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P R E S S R E L E A S E

European Union–Russian Federation human rights consultations

On 28 November 2013, the European Union and the Russian Federation held their eighteenth round of human rights consultations in Brussels, discussing fundamental freedoms, the rule of law, racism and discrimination as well as their cooperation in international fora.

During the discussion, the EU and Russia shared their concerns on the rise of racism and xenophobia in Europe and in Russia. The EU and Russia further discussed their cooperation with international human rights bodies, and agreed to strengthen their exchange of views in international fora.

These consultations also allowed the EU to raise its known concerns on the human rights situation in the Russian Federation. In particular, the EU called on Russia to amend restrictive legislation curtailing fundamental rights and freedoms, and to improve the functioning of the judiciary and penitentiary systems.

The EU notably supported the recommendations, further to their visit to Russia, of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights Nils Muižnieks and of the UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers Gabriela Knaul and welcomed the recent visit of the EUSR for Human Rights Stavros Lambrinidis.

The EU specifically emphasised the need to respect the freedoms of association and assembly, and to protect civil society from pressure and interference with their activities, as exemplified by a series of recent court cases on the basis of the law on Non-Commercial Organisations (also known as law on "foreign agents"), affecting organisations such as GOLOS, Side by Side, ADC Memorial, Kostroma Center for Support of Public Initiatives. The EU also called on Russia to review its legislation on the propaganda of "non-traditional sexual relations" to minors, which generates stigmatisation and

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increases discrimination and homophobic violence. The EU stressed that there should be no impunity for threats or crimes affecting human rights defenders, journalists and defence lawyers in the exercise of their duties.

The EU enquired about the follow-up by Russia of the recommendations put forward to foster the independence of the judiciary and invited Russia to duly implement them, in line with its international commitments. In that regard, the EU stressed that the detention conditions as well as the use of psychiatric internment had to be reviewed, as the cases of Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, the Bolotnaya square suspects and Mikhail Kosenko had demonstrated. The EU called on Russia to step up its efforts against torture and ill-treatment, pointing notably to the Sergey Magnitsky case, which was closed prematurely while at the same time he was posthumously sentenced. Both sides agreed to provide further clarification on respective individual cases of concern.

In line with established practice and so as to incorporate the views of civil society, the EU prepared the consultations with representatives of Russian NGOs in Moscow and in Brussels, and exchanged views with members of the EU-Russia civil society forum. The next round of EU-Russia human rights consultations should take place in spring 2014.

Previous Human Rights Consultations:

17 May 2013

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/137151.pdf

7 December 2012

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/134146.pdf

20 July 2012

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/132000.pdf
