russian Federation to fully implement all OSCE commitments and international obligations on human rights and fundamental freedoms, including those on media freedom and safety of journalists.

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.