



MEPs call for sanctions against Russian officials involved in the Magnitsky case

Committees: Committee on Foreign Affairs

The foreign affairs committee called on Thursday for an EU-wide visa ban and assets freeze against Russian officials responsible for the death of lawyer Sergei Magnitsky, the subsequent judicial cover-up and the harassment of his mother and widow.

In a recommendation adopted by an overwhelming majority, the committee calls on the Council to draw up a list of officials responsible for the death in custody of Magnitsky, to impose EU-wide travel restrictions on them and to freeze their and their families' financial assets in the EU.

They also call on Russia to conduct a credible and independent investigation encompassing all aspects of this tragic case.

Climate of impunity

The arrest, detention and death in custody of Sergei Magnitsky represent a well-documented and substantial case of disrespect for fundamental human rights, MEPs say, pointing to the stalled investigation of the case and the current climate of impunity in Russia, despite the findings of the Russian President's Human Rights Council in 2011.

The officials involved have been exonerated and even assigned to the posthumous case, the text underlines.

Need for sanctions

MEPs emphasise that visa restrictions and other restrictive measures remain a necessary and legitimate foreign policy tool. They believe Russia could address the rule of law more concretely and convincingly if EU sanctions were applied and they underline that the Magnitsky case is only the most prominent of a number of cases of abuse of power by the Russian law-enforcement authorities.

Test case

The Council should take a coherent and proactive stance on other serious human rights violations in Russia as well, MEPs say, calling for similar restrictive measures to be introduced, as a last resort and on the basis of well-documented, converging and independent sources and convincing evidence.

The report, drawn up by Kristiina Ojuland (ALDE, EE), was adopted by 62 votes to 2, with 1 abstention.

The full House is scheduled to vote on the text in October, in Strasbourg.

Background

Press release

Sergei Magnitsky, a Russian attorney representing a UK-based investment firm, died in November 2009 after being held for 358 days in a pre-trial detention centre. He had been arrested himself after alleging systematic and large-scale corruption and theft from the Russian government sanctioned by officials. Though suffering from serious ill-health, including gall stones and pancreatitis, he was refused adequate medical treatment and died eight days before he would have had to be released or brought to trial.

The European Parliament first called for sanctions against those involved in the case in December 2010.

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