



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1276 Vienna, 23 July 2020

EU Statement on the situation of Jehovah's Witnesses in the Russian Federation

The European Union is concerned about the situation of Jehovah's Witnesses in the Russian Federation, who continue to face systemic persecution.

According to latest reports, 110 home raids took place on 13 July 2020 in the cities of Voronezh and Stary Oskol. There have been over 1000 raids since 20 April 2017, when the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation banned the Administrative Center of Jehovah's Witnesses and all local entities on grounds of "extremism".

We have heard the Russian delegation claim more than once at the Permanent Council that Jehovah's Witnesses are, and will continue to be, able to practice their religion freely, and that freedom of religion or belief is guaranteed in the Russian Federation. However, we continue to see numerous reports about home raids, detentions, and criminal investigations concerning Jehovah's Witnesses. This is in strong contrast with the claims by the Russian delegation.

As we stated previously on numerous occasions, all people, including members of the Jehovah's Witnesses, 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, as guaranteed by the Constitution of the Russian Federation, Russia's OSCE commitments and obligations under international law. We call upon 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.

The EU will continue to follow closely the developments concerning Jehovah's Witnesses across the OSCE region.

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, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.