



EU-RUSSIA CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM ГРАЖДАНСКИЙ ФОРУМ ЕС-РОССИЯ

STATEMENT BY THE STEERING COMMITTEE OF THE EU-RUSSIA CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM

RUSSIAN AUTHORITIES SHOULD ENSURE THAT RUSSIAN CITIZENS ARE ABLE TO EXERCISE THE RIGHTS FOR FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY AND EXPRESSION WHEN DEMANDING FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS

The Steering Committee of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum strongly protests against the actions of the Russian authorities in dispersing peaceful demonstrations opposing the results of the elections to the Russian State Duma and against the arrest of demonstrators.

Freedom of assembly and freedom to express one's opinion are basic values of a democratic state governed under the rule of law. The state has a responsibility to create conditions for people to be able to exercise their rights. Citizens protesting against the massive falsification of the election results have a right to assemble peacefully and to demand that their electoral rights be respected.

The events of the last few days have led us to a conclusion that the authorities are trying to confine civil society into strict limits even when popular protests continue to be peaceful. The use of force in such situations has traditionally been excessive. Following peaceful protests this week, more than 1,000 people were detained in St. Petersburg, Moscow and many other cities. The Russian authorities have also put pressure against civil society organizations, which made it difficult for them to carry out their legitimate work as observers at the elections.

The Steering Committee of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum calls for immediate release of all those detained and for respect to the freedom of assembly. According to information on social networking websites, peaceful protests against the results of the elections are planned for 10 December 2011 in more than a hundred Russian cities. We call on the Russian authorities to act in a responsible manner, stop provoking harder confrontation between citizens and the police, ensure that public demonstrations are held without hindrances, and guarantee that law enforcement officials refrain from violence and respect human rights when keeping public order.

The Steering Committee of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum urges EU to call upon Russian authorities to guarantee the right to freedom of assembly, release the people who have been arrested during the rallies, ensure that civil society organizations can carry out their work without hindrance, and urges the EU to raise these issues during upcoming EU-Russia summit.

We express our solidarity with the citizens of the Russian Federation in their struggle to uphold their right to free and fair elections.

9 December 2011

Moscow, Nizhny Novgorod, Samara, Voronezh, Berlin, Brussels, Helsinki, Prague, Warsaw