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Political punishment

Reply to Written question¹: Written question No. 543 (Doc. 11548)
Committee of Ministers

1. As the honourable parliamentarian points out, freedom of expression and information and freedom of assembly and association are core principles of a democratic society. The right to a fair trial is also a fundamental requirement in a society that respects the rule of law.
2. As it has stressed on numerous occasions, the Committee of Ministers expects all member states to respect these rights and freedoms in accordance with the commitments they entered into when acceding to the Council of Europe and ratifying the European Convention on Human Rights.
3. This is especially important in an electoral period, when all currents of opinion must be able to express themselves freely. The Committee of Ministers pays particular attention to this, as it has pointed out when adopting and monitoring the implementation of action plans to provide pre-electoral assistance to member states.
4. Through various instruments adopted by the Committee of Ministers, standards and guidelines have been laid down for the governments of the member states in order to guarantee the exercise of freedom of expression and information and freedom of assembly, and the right to a fair trial. The supervision mechanisms provided for in some of these instruments, foremost among which is the European Court of Human Rights, offer effective remedies to persons considering themselves to be victims of an infringement of their rights and fundamental freedoms.
5. Above and beyond these convention-based supervision mechanisms, the Committee of Ministers can initiate, on an ad hoc basis, a procedure to monitor the honouring of commitments by the member states, including on the sensitive issues referred to by the honourable parliamentarian.
6. As regards the individual case referred to, it appears from the information provided by the Russian authorities that the judicial proceedings concerning Mr Reznik are still in progress, although he was released under court supervision by a decision of the court of the city of Saint Petersburg on 21 March 2008. Pending a final judicial decision in this case, the Committee of Ministers will refrain from making any comment.

1. Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 18 June 2008, at the 1030th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies.

