

Letters & emails

Turning a blind eye to Putin's energy gulag

I fully support the comments made by Kevin Roth, the director of Human Rights Watch, quoted in *'EU punches well below its weight'* (14-20 December 2006), about the EU's lack of leadership when dealing with Russia.

The EU is sleep-walking into energy reliance on Russia while largely failing to press the regime on its appalling human rights record and the erosion of democracy and the rule of law. Russia's energy disaggregation has targeted the EU, leading for example, to French President Jacques Chirac arguing that human rights should be separated from energy.

Some European leaders, such as German Chancellor Angela Merkel, European Commission President José Manuel Barroso as well as the leadership of the European Parliament, have raised with the Kremlin their concerns about human rights abuses, exemplified by the plight of its political prisoner Mikhail Khodorkovsky.

Now is the time for



From magnate to inmate: former energy billionaire Khodorkovsky is languishing in a Siberian gulag, despite protests from his supporters/REUTERS

other EU leaders to follow suit, to forget the self-serving interests of their own member states and actively to advocate that Russia return to the path of democracy and individual rights and freedoms. My client has spent his fourth Christmas away from his family, languishing in a Siberian gulag.

As European leaders reflect on their new year's resolutions they might just consider that 2007 should be the year they put principles such as the integrity of the EU and universal values first.

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