

Subject: Response of the Republic of Latvia on alert published on 5 January 2018 on the Council of Europe Platform – “Expulsion of two Russian journalists from Latvia”.

The Latvian authorities would like to provide the following information concerning the detention and subsequent expulsion of Mrs Olga Kurlaeva and Mr Anatoliy Kurlaev from Latvia.

Mr Anatoliy Kurlaev and Mrs Olga Kurlaeva were detained and subsequently deported from the territory of Latvia by the State Border Guard Service officers on 2 and 4 January 2018 accordingly, on the account that by the decisions of the Minister of the Interior of 5 August 2015 and 4 January 2018 they had been included in the list of those foreigners to whom entry into the Republic of Latvia is prohibited.

Both decisions were based on Article 61, paragraph 1(2), and Article 63, paragraph 3, of the *Immigration Law*, that is, on the fact that the Minister of the Interior had a reason to believe that Mr Anatoliy Kurlaev and Mrs Olga Kurlaeva caused a threat to national security or public order and safety. The existence of such a threat was established on the basis of an opinion issued by the competent State authority in accordance with Article 61¹, paragraph 1, of the *Immigration Law*. It should be emphasised that Mr Anatoliy Kurlaev’s and Mrs Olga Kurlaeva’s inclusion in the list was not because of their profession of being journalists. Further, in accordance with Article 61, paragraph 6, of the *Immigration Law* Mr Anatoliy Kurlaev and Mrs Olga Kurlaeva have a right to appeal against the decisions on the inclusion into the list before the Office of the Prosecutor General within a period of one month from the day they became acquainted with the respective decisions.

The State Border Guard Service officers had explained to Mr Anatoliy Kurlaev and Mrs Olga Kurlaeva, in the language they understand (the Russian language), the reasons for their expulsion and had informed them about the right to appeal against it. Also, they were informed about the right to receive legal aid pursuant to Article 56, paragraph 1, of the *Immigration Law*.

The Latvian authorities reiterate their strong will to continue cooperation with the Council of Europe and its mechanisms. Latvia is firmly committed to promote and protect the freedom of expression, including media freedom, not only in theory but also in practice. Latvia fully aligns itself with all international standards and obligations which stand for the protection of journalist work.