Press release | 23.07.2009

Russia - human rights

EU must put prioritise human rights in Russian relations in wake of Kulagin murder

The murder of Andrei Kulagin, activist for human rights organisation Spravedlivost (Justice), has been announced by authorities more than two months after his disappearance and almost two weeks after his body was found. **Rebecca Harms,** President of the Greens/EFA Group in the European parliament and Finnish Green MEP **Heidi Hautala**, the EP's newly appointed EP human rights subcommittee chair, commented:

"Greens are shocked and saddened by the death of Andrei Kulagin and we extend our condolences to all who were close to him.

"This murder exposes the extent of the dangers faced by people who stand up for human rights in Russia. It is unacceptable that brave people who defend the basic rights of others can be so vulnerable to cowardly acts to silence them. Murderers must no longer be allowed to act with impunity. We call on the Russian authorities to do everything in their considerable power to bring the responsible people to justice.

"The European Union must now put the critical human rights situation in Russia at the very top of its agenda, now and at the EU-Russia summit this autumn. The Swedish Presidency, European Commission and European Parliament (1) must unreservedly condemn the recent murders and send an unequivocal message to the Russian authorities that the vulnerable situation of human rights defenders will not be tolerated."

**** ENDS ****

Notes to editors:

(1) Greens/EFA Group Co-Presidents Daniel Cohn-Bendit and Rebecca Harms today wrote to EP President Jerzy Buzek to call for a debate on this issue in the next EP plenary session.

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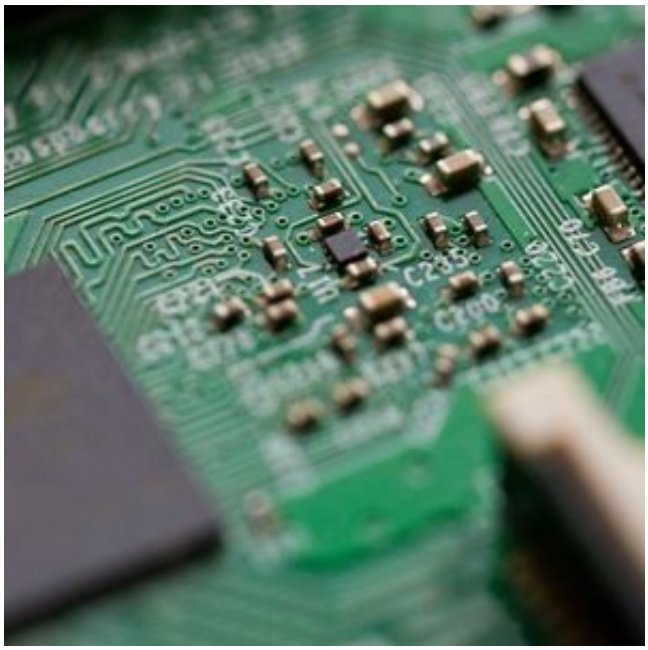


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