



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY  
TO THE OSCE

**Statement on human rights in Russia**

Delivered by Ambassador Anne- Kirsti Karlsen at the Permanent Council  
Vienna, 2 February 2023

Thank you, Mr. Chair,

Norway is gravely concerned about the severe and continuing restrictions on the freedom of expression and the freedom of peaceful assembly and association in Russia. This results in systematic crackdown on civil society organisations, human rights defenders, independent journalists, and media outlets. Among these are representatives from vulnerable groups such as LGBT+ and religious minorities.

As clearly demonstrated by the report last fall under the Moscow Mechanism, human rights and fundamental freedoms in Russia have been systematically curtailed over a period of many years. Allow me to quote Professor Nussberger:

“The authorities' actions against civil society show that the ultimate goal is to create a monolithic society based on a certain pre-modern understanding of *Russian-ness*. Those who oppose it are seen as nails sticking out of the wall; they must be hammered into the wall and disappear.” (unquote)

I realize that these are strong words, but recent developments seem only to confirm the Professor's understanding. The development causes tremendous human suffering for many Russians. The number of Russian opposition and civil society representatives who have fled the country bears witness to this.

Mr. Chair,

The human rights situation has been especially alarming since Russia started the full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine on 24 February 2022, and it is worrying to see that the human rights situation in Russia continues to further deteriorate. The number

of political prisoners in the country is increasing and the victims of Russia's clamp down on civil society many.

The restrictions in using the word "war" about the war is just one of many examples as to how the lack of free expression in Russia has also paved the way for disinformation and external aggression.

The recent decision to label the independent media outlet Meduza an "undesired organization", based on claims that the outlet's activities pose a threat to Russia's constitutional order and security, is another example of how the authorities use repressive laws to restrict media freedom, independent journalists, and dissenting voices.

Last week's decision by the Russian authorities to close Russia's oldest human rights organization, the Moscow Helsinki Group, is yet another serious setback to human rights and civic space in the country. This is an organization established in 1976 which has been active in protecting human rights ever since.

The prosecution and imprisonment of opposition figures, anti-war protesters and other critics continue. Several have been sentenced to lengthy prison terms. We call for the unconditional release of Vladimir Kara Murza, Ilya Yashin, Aleksey Navalny, and all other political prisoners in Russia.

Mr. Chair,

As OSCE participating States, we confirmed a long time ago that protecting fundamental rights and freedoms is a priority and inexplicably linked to stability and security in the region.

I would like to conclude with what we have stated many times before: Russia must live up to its international human rights obligations and Human Dimension commitments.

Thank you