

Mr. Didier Reynders

The European Commissioner for Justice

Rue de la Loi / Wetstraat 200

1049 Brussels, Belgium

In Brussels XX March 2022

Dear Commissioner for Justice,

We, the undersigned members of the European Parliament, would like to address you in view of the slow progress of the investigation into the death of the Slovak citizen, Mr. Jozef Chovanec, which has been ongoing for more than four years since the events in February 2018. Concurrently, we are strongly concerned that the leaks and reports to the media suggesting that Mr. Chovanec had caused his own death may have in the meantime already negatively contributed to the public opinion about the case.

We received with concern the report about the death of Mr. Chovanec, who died after the intervention of the Belgian Federal Police in February 2018. According to all available information, the behaviour of the police officers toward the Slovak citizen was unprecedented and beyond all rules of Belgian law. It is therefore in the common interest of the Kingdom of Belgium and Slovak Republic, but also of the European Union, that the incident is thoroughly and transparently investigated and the perpetrators punished.

The length of the investigation and the fact that not a single charge has yet been brought in the case of Mr. Chovanec, however, highlight the need for a common call on the Belgian authorities to finish investigating the death of Mr. Chovanec as soon as possible.

We are aware of the Union’s subsidiarity in the area of freedom, security and justice in regards to the Member States, but at the same time, we are convinced that ensuring that the rule of law is upheld and the fundamental rights are respected is a matter of truly European interest. The European Union needs to show solidarity and enforce that such crime cannot go unpunished and unnoticed. This act needs a response, and the European Union needs to send a clear signal that it will not tolerate this type of behaviour.

We hope that your action can make a difference on how individuals are being treated and that the relevant Belgian authorities will do everything in their competency and power to clarify the circumstances of Mr. Chovanec's death. It will significantly contribute to relaxation of the situation and will increase citizens' trust in the peaceful coexistence in our common European space.

We thank you for your understanding of the seriousness of the situation and for considering our request.

With kind regards,

Ivan ŠTEFANEC (EPP, Slovakia)

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