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**STATEMENT BY  
MR. ALEKSANDR VOLGAREV, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF  
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1429th MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

22 June 2023

**On the continued gross violations of human rights and  
fundamental freedoms in Estonia**

Mr. Chairperson,

We are compelled to draw attention once again to the continuing gross violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms by the Estonian authorities.

In this OSCE participating State, which claims to be democratic and even wants to take the helm of our Organization, the shameful phenomenon of mass statelessness persists, the Estonianization of all spheres of life is under way, and the State language is aggressively imposed in the education system, which deprives Russian-speaking children of the right to study in their native language and to develop their cultural identity. Other violations include the repression of Russian media, the “visa inquisition” and the associated denial of freedom of movement, and restriction of human contacts.

Under the pretext of the Russian special military operation and ostensibly to combat some kind of Kremlin propaganda, efforts have been stepped up in Estonia to eradicate alternative viewpoints and anything related to Russia. The public and political space is being cleansed of civil society activists who express different views from the official one or who engage in what the authorities consider to be undesirable public activities. For example, this spring, under pressure from the local intelligence services, the Co-ordination Council of Russian Compatriots in Estonia announced its “voluntary” dissolution.

The practice of expelling activists and depriving them of residence permits under the pretext that they pose a security risk is widespread. Law enforcement officials often do not even try to pretend to conduct a fair trial.

Over the past year, four Russian citizens have suffered these unsavoury practices and been promptly deported from the country. Two others have had their residence permits revoked while away from Estonia. Amongst those affected are Maxim Reva, one of the former activists of the Bronze Four; Ramil Usmanov, former head of the South Estonian Union of Afghan War Veterans; Sergey Neprimerov, chairman of the board of the Narva Union of Chernobyl Accident Liquidators; Andrey Sushev, an activist from Narva;

Alexey Esakov, one of the organizers of the Immortal Regiment; and Alexander Kornilov, editor of the baltija.eu media portal and member of the Co-ordination Council of Russian Compatriots in Estonia.

In February, Sergey Chaulin, one of the organizers of the Immortal Regiment events in Estonia and a board member of the non-governmental organization Russian Compatriots in Europe, was forced to leave the country.

The Estonian authorities did not stop there. In early June, local law enforcers also targeted Chaulin's comrade-in-arms, Zoya Paliamar. She had her residence permit revoked and was banned from entering the Schengen area for ten years. It is important to make clear that she is an elderly woman, in disability group II, with no place to live and no medical treatment outside Estonia, where she has lived for 40 years and where she still has family. The country's authorities have launched an all-out campaign to justify their unsavoury move, including the publication on pro-government portals of photographs from the archive of the local security police, supposedly proving her guilt. It turned out that the only thing she was guilty of was organizing the peaceful processions of Tallinn's Immortal Regiment and participating in ceremonies at the Monument to the Warrior-Liberator of Tallinn commemorating key dates in the Great Patriotic War. Simply put, she was expelled because she dared to exercise her rights to freedom of association, peaceful assembly and expression.

It is worth recalling that the OSCE has accumulated a body of commitments aimed at protecting these rights. In particular, paragraph 9.1 of the 1990 Copenhagen Document of the CSCE establishes that "everyone will have the right to freedom of expression ... This right will include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority ...". Paragraph 32.6 of the same document notes the right of citizens "to establish and maintain organizations or associations within their country ...". Similar provisions are contained in the 1990 Charter of Paris, the 1994 Budapest CSCE Summit decision and other relevant documents of our Organization.

It seems that in the understanding of the Estonian authorities, such provisions apply to the "right sort" of activists, including representatives of radical right-wing and neo-Nazi groups that incite inter-ethnic discord, hatred and xenophobia.

Mr. Chairperson,

Estonia, which dreams of the OSCE Chairmanship, continues to grossly violate its international human rights obligations. We call upon the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights to provide, as part of their official duties, a principled assessment of Estonia's policies.

Thank you for your attention.