

Recent repression of demonstrations in Russia

European Parliament resolution of 26 April 2007 on Russia

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the objectives of consolidating democracy and political freedoms in the Russian Federation, as laid down in the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Russian Federation, of the other part (PCA)¹, which entered into force in 1997 and expires in 2007,
 - having regard to the EU-Russia human rights dialogue,
 - having regard to its previous resolutions on Russia, and in particular to its resolution of 25 October 2006 on EU-Russia relations following the murder of the Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya² and its resolution of 13 December 2006 on the EU-Russia Summit in Helsinki on 24 November 2006³,
 - having regard to Rule 115(5) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas Russian opposition members rallied in Moscow's Pushkin Square on 14 April 2007; whereas the so-called Dissenters' March was organised by Another Russia, an umbrella group which includes various movements with different political backgrounds,
- B. whereas minutes after the march began, the 2 000 protesters found themselves outnumbered by more than four to one by security forces, who quickly dispersed the activists, beating and briefly detaining those who sought to break through the riot-control lines,
- C. whereas among those detained were the leader of the United Civic Front, former world chess champion Gari Kimovič Kasparov and Maria Gaidar, the daughter of Russia's first post-Soviet reformist prime minister; whereas former prime minister Mikhail Mikhailovitch Kasyanov only avoided arrest because his bodyguards helped him to escape; whereas many journalists, including ARD correspondent Stephan Stuchlik, who tried to capture the events and disseminate them to the West, were also beaten and arrested,
- D. whereas on 15 April 2007 another protest, albeit far smaller, organised by the same grouping, was broken up in a similar way in St Petersburg, though Gari Kimovič Kasparov was detained before the protest even began and some demonstrators were arrested pre-emptively whilst en route to the event,
- E. whereas Vladimir Petrovich Lukin, Russia's human rights ombudsman, said that he believed police in both cities had exceeded their authority and whereas Valentina

¹ OJ L 327, 28.11.1997, p. 1.

² *Texts adopted*, P6_TA(2006)0448.

³ *Texts adopted*, P6_TA(2006)0566.

Ivanovna Matviyenko, the governor of St Petersburg, ordered an investigation into human rights violations that took place at the rally in St Petersburg,

- F. whereas the Russian authorities, in the run-up to the parliamentary and presidential elections, are putting increased pressure on opposition groups and non-governmental organisations to refrain from any activities directed against the president and the government and to prevent the media from reporting any such activities,
- G. whereas democracy has been weakened in Russia, in particular by the bringing of all major TV stations and most radio stations under government control, the spread of self-censorship among the print media, new restrictions on the right to organise public demonstrations and a worsening climate for NGOs,
- H. whereas the right of free assembly is a fundamental part of the democratic principles and human rights standards that Russia has committed itself to upholding and repeatedly expressed its commitment to; whereas those principles and values are also the basis for the strategic partnership between the EU and Russia,
- I. whereas as a member of the United Nations, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Council of Europe, the Russian Federation has undertaken to respect freedom of speech and assembly; whereas observance of those principles is of particular importance in view of the forthcoming elections in Russia,
 - 1. Strongly condemns the use of excessive force by the Russian anti-riot police during last weekend's peaceful demonstrations in Moscow and St Petersburg, and calls on the Russian authorities to comply with their international obligations and to respect freedom of expression and freedom of assembly;
 - 2. Condemns, in particular, the repressive actions of the security forces against journalists carrying out their professional duty; regards such assaults on the media as unacceptable;
 - 3. Calls on the Russian authorities to order an investigation into the human rights violations that took place at both rallies and to identify and bring to justice those responsible for the violations;
 - 4. Encourages the Russian State Duma to set up a working group to investigate why such force was used against peaceful demonstrators;
 - 5. Urges the Commission and the Council to express those concerns clearly in their contacts with the Russian Government, in particular during the next EU-Russian Summit, to be held on 18 May 2007 in Samara;
 - 6. Calls on the Russian leadership to do its utmost to avoid any repetition of those regrettable events, in particular in the run-up to the next presidential and Duma elections, and to guarantee all political parties and movements a chance to take part in the democratic process; calls on the Central Election Commission and on the Russian judiciary to be vigilant, objective and impartial in scrutinising the campaign and election processes;
 - 7. Is deeply disturbed by an emerging pattern of use of excessive force by the Russian authorities towards opposition activists, which raises deep concern as regards democracy

and respect for human rights in the Russian Federation;

8. Reiterates its call for the EU-Russia Human Rights Dialogue to be stepped up so as to make it more effective and result-oriented, while fully involving the European Parliament at all levels, with a view to strengthening that element in the new PCA, which is due to be negotiated soon;
9. Emphasises that, in order to achieve visible progress as regards democracy in Russia, the EU common policy and Member States' bilateral relations with Russia should be guided by jointly agreed principles and common positions;
10. Urges the Russian authorities to fully respect, during the run-up to the parliamentary and presidential elections, the democratic standards and principles laid down by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Council of Europe; calls on the Council of Europe to investigate the human rights violations that took place at the rallies in Moscow and St Petersburg;
11. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Council of Europe and the Government and Parliament of the Russian Federation.