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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1090th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

18 February 2016

On the use of torture by the United States military

Mr. Chairperson,

The American Civil Liberties Union recently published 198 photographs which testified to the sophisticated torture which United States soldiers have used in prisons in Afghanistan and Iraq.

As is typical, human rights advocates spent over ten years pushing for the photographs to be published, in the face of strong opposition from the Pentagon and other United States agencies. That said, most of the “torture archives” of 2,000 photographs are still classified. What is more, some one hundred of the almost two hundred disclosed photographs show clear signs of having been edited prior to publication.

Information from the American Civil Liberties Union indicates that there are still some photographs among the classified ones which show the particular brutality of the United States military. For example, the sexual and other debasement inflicted on a 73-year-old Iraqi woman by soldiers. According to the report on the investigation into this incident, the woman had been forced to crawl on all fours while one of the soldiers rode on top of her like on a horse, beating her with a stick. Human rights advocates report that other unpublished photographs include the simulation of a shooting of an Iraqi adolescent, the murder of a handcuffed person with disabilities and similar barbarities.

Meanwhile, the United States authorities, citing some kind of national security interests, continue to prevent the prosecution not only of staff of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the Department of Defense and the Department of Justice who had devised and perfected various so-called interrogation techniques over the course of many years, but also of high-ranking officials of the United States administration who had authorized the use of torture.

This impunity has come home to roost, as today United States inhabitants – mainly of racial and religious minorities – are encountering police brutality and abuse of power.

We wish to remind our American colleagues that freedom from torture is an absolute right. Torture cannot be used under any circumstances and is prohibited under international humanitarian law and a number of human rights treaties. This being so, statements by certain United States presidential candidates about the need to reintroduce the practice of waterboarding as part of the fight against terrorism are a cause for concern. Statements of this kind by candidates to the position of head of State are unacceptable.

We call on the United States Government not to permit the use and justification of torture, to make public the aforementioned photographic evidence of torture – which is hidden from its own people – and to penalize all those responsible for the use and promotion of torture.

Thank you for your attention.