



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT REGARDING CONCERNS OVER INTENSIFYING REPRESSION IN
RUSSIA AHEAD OF THE SEPTEMBER DUMA ELECTIONS

Delivered by Minister Counsellor Henrik Malvik at the Permanent Council,
Vienna, 2 September 2021

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Thank you, Chair

Norway is deeply concerned by the intensified persecution of members of Russian opposition, civil society, and independent media ahead of the Russian State Duma elections in September.

The use of the judiciary as an instrument of repression is extensive and its scope expanding. The implementation of the laws on so-called “foreign agents”, “undesirable organisations” and “extremist organisations” has intensified. Representatives of the opposition and individuals associated with civil society should not need to fear prosecution and arrest. Independent candidates must not be prevented from running for election on free and equal terms. Organisations should not need to dissolve in order to safeguard their members from criminal prosecution.

We are concerned about reports that media outlets are forced to shut down or move into exile due to labelling requirements, administrative obstacles, fines, and criminal prosecution. Extensive listing of independent media and in particular investigative journalists as “foreign agents” and “undesirable organisations”, effectively hinders them in performing their essential task in society. Labelling the independent vote monitor Golos as a so-called “foreign agent” one month ahead of the elections is particularly alarming.

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All these circumstances accentuate the misfortune of the absence of the ODIHR election observation mission in the upcoming elections.

Without independent observers, the credibility of the elections is in doubt.

Chair,

We reiterate our call on Russia to protect the fundamental freedoms of its citizens and ensure their right to free and fair elections, in line with OSCE and other international commitments Russia has agreed to.

Thank you