



Ms. Dunja Mijatović  
Council of Europe  
Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights  
67075 Strasbourg Cedex  
FRANCE

Moscow, 22 January 2021

Dear Madam Commissioner for Human Rights,

This is a joint letter submitted by three NGOs: the Moscow Helsinki Group (MHG), Human Rights Centre "Memorial" (HRC Memorial), and OVD-Info. It concerns the statement on Alexey Navalny's arrest and freedoms of expression and of assembly in Russia.

MHG is the oldest existing human rights organisation in Russia, founded in 1978, aimed to promote respect for human rights, protect from human rights abuses, build and develop democratic institutions in Russia. Memorial is a long-standing NGO whose mission is to promote general respect and observance of human rights in the Russian Federation. Finally, OVD-Info is an independent human rights media project, which has collected highly detailed information about arbitrary restrictions on freedom of assembly in Russia.

We thank Madam Commissioner for the statement and hope that it would encourage Russian authorities not to violate freedoms of expression and of assembly in Russia.

We permanently monitor the situation around mass detentions and would like to provide Madam Commissioner and her office with the English translation of our report on this issue. Please find it attached. Below we list the highlights from the report.

- 58 people were detained at Moscow's Vnukovo airport, where the plane was supposed to land, given out warning in advance that Navalny's meeting at the airport had not been coordinated "with the Moscow city executive authorities in the manner prescribed by law." During the arrest at the airport, an electric shock was used, and it was also mentioned that some of the detainees were dragged along the ground. And also 3 people were detained at the Sheremetyevo airport near Moscow, where the plane eventually landed and 3 in St. Petersburg.



- Among all those detained, there are 10 journalists who were detained either as a precautionary measure or without being charged.
- The police on the buses took away the detainees' phones in order to deprive them of the opportunity to receive legal assistance and report their detention to relatives and human rights activists.
- During the arrest in Vnukovo some activists were beaten and had to be taken to the hospital. The injuries vary from getting hit in the eye to a closed craniocerebral injury, concussion, eye hemorrhage.
- Many detainees at Vnukovo airport were transported to remote police stations, kept for a long time in paddy wagons in the cold (about 20 degrees below zero) and were released from police stations located in remote areas of Moscow, late in the evening or at night when public transport is not working.
- On January 18, rallies were held in support of Alexei Navalny, where 73 people were detained in 5 cities (Moscow, Khimki, St. Petersburg, Irkutsk, Arkhangelsk). The actions carried out were exclusively peaceful and did not pose a threat to public order, the rights, life, health and property of others.

Unfortunately, the situation is changing rapidly and new challenges are emerging. On January 21, it became known that the Investigative Committee for Tatarstan (a region in Russia) opened a criminal case on incitement to mass riots during January 23. Furthermore, on January 22, the Investigative Committee of Russia opened another criminal case under the article on “involving minors in illegal activities” due to posts with announcements of actions in support of Navalny.

Based on previous cases of assembly policing in Russia, it is expected that on January 23 there will be massive dispersal resulting in hundreds, possibly thousands of detainees, injured, arrested and, subsequently, convicted protesters and journalists. We are also afraid that lawyers and human rights activists could face police obstacles when trying to provide legal assistance to protesters.

Sincerely,

Head of Legal Programmes of Moscow Helsinki Group  
Roman Kiselyov

Lawyer at HRC "Memorial" and OVD-Info  
Denis Shedov