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## **Russia: Dunja Mijatovi? (Council of Europe), arrests “are contrary to the obligation to respect freedom of expression, of the press and of assembly”**

“This contempt for human rights, democracy and the rule of law is unfortunately not new in a country where human rights defenders, journalists and civil society are regularly attacked, even with highly questionable judicial decisions”. This is an excerpt from the message that the Council of Europe’s Human Rights Commissioner, Dunja Mijatovi?, addressed to Russia, where many people taking part in the demonstrations for Alexei Navalny’s release were apprehended and arrested yesterday. “The apprehension of over 5,000 protesters and dozens of journalists during large-scale protests, which were largely peaceful, and the subsequent arrests of some of them with hasty judicial proceedings, are contrary to Russia’s obligations to respect freedom of expression, of the press and of assembly”, Mijatovi? denounced. I am “particularly dismayed to learn”, she added, that “in many cities, the Russian police used violence against peaceful protesters, sometimes even causing them fractures and other serious injuries”. The Russian authorities are urged to “respect their human rights obligations”, to “ensure an environment where dissident views can be freely and safely expressed”, to “immediately release all the people who have demonstrated peacefully, and to hold accountable those police officers who have engaged in illegal behaviour”.

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