

Press Release

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PACE rapporteur in Moscow calls for support of judges “who take their independent role seriously”

Strasbourg, 01.04.2009 - Sabine Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger (Germany, ALDE), rapporteur on behalf of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights on "allegations of politically-motivated abuses of the criminal justice system", has carried out a fact-finding visit to Moscow.

She met with the Chairmen of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation, of the Qualifying Collegium of Judges and of the federal Council of Judges. She also had a discussion with the Chairman of the Legal Affairs Committee of the State Duma, Mr Krasheninnikov.

Previously agreed appointments with the Deputy Prosecutor General and the Head of the Investigative Committee were cancelled at short notice.

“I always strive to listen to all sides. I met with the most senior prosecuting officials in London and Paris within the framework of this mandate. As their Russian colleagues could not find the time to speak with me, I will address them a list of questions in writing so that they can present their point of view”, Mrs Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger said.

She also met with prominent independent experts on judicial reforms, lawyers and human rights defenders, including [Lev Ponomarev](#). She also met with several former judges who explained how they came to lose their jobs, including Mrs Kudeshkina, who just won her case to Strasbourg*.

“Judges who take their independent role seriously deserve our greatest respect. They need support both from Russian and from European institutions, such as the Council of Europe”.

Mrs Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger also attended the opening of the new trial against Mr Khodorkovsky and Mr Lebedev, two former leading [Yukos executives](#).

“Whilst I do not wish to interfere in pending judicial proceedings, I cannot help feeling bewildered by the fact that the two men are again being tried for facts which appear to be essentially the same as those for which they were condemned in 2005”, she concluded.

* Case *Kudeshkina v. Russia*, application no. 29492/05, judgment of 26 February 2009, not yet final.