

Member of the European Parliament

Mrs Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Commission

Brussels, 8th of February, 2021

Dear President of the European Commission,

We, the undersigned members of the European Parliament, are extremely concerned about the humiliating developments during the visit of VPC/HR Josep Borrell Fontelles to Moscow, which have greatly damaged the European Union's reputation.

Mr Borrell decided to go to Moscow on his own initiative. This decision indicated disregard for the crimes committed by the Putin regime against its political opponents, and was not in line with a foreign policy based on values. This was exacerbated by the fact that during his visit Mr Borrell repeatedly failed to defend the European Union's interests.

Instead of strongly condemning the arrest of Mr Navalny and visiting him in prison, Mr Borrell falsely stated that there was no talk about EU sanctions due to the imprisonment of Mr Navalny. This statement was incorrect, as several Member States, at the highest level, have called for sanctions.

Mr Borrell did not defend the EU's interests when Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov fiercely criticised the European Union and the United States. Mr Lavrov even said that EU leaders are "deluded" and "culturally arrogant" in accusing Russia of trying to assassinate Mr Navalny. Instead of standing up to Mr Lavrov, Mr Borrell attacked our principal ally, the United States, over Cuba.

As a sign of disrespect towards the European Union, Russia decided to time the announcement of its decision to declare three EU diplomats (from Germany, Poland, and Sweden) as persona non grata during a joint press conference between Mr Borrell and Mr Lavrov. When learning about this, Mr Borrell failed to send a resolute signal by ending his visit at that point.

In addition to the aforementioned transgressions, Mr Borrell failed to mention Russia's ongoing war in east Ukraine, and took the opportunity to endorse Russia's "Sputnik V" coronavirus vaccine, even though it has not been approved by the European Medicines Agency.

Mr Borrell's misjudgement in proactively deciding to visit Moscow, and his failure to stand for the interests and values of the European Union during his visit, have caused severe damage to the reputation of the EU and to the dignity of the office of High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. We believe that the President of the European Commission should take action, if Mr Borrell does not resign by his own accord.

Sincerely,

Riho Terras
Roberts Zīle
Pernille Weiss
Jaak Madison
Rasa Juknevičienė
Jacek Saryusz-Wolski
Radosław Sikorski
Adam Jarubas
Eugen Tomac
Marian-Jean Marinescu
Dace Melbārde
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Róza Thun und Hohenstein
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