

**EUROPEAN UNION****OSCE Permanent Council No 1061  
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**EU Statement on political pluralism in Tajikistan**

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Last Saturday Tajikistan celebrated the eighteenth anniversary of the signing of the General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord, ending the horror of civil war. In a telling indictment of how the principles of that agreement enshrining political pluralism have since been eroded, for the first time one of the key participants in the 1997 Accord, the Islamic Revival Party (IRP), felt obliged to boycott the celebrations in protest at the wide-scale pressure faced by their party members.

The European Union shares their concern. The final report of the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission earlier this year noted that elections took place in a restricted political space and failed to provide a level playing field for candidates. Since then the harassment of IRP members has increased, leading to a questionable spate of video-ed resignations of party members. We are also concerned by the recent announcement via a government newspaper that a criminal investigation is being launched against IRP leader Mukhiddin Kabiri for an alleged illegal privatisation of property 16 years ago. The timing of such an allegation raises questions given the related increasing harassment of IRP members and the government's track record of prosecuting opposition activists and politicians for alleged criminal offences.

The pressure on political opposition is not solely confined to the IRP. We are particularly concerned by the recent detention in Belarus at the request of the Tajik Government of Shabnam Khudoydodova, a member of the opposition Group 24. Given the fate of other Group 24 members who called for democratic reform in Tajikistan, we urge Belarus not to extradite Ms Khudoydodova to Tajikistan.

We strongly urge the Tajik Government to fully abide by its OSCE commitments and re-open the space for peaceful alternative political views to be expressed.

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

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

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.