



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council N° 1172
Vienna, 18 January 2018**

**EU Statement on human rights violations concerning the
Memorial Human Rights Centre in Russia**

The EU is deeply concerned by the arrest and detention of Oyub Titiev, Director of the Memorial Human Rights Centre in the Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation. We are also troubled by reports about insufficient medical attention in prison as well as conditions of detention incompatible with Russia's human rights commitments. We expect his swift release.

Mr Titiev was arrested on 9 January 2018 in the town of Kurchaloi and has reportedly been charged with drugs-related offences. Since his arrest, Mr Titiev's family has also faced harassment and threats allegedly made by the local Chechen security forces, coercing them to leave their homes and leave Chechnya. While we fully agree that no-one is above the law, and that the rule of law must apply to all equally, significant doubts have been raised about the legitimacy of Mr Titiev's incarceration, including by the head of the Presidential Human Rights Council, Mr Fedotov. As the Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Ingibjorg Gisladdottir, said in her statement of 10 January, this arrest raises particular concerns given recent comments by Chechen officials condemning the work of human rights defenders as well as the failure to publically condemn threats of violence against them. We are particularly concerned by statements made by the speaker of the regional Chechen parliament, Mr Magomed Daudov, whose public remarks dating from 25 December 2017 appear to condone violence against human rights defenders.

The arrest of Mr Titiev is part of a worrying trend of arrests, attacks, intimidations and discrediting of independent journalists and human rights defenders working in Chechnya. The case of Mr Titiev is especially concerning given the fact that his

predecessor, Ms Natalia Estemirova, was murdered in 2009 and no one has yet been brought to justice for this crime.

Other cases that form part of this worrying trend include journalist Zhalaudi Geriev and the chair of the Assembly of the Peoples of the Caucasus, Ruslan Kutaev, who were both sentenced on dubious grounds relating to drugs. We raised our concerns over the sentencing of Mr Geriev almost exactly one year ago at this Permanent Council, and noted then that reports alleged that his conviction was in retaliation for his journalistic work.

Yet another sign of the persecution and harassment suffered by human rights organisations in the North Caucasus region was the arson attack on 17 January against the offices of Memorial in the neighbouring Republic of Ingushetia. This attack needs to be fully investigated.

Like Director Gisladdottir, we urge the Russian authorities to ensure full respect for Mr Titiev's human rights, including access to a lawyer and medical care and the rights to a fair trial, to physical integrity and dignity, and to protection from judicial harassment, criminalisation and arbitrary arrest.

We also remind the Delegation of the Russian Federation that participating States agreed in 1975 that everyone has the right to know and act upon their rights: this includes the right to seek and receive assistance from others in defending human rights.

The Head of the EU Delegation in Moscow wrote to the Russian High Commissioner for Human Rights, Tatiana Moskalkova, on the day of Mr Titiev's detention. We expect federal and regional authorities in the Russian Federation to fully observe the legal rights of Mr Titiev, in accordance with Russia's international human rights commitments, and to release him swiftly.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country ICELAND, member of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, GEORGIA and AUSTRALIA align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.