Press release | 21.01.2011

Uzbek president Karimov in Brussels

EU wrong to role out red carpet for dictators

Uzbek president Islam Karimov will be in Brussels on Monday on an official visit to meet with EU Commission president Barroso among others. The Greens have criticised the meeting, highlighting ongoing concerns about the human rights situation in Uzbekistan. Commenting on the meeting, Green MEP and vice-chair of the EP's EU-Uzbekistan cooperation committee **Bart Staes** said:

"The EU is wrong to role out the red carpet for dictators. Accepting an official visit from a dictator like Karimov, whose regime has consistently flouted basic human rights in Uzbekistan, is wrong-headed. The timing could also not be worse, with the EU condemning another dictatorship in Belarus and welcoming the fall of the Ben Ali regime in Tunisia. The message sent is contradictory and reflects the inconsistency of EU foreign policy.

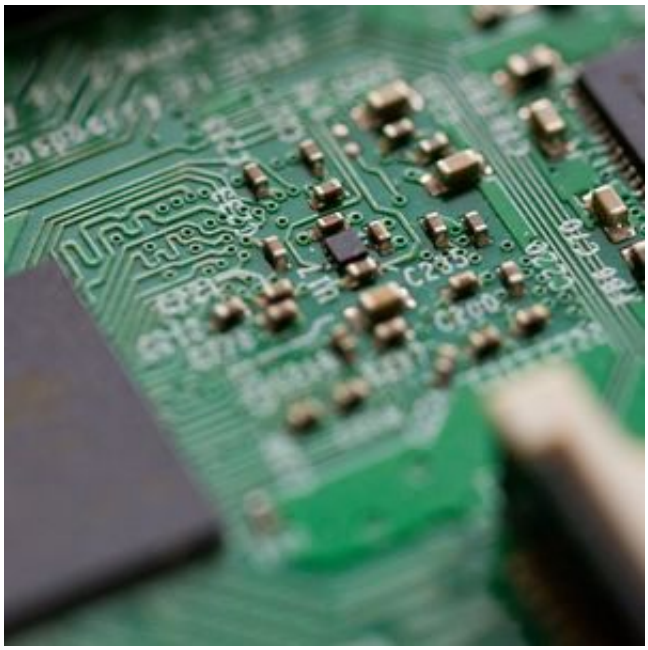
The EU decision in 2009 to lift the embargo on Uzbekistan was regrettable and did not trigger any real progress in the country. On the contrary, there are concerning reports about the deterioration of the human rights situation, with new arrests of activists and independent journalists and new reports of torture and ill-treatment of detainees. The EU should push for the immediate release of all the political prisoners and President Barroso must raise Uzbekistan's human rights record with Karimov and report on this afterwards.

EU policy towards Central Asian republics must be redirected. More aid and support should go to those countries in the region, like Kyrgyzstan, that are making efforts to introduce democratic reforms. Engaging with dictators is counterproductive and undermines the EU credibility."

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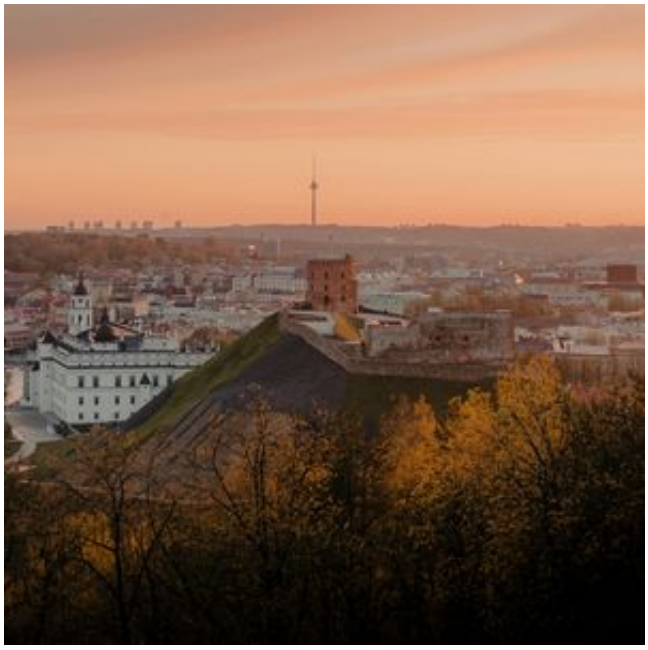
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Bart Staes

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