Press release | 31.05.2010

EU Russia Summit

Green MEPs demonstrate for freedom of assembly in Russia

On the first day of the EU Russia Summit in Rostov-on-Don Green MEPs demonstrated for freedom of assembly in Russia at events in Brussels and in St. Petersburg.

Heidi Hautala, chairwoman of the Subcommittee on Human Rights in the European Parliament, participated in the events in St. Petersburg in support of the peaceful demonstration in defence of Article 31 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation on the Freedom of Assembly. Commenting on her participation, Heidi Hautala said:

"To effectively defend civil liberties and human rights in Russia, more common efforts are needed. Today, EU and Russia meet at the highest political level in Rostov-on-Don. Again, we have observed how the Russian authorities use their pre-emptive techniques to prevent people from expressing their views, harassing members of the democratic opposition and using administrative sanctions against them. I especially strongly condemn the violent oppression of peaceful demonstrations in Russia. The European leaders in their summit with Russia must not leave these obstructions of democratic freedoms unaddressed.

"I also expect EU representatives to mention the names of real persons whose rights have been violated. We want all political prisoners to be released. I personally looked into two cases, those of Alexey Sokolov and Alexey Nikiforov, and it appears that both have been convicted on the grounds of having dissenting opinions. We demand a real investigation of the case of lawyer Sergei Magnitsky, who most clearly signifies the problems, having died in prison because of his fight against corruption."

German MEP **Werner Schulz** organised a demonstration in front of the Russian Embassy in Brussels this afternoon. Commenting on his initiative, Werner Schulz said:

"Visa liberation is the primary question which the Russian side is keen to discuss during today's Summit in Rostov-on Don. But besides the numerous unresolved technical issues there is also a question of the level of freedom and openness of a social system. The fact that human rights and civil rights are not respected and established - which is a condition for the agreement - is a big problem for Russia itself. This disparity between the EU and Russia leads to many citizens leaving the state and searching for a better life in the West.

The ones who demand unconditional travel freedom outside the country should first grant such constitutional rights like freedom of assembly and association inside the country so that the citizens could see the future in their own country."

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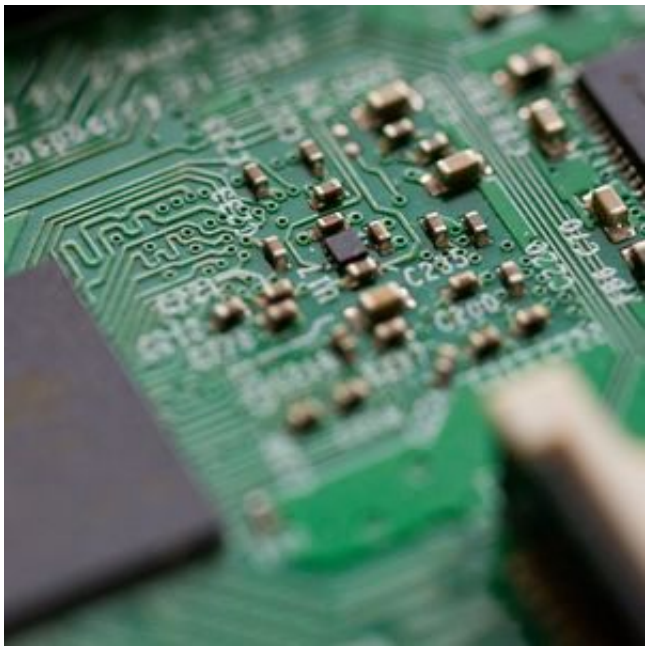


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