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Statement by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on the situation of NGOs in the Russian Federation

The High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the Commission issued the following statement today:

"I am concerned with the ongoing actions of the authorities against the NGO community in the Russian Federation. Civil society organisations play an essential role in today's society all over the world, including in the European Union and the Russian Federation. They help citizens exercising their rights and generate debate indispensable in a vibrant democracy, thereby contributing significantly to the modernisation of society. The inspections and searches launched against the Russian NGO community and conducted on vague legal grounds are worrisome since they seem to be aimed at further undermining civil society activities in the country.

The ongoing raids, taken together with the recent package of legislation that curtails the civil freedoms of Russian population, an upsurge in prosecution of civil society activists, the Bolotnaya and other political trials, as well as lack of action in some prominent cases of human rights abuses, constitute a trend that is deeply troubling."

P R E S S

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