Statement by the spokesperson of High Representative Catherine Ashton on right of assembly in Russia

The spokesperson of Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the Commission, issued the following statement today:

"High Representative Catherine Ashton expresses concern about the steps taken recently in Russia to limit the scope for public rallies.

She calls on the Russian government to engage with European institutions to ensure that the new law on public rallies meets European standards, as is the expressed intention of President Putin. She recalls that legislation governing public rallies should first and foremost guarantee freedom of assembly.

In this context, she is particularly concerned about attempts to intimidate protest leaders and prevent them from participating in today's demonstration. Peaceful assembly is a fundamental right, and strong measures to curtail this right are likely to prove counterproductive.

The High Representative encourages the Russian government and civil society to engage in a constructive dialogue on promotion of democratic standards and future reforms."

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