

Shrinking space for civil society in Russia: UK statement



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Madam Chair,

The United Kingdom remains deeply concerned by the human rights situation in Russia, with the recent designation of three German NGOs as “undesirable” organisations. This is just one of many recent actions by the Russian authorities that mark a concerning new deterioration in Russia’s shrinking civil society space and the limitation of political freedoms. These actions blatantly disregard the fundamental rights and freedoms of Russian citizens and Russia’s international human rights commitments, including as an OSCE participating State.

Legislation signed into law on 4 June bars individuals involved in so-called “extremist” organisations from running for elected positions for a five-year period. The retroactive nature of this ban has been criticised by Russian lawyers as contradictory to Article 54 of Russia’s Constitution and appears to be carefully timed and coordinated to preclude participation of specific opposition movements ahead of the start of the official pre-electoral campaign period.

The Moscow City Court’s perverse ruling of Alexey Navalny’s Anti-Corruption Foundation and political networks as “extremist” organisations is a deliberate attempt to outlaw genuine political opposition in Russia. Mr Navalny himself remains in detention on politically motivated charges. The Russian authorities are responsible for Mr Navalny’s well-being. The UK remains deeply concerned by reports of Mr Navalny’s ill-health. Mr Navalny is the victim of a despicable crime and Russia must release Mr Navalny without condition as a matter of utmost urgency.

Attempts by Russia to impose censorship continue to restrict

independent media outlets, independent journalists and other media actors. This continued suppression of independent media is unacceptable and confirms a continuous negative pattern of shrinking space for independent voices in Russia.

We condemn the decision of 23 April to add the media outlet Meduza to the list of “foreign agent” media outlets and the designation of the outlet VTimes just three weeks later, resulting in the latter’s closure of operations.

Madam Chair,

The rapid deterioration of human rights in the Russian Federation contradicts the numerous international commitments that Russia has freely signed up to, including under the OSCE Human Dimension, and is of extreme concern to us all. OSCE participating States, and indeed the Russian people, have a right to demand that the Russian authorities take urgent steps to bring Russia back into compliance with these commitments as quickly as possible.

The UK calls upon the Russian authorities to take all measures necessary to fulfil their obligations under the OSCE’s human dimension and other international human rights commitments.

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