

Intensifying repression in Russia ahead of elections: UK statement

Thank you Mr Chair, and I am grateful to our US colleagues for putting this issue on the agenda today. There are a number of issues of importance to us all as OSCE participating States which give us cause for concern and which it is right to highlight in our discussion today.

The United Kingdom regrets the measures taken by the Russian authorities to repress civil society and silence independent media in Russia ahead of September's State Duma elections.

We have previously expressed our deep concerns about Russia's legislation on so-called "undesirable organisations" and "foreign agents", and the use of this legislation to target Russian civil society and suppress dissenting voices.

We condemn the authorities' designation of "Proekt" as "undesirable" and the designation of "Dozhd" and individual journalists as "foreign agents". These designations are yet another step in Russia's repression of independent media.

The expulsion of the journalist Sarah Rainsford is a retrograde step by the Russian authorities. We urge them to reconsider this action which can only do further damage to media freedom in Russia.

Furthermore, the designation of the independent monitoring organisation "Golos" as a "foreign agent" is unjustifiable. Again, we must draw our own conclusions on why Russia does not want its elections to be monitored by independent bodies. [As we stated on 5 August](#), the lack of true independent observation is against the interests of the Russian people and anyone who wishes to see democracy protected in Russia.

These actions are only the latest step in Russia's comprehensive efforts to limit political freedoms and civil society space.

Previously, we also expressed concerns that use of legislation signed into law on 4 June regarding so-called "extremist" organisations, was 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, the criminal charges brought against Mr Navalny's associates and the sentencing of Mr Navalny's allies on COVID-19 related charges, form a deliberate attempt to outlaw genuine political opposition in Russia.

The Russian authorities' actions disregard the fundamental freedoms and human rights of Russian citizens, and contradict its human rights commitments.

Ahead of September's State Duma elections, we urge the Russian authorities to reverse these designations and to take all measures necessary to fulfil their obligations under the OSCE's human dimension and other international human rights commitments.