To: Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell

Brussels, 6 April 2023

Dear High Representative/ Vice President Borrell,

We, the undersigned Members of the European Parliament, are deeply concerned about the lack of action by the European Union and its Member States on human rights violations in the Russian Federation, in particular the insufficient use of the EU’s global human rights sanctions regime, the EU’s Magnitsky Act, to impose sanctions on the individuals responsible for these violations.

More than 500 people have been prosecuted in Russia for taking an anti-war stance. Among the most notable cases are the Russian opposition activist Vladimir Kara-Murza, who faces up to 25 years in prison; the Moscow City Duma deputies Ilya Yashin and Alexei Gorinov, who have been imprisoned for 8 and 6 years respectively; the journalist Maria Ponomarenko, who has been sentenced to 6 years in prison; the activist Igor Maltsev (aka Yegor Skorokhodov) and the amateur radio journalist Vladimir Rumyantsev, who have been sentenced to 3 years in jail each. The Memorial Centre for Human Rights has recognised more than 540 people as political prisoners in Russia, the most famous of whom is Alexei Navalny, who recently received another court verdict adding 9 years to his prison sentence. Many of those wrongly accused and illegally imprisoned face ill-treatment and torture, and are denied medical care and are at risk of dying in detention.

We as the European Union must demonstrate our solidarity and support for the politically persecuted persons in Russia. People who oppose Russia’s illegal and unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine and demand democracy in Russia must know that they are not left alone. The least we can do is to impose EU Magnitsky sanctions on those involved in the illegal imprisonment and persecution of civil activists and opposition members.

We urge you to include the issue of political persecution and the situation of political prisoners in Russia in the forthcoming EU Foreign Affairs Council’s agenda, and to consecutively adopt a united EU position on additional sanctions for serious human rights violations and support for victims in Russia in the conclusions of the European Council meeting.

The rapidly deteriorating health of Alexei Gorinov, Vladimir Kara-Murza and Alexei Navalny, among other political prisoners in Russia, requires urgent action by the EU and its Member States. Only high-level engagement and international advocacy can prevent the loss of life and bring much-needed hope to the oppressed and persecuted people in Russia.
Included to this letter is a list of 28 individuals directly linked to the illegal arrest of Vladimir Kara-Murza, some of whom have already been sanctioned by the US and Canada. We believe that you are already aware of the more than 7 000 people on the so-called Navalny list who should also be subject to EU sanctions.

We look forward to your prompt action and are ready to help from our side.

Sincerely,

Petras Auštreivičius, Renew Europe, Lithuania
Guy Verhofstadt, Renew Europe, Belgium
Radosław Sikorski, EPP, Poland
David Lega, EPP, Sweden
Thijs Reuten, S&D, Netherlands
Sergey Lagodinsky, Greens/EFA, Germany
Anna Fotyga, ECR, Poland
Udo Bullmann, S&D, Germany
Roberts Zile, ECR, Latvia
Charlie Weimers, ECR, Sweden
Nicolae Ştefănuţă, Greens/EFA, Romania
Bernard Guetta, Renew Europe, France
Miriam Lexmann, EPP, Slovakia
Karen Melchior, Renew Europe, Denmark
Dragoș Tudorache, Renew Europe, Romania
Riho Terras, EPP, Estonia
Eugen Tomac, EPP, Romania
Karin Karlsbro, Renew Europe, Sweden
Olivier Chastel, Renew Europe, Belgium
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Andrzej Halicki, EPP, Poland
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Witold Jan Waszczykowski, ECR, Poland
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Javier Nart, Renew Europe, Spain
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