

Adopted resolution

on Russia and Chechnya

The European Greens are deeply shattered by the barbarous hostage murder of Beslan in September 2004. It was a heinous act of terrorism for which there can be no rationale or excuse. There is definitely nothing that can justify these atrocities. Those who committed these acts of violence can never be partners for a dialogue.

We express our sympathy and solidarity with the victims, their families and with all the people of the Russian Federation in their struggle against terrorism.

At the same time, we are deeply concerned over the continuous weakening of democracy in Russia. The terrible events in Beslan do not justify the weakening of democracy. But President Putin has announced plans to further centralise power, e.g. by appointing the regional governors, and to push through measures that are restricting the freedom of press and opinion and will take Russia a step closer to an authoritarian regime. In many aspects of Russian political life, the instruments of state control over a free civil society appear to be being rebuilt, and the dominance of the security services is growing. NGOs are experiencing an increasing level of harassment in their every day work. The European Greens realise that these measures are already having a massive negative impact on the development of Russian civil society and the country altogether.

The expansion of violence in Russia is propelled by the unresolved and escalating conflict in Chechnya, where gross human rights abuses are taking place. More than 100.000 people died in the war since 1999. The Chechen capital Grosny was completely destroyed. Thousands of civilians were murdered, tortured, deported or made homeless. The Chechen society is widely destroyed and parts of it have been brutalised by the trauma they experienced. This contributed to the expansion of Chechen terrorism. Irresponsible propaganda by Russian authorities, picturing the whole Chechen nation as bandits in order to justify to Russian and international public opinion numerous violations of human rights by the Russian military and special forces, is increasing. Chechens as well as all ethnic groups of the Caucasus are today perceived by a majority of common Russians as potential criminals. We, the European Greens, deplore and condemn such irresponsible conduct of the Russian authorities.

The European Greens are also worried about the Khodorkovsky criminal case. We express our concern that the co-ordinated action of the state finance and criminal prosecution authorities is politically motivated, possibly with the objective of eliminating a successful Russian entrepreneur and company. We call for open, transparent rule-of-law proceedings and strict respect of the accuser's right to be presumed innocent, which applies both internationally and in Russia.

Deeply concerned about the state of democracy in Russia, the European Greens ask the Russian Government

- to stop violating human rights and breaching international law in its struggle against terrorism;
- to oblige all representatives of the Russian state, especially the armed forces and the secret

- services in Chechnya, to strictly respect human rights and to throw light upon the crimes committed by representatives of organs of the state in public proceedings and to condemn the culprits;
- to ensure free access to Chechnya for Russian and foreign journalists, NGOs and human rights monitors;
 - to make a strong effort for a political solution of the Chechen conflict, which is accepted and actively supported by the Chechen population;
 - to distinguish with diligence between terrorists and separatists who are willing to negotiate;
 - to be aware of the fact that a solution of the Chechen conflict can only be successful with the approval of and not against the Chechen population;
 - to stop discrimination and harassment of Chechens and all other ethnic groups of the Caucasus, especially in Moscow;
 - to improve access to humanitarian aid for Chechen refugees inside and outside of Chechnya and to stop pressure on displaced Chechens to return despite serious security risks;
 - to stop the persecution and repression of persons and organisations defending human rights;
 - to offer the OSCE observers to return to Russia and to support and accompany their work constructively;
 - to ensure that the parliamentary elections in Chechnya provided in 2005 will be prepared and held under international standards and accompanied by international election observers;

The European Union is the most important trading partner of the Russian Federation and it is also the most important donor of humanitarian aid in Chechnya. The EU has set itself strategic aims and ethic norms that have to be transmitted constructively into concrete policies. The EU must speak the truth about what is happening in Russia and should not create a double standard for democracy in the countries which lie to Europe's East. A EU that shies away from insisting that Russia end the blatant impunity for the most serious human rights violations cannot and will not be respected as a credible promoter of reforms aimed at building the rule of law across the Russian Federation. The European Commission itself has analysed that European policy towards Russia lacks coherence, co-ordination and clear words to the Russian government.

Having in mind the destabilising consequences of the conflict in Chechnya for the whole Caucasus region the European Greens ask the EU

- to overcome these shortcomings and to finally develop a common sustainable and consistent strategy for the Caucasus region;
- to include the above mentioned points in its dialogue with the Russian Federation;
- to link any future development of EU-Russia partnership to a clear commitment by President Putin to find a political solution to the conflict paving the way for a negotiation process with all the components of the Chechen society with the involvement of the international community
- to grant Chechen refugees the right of residence and forbear from deportations to Russia
- to bind financial aid to stricter conditions.

The European Greens demand that European Union constitutes a special envoy to advance by all possible expedients solving the crisis of Chechnya and all problems connected to it. We also require the members of European Union to give full political support for the envoy

To achieve the necessary change in the Caucasus policy it could be helpful to pursue a strategy of confidence building, pacification and reconciliation between the Caucasian peoples within the scope of a „Stability Pact for the Caucasus“ between the Russian Federation, Georgia, Armenia and

Azerbaijan. Such an agreement should be supported by the European Union and other international organisations like the UN, the OSCE and the Council of Europe as well as by international financial institutions like the 'Bank for Eastern Europe' (the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)) and the World Bank. Russia should be offered a co-operation with the objective of pushing forward political solutions and economic reconstruction in the Caucasus by a joint international effort.

The European Greens take a firm and unambiguous stand on the side of democratic forces in Russia and support all those forces in Russia and Chechnya striving for enduring and sustainable peace.