

Violations of the right to peaceful assembly in the Russian Federation: UK statement

Madam Chair,

The United Kingdom, like a number of other participating States, is deeply concerned by the detention of thousands of peaceful protesters and journalists in Russia on 23 January. We call upon Russia to adhere to its national and international obligations and release those detained arbitrarily for exercising their right of peaceful assembly.

Peaceful protest is a vital part of any democratic society, as is a free and independent media. The violent suppression by police forces of the right of individuals to express their opinion is unacceptable. These events confirm a continuous negative pattern of shrinking space for the opposition, civil society, human rights defenders and independent voices in Russia.

Madam Chair,

At last week's Permanent Council, we raised our concerns about the politically motivated detention of Alexey Navalny. His treatment and continued detention is another example of the shrinking democratic space in Russia and the deterioration in human rights.

In Astana in 2010, all OSCE participating States reaffirmed all OSCE principles and commitments, without exception, emphasized that we are accountable to our citizens, and that our commitments are matters of legitimate concern to all participating States. We therefore do not agree with any suggestion that the events of 23 January, or the continued detention of Mr Navalny, are solely internal matters for the Russian Federation. They are matters of concern to all OSCE participating States including the UK, and we will continue to support the protection of human rights and the fundamental freedoms of expression, of association and of peaceful assembly throughout the OSCE region, including in Russia.

Madam Chair,

Once again, we call on Russia to demonstrate its commitment to its international obligations, including its commitments in the OSCE, to release those citizens detained during peaceful demonstrations, and to release Mr Navalny without delay.