

## The Situation in Russia Before Elections

During last months there has been signs showing that the Parliamentary elections in Russia are not necessarily going to be conducted in a free and fair way. Since last elections the position of independent media has been undermined and different restrictions on media reporting about the elections have also taken place.

It is also worrying if everyone with foreign contacts in Russia will be put under direct suspicion. An example of this is the way the liberal party Yabloko – an affiliated party of Liberal International - has been drawn in to legal proceedings. Pretending that search was done to find evidence in an economic case, the security police and the public prosecutor office have confiscated computers of PR-office the Yabloko party is using. This is a big set-back for Yabloko's election campaign, much of the campaign material being dependent on these confiscated computers. This confiscation is seriously undermining Yabloko's possibilities to conduct an election campaign. The attack is an attack against democracy and open campaigning.

At the same time the Italian Prime Minister Mr. Berlusconi, when heading the EU-Russia summit in Rome on the 6th of November defended Russia's actions in Chechnya and saw no problems in the legal procedures concerning the arrestation of persons linked to Yukos oil. Berlusconi's comments broke with the EU's agreed policy on Russia and were a serious set-back to the efforts of a common foreign policy of EU.

The ELDR party

- calls on all liberal parties in Europe to show solidarity with Yabloko and to help them in re-starting their rightful election campaign.
- urges the EU to express its serious misgivings as regards the way political parties are hindered from conducting a free and fair electoral campaign.

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