

**Question for oral answer O-000103/2013  
to the Commission**

Rule 115

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on behalf of the S&D Group

Subject: Rule of law and human rights in Russia, in particular with regard to xenophobia and homophobia

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, it is 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 individuals (including teenagers), migrants and those belonging to 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 being closed down. NGOs and civil and political activists defending the human rights of women, young people, ethnic minorities, migrants and LGBT people are being 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 organisation remains under threat of police inspections. Other organisations are left unable to operate if they do not declare themselves 'foreign agents', subjecting themselves to disabling legal obligations.

What has the Commission done to follow up on 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 EU-Russia Summit in Yekaterinburg in June 2013 and at the G20 Summit in Saint Petersburg in September?

How will the Commission continue to raise concerns of NGOs regarding human rights and the rule of law in Russia?

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