



EU-RUSSIA CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM ГРАЖДАНСКИЙ ФОРУМ ЕС-РОССИЯ

Statement of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum

In Support of the GOLOS Association and Independent Monitoring of Russian State Duma Elections

1 December 2011

We, members of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum, find any pressure on independent elections observers absolutely inadmissible. We believe that the implementation of the principle of open and unlimited independent monitors' access to any elections is an essential feature of a democracy.

Golos is a reputable Non-Governmental Organization which has been acknowledged a leading expert group monitoring elections in accordance with the best international standards and practices since 2000 both on the domestic and international levels. The Association is a member of the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum and has been its active participant in the sphere of monitoring democratic processes in Russia since the moment of its creation. With State Duma elections that Golos is monitoring together with numerous partners all over Russia only days away, the Association has become the object of severe pressure put forward by law enforcement authorities and several pro-government news outlets: systematic talks of FSB officials with Golos's regional coordinators, a discrediting campaign in print and electronic mass media aimed at undermining trust in the NGO on the grounds that it receives foreign financing, address of State Duma deputies to the Prosecutor General with a request to check the Association. On December 1 the Moscow Prosecutor's Office delivered a letter obliging Golos to close its web-site – an online "map of violations", which has made prompt dissemination of information about violations impossible. On December 2 Golos will face the court for allegedly committing an administrative violation of the Russian elections law. These activities obviously aim at preventing public monitoring at polling stations.

The Forum is extremely concerned about the situation around Golos. We would like to point out to the Russian authorities that such intervention is not only unlawful and ill-founded, but also jeopardizes the whole system of independent monitoring of democratic processes in the country. Elections without monitors become impaired in terms of legality.

We hereby express our support and respect for Golos and insist on the termination of any pressure on our colleagues.