

**Question for oral answer O-000088/2013  
to the Council**

Rule 115

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on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group

Subject: Rule of law and human rights in Russia (especially with regard to xeno- and homophobia)

The European Parliament remains committed to further deepening and developing relations with Russia on the basis of a shared mutual commitment to democracy, the rule of law and human rights. Nevertheless, we are deeply concerned by Russia's increasing disregard of these core principles.

Since the adoption of several laws restricting freedom of expression, assembly and association, notably the 'foreign agents' law and federal and regional 'anti-propaganda' laws, numerous organisations have reported an increase in violent xenophobic and homophobic attacks. Several hundred senselessly violent videos have emerged online showing ultra-nationalist groups beating and torturing LGBT persons (including teenagers), migrants and ethnic minorities. Several groups have uploaded disturbing videos of acts of intense humiliation, beatings and torture to Russian social media sites.

Russian NGOs monitoring these grave violations now face a proactive closing-down campaign. NGOs and civil and political activists defending the human rights of women, young people, ethnic minorities, migrants and LGBT people are intimidated and threatened by vigilante groups and the police. There is ample evidence of unfair trials in which organisations, such as the Side-by-Side LGBT Film Festival, have been fined and forced to shut down. Coming Out Saint Petersburg was fined the maximum amount under the 'foreign agents' law before seeing the sentence annulled by a higher court but the threat of police inspections remains. Other organisations are unable to operate if they do not declare themselves 'foreign agents', subjecting themselves to disabling legal obligations.

- What has the Council done to follow up Parliament's resolution of 13 June 2013 on the rule of law in Russia?
- In what terms were these matters raised with Russian leaders at the June EU-Russia Summit in Yekaterinburg, and at the September G20 Summit in Saint Petersburg?
- How will the Council continue to raise NGOs' concerns regarding human rights and the rule of law in Russia?

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