

E-5738/10EN

Answer given by High Representative/Vice President Ashton
on behalf of the Commission
(31.8.2010)

The Commission thanks the Honourable Member for drawing its attention to the case of Mr. Mokhnatkin. As it has pointed out in its replies to the Honourable Member's written questions E-0641/10 and E-4290/10, discussions on human rights form an integral part of the dialogue between the EU and the Russian Federation. Exchanges take place both at the regular EU-Russia Summits, as well as during meetings of the political dialogue, including at expert level during the regular consultations on human rights, the last round of which took place on 28 April 2010 in Brussels. The Commission confirms that issues linked to freedom of assembly were raised by the EU side at that time. The EU side continues to encourage the Russian authorities to respect Russia's commitments in the areas of human rights and democracy.

The annual meeting with Russian civil society representatives on 23 March 2010 which the Honourable Member mentions has provided a valuable opportunity to discuss how to best defend the human rights defenders, including in the interaction between law enforcement agencies and human rights defenders as well as legal defence of human rights defenders. In addition, the relevant civil society representatives were briefed on the EU support for human rights defenders as well as on relevant United Nations protection mechanisms. Last but not least, the implementation of the EU guidelines on human rights defenders formed an integral part of the discussion and is currently followed-up by the EU Delegation in Moscow in cooperation with civil society representatives.