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## **The dissolution of the Russian Republican Party in the light of Russia's modified Law on political parties**

Written question no 532 to the Committee of Ministers  
presented by Mrs Beck

Free and fair elections are the basic condition of democratic development, as was affirmed by PACE President René van der Linden on his recent visit to Azerbaijan. Their regular conduction is a binding obligation for contracting states under Article 3 of the Protocol to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

A key condition for free and fair elections is to allow political parties to form, register and take part in elections. The freedom of assembly and association, as guaranteed by Article 11 of the Convention, clearly applies to political parties, as the European Court of Human Rights has confirmed in its judgments.

The Russian Republican Party (RPR), founded in November 1990 and participant to all four elections to the State Duma, was disbanded by the Cassation Board of Russia's Supreme Court on 31 May 2007, confirming the court's order from 23 March and rejecting an appeal from party representatives. This decision was justified on the grounds that the Republican Party did not fulfill the new legal requirements modifying the law "On political parties" as of 1 January 2007. These requirements make party registration more difficult: now a minimum of 50 000 members in at least half of the Russian Federation's 88 regions is needed for a party to be registered. This change in legislation has already led to the liquidation of 16 out of 33 parties. Representatives of the RPR maintain that their party fulfills the requirements and have presented evidence of 58 000 members.

Prior to its dissolution, the RPR had already lodged a complaint before the European Court of Human Rights, claiming that the Federal Registration Service had not acted lawfully when refusing to accept changes to the party's entry to the State register, effectively preventing the party from functioning.

Following its liquidation on 31 May, the RPR has asked the Court to give priority to its claim in the view of the upcoming parliamentary elections in December. In addition to violations of articles 11, 17 and 18 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the Party argues that its right to a fair trial has been infringed upon, since Russia's Supreme Court simply endorsed the opinion of the Federal Registration Service, while evidence to support the charge of insufficient membership was absent.

How does the Committee of Ministers position itself to the dissolution of the Republican Party and the way this dissolution was carried out by the Supreme Court?

How does the Committee of Ministers evaluate the new membership requirements under the modified law "On Political Parties" with regard to the upcoming parliamentary elections?

*Signed:*

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