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Petitions Committee concern at UK forced adoptions

Press Release from EFA MEP Tatjana Zdanoka

Serious concerns were raised at this week's meeting of the European Parliament's Petitions Committee about the practice of forced adoptions in the UK.

MEPs also expressed concern about apparent attempts by UK authorities to prevent those affected from speaking to the committee. The Committee Chair deemed this totally unacceptable and will write to UK authorities for an explanation.

The Committee held a special session on the issue of juvenile justice and the removal of minor children from their families in the UK.

MEPs were told that the UK is almost unique in Europe for allowing the forced adoption of children without parental consent.

Today's session follows an initial meeting to consider petitions received on this issue earlier this year. The UK had failed to respond to a request for clarification on the issues concerned until today.

The Petitions mainly relate to citizens of other EU countries resident in the UK who have had their children removed by UK authorities, and several are being supported by Latvian MEP **Tatjana Ždanoka**, a member of the Petitions Committee.

Several parents affected by this issue gave evidence at the hearing.

Tatjana Ždanoka MEP said:

"We have looked at the issue of juvenile justice and the removal of minor children from their families who come from different EU countries.

"In my experience, the UK is unique in Europe for the secrecy of its family courts and for the threats and bullying by authorities of parents who want to speak out about their treatment.

"We know that individuals have been threatened with severe consequences by authorities in the UK if they

come to the *European Parliament's Petitions Committee* to tell their story.

"This is a very worrying development indeed. The refusal of UK authorities to co-operate with our inquiries is reprehensible enough. But threatening EU citizens with legal consequences for exercising their fundamental rights under EU treaties is disgraceful."

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