

Joint statement on the arrest of Aleksei Navalny

We, Chairmen of the Foreign Affairs Committees of the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian parliaments, condemn the detention of Aleksei Navalny by the Russian authorities, upon his return to Russia, in what is clear to be yet another attempt to silence the opposition and critical voices by the Russian authorities. The Russian authorities must immediately and unconditionally release Mr Navalny and ensure his safety.

Russia is bound by international obligations to the principle of rule of law and the protection of civil rights, and detention of political opponents is against Russia's international commitments and obligations, including those of Council of Europe. Mr Aleksei Navalny was the victim of a despicable crime on Russian territory – the poisoning attempt, using a military-grade nerve agent from the “Novichok” group developed by Russia, a finding confirmed by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. Instead of investigating these crimes, the Russian authorities have chosen to, yet again, deprive Aleksei Navalny of his liberty for exercising his human right to free speech.

We reiterate the call to Russian authorities to open a criminal investigation into Navalny's poisoning and ensure that all those responsible are brought to justice in fair trial proceedings. We call on Russian authorities to immediately release Mr Navalny and cease their campaign of political persecution and intimidation against critics of the regime.

Drawing the necessary conclusions from these facts, we call on our European partners and the parliamentary assemblies (including PACE) to be swift and forceful in their condemnation of Russia's undemocratic methods, and consider additional sanctions targeting those responsible for the unlawful detention of Mr Navalny.

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