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**STATEMENT BY
MR. ALEKSANDR VOLGAREV, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1381st MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

7 July 2022

On the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture

Mr. Chairperson,

In 1997, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 26 June as the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. This date was not picked at random – on this day in 1987, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment entered into force. The OSCE participating States also contributed to the common cause of combating these phenomena by adopting a decision at the Tirana Ministerial Council in 2020.

Torture and other forms of inhuman or degrading treatment and punishment constitute, without doubt, one of the most serious types of violation of human rights. The United States of America continues to retain its woeful and dishonourable position as leader in terms of this issue. In January 2022, the Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs at Brown University published a research paper on the costs of war. According to this document, after the events of 11 September 2001, a US network of secret prisons soon covered 54 countries and regions, working with the direct complicity of other foreign Governments. In these prisons, detainees were subjected to what the United States elegantly calls “enhanced interrogation” techniques, such as waterboarding, sensory deprivation or threats of such acts, forced nudity, sleep deprivation and so on. Similar techniques are used on prisoners at the infamous detention facility at Guantánamo Bay.

Our compatriots who find themselves in the hands of US justice, most often by deceptive means through third countries, are also subjected to inhuman treatment by investigative authorities and courts. Without explanation, they are placed in punishment cells and denied access to qualified medical care and necessary medication. This causes irreparable harm to their health and can be equated with torture and other forms of inhuman treatment. In this context, the return to his homeland of the Russian pilot Konstantin Yaroshenko is undoubtedly significant. As is well known, the Russian citizen was convicted in a trumped-up case and spent more than ten years of his life in a US prison.

Mr. Chairperson,

The situation in Ukraine is especially alarming. Such practices as arbitrary arrests, solitary confinement, torture and ill-treatment of civilians have continued there for the past eight years. Not to mention the fact that those responsible for the violent events of 2 May 2014 in Odessa's Trade Union House, where people were burned alive in full view of members of the law enforcement authorities, still go unpunished.

The Kyiv regime is failing to take effective steps to investigate the systematic violations of human rights by the Ukrainian security forces or by nationalist battalions, which are notorious for their neo-Nazi discourse. The crimes they have committed include arbitrary arrests, torture, ill-treatment and intimidation – carried out not least at unofficial places of detention – with a view to obtaining information from people, or forcing them to confess or collaborate.

The whole world has seen gruesome, chilling images and videos of the torture and murder of Russian prisoners of war. Whereas documentary evidence to the contrary does not exist. Apart from empty words about there being some kind of “credible” evidence, there is nothing.

Moreover, this unlawful practice has not only not been eradicated, but it has worsened. The ombudsperson of the Luhansk People's Republic recently informed the International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine about the beatings and humiliation of persons detained by the Ukrainian side. According to the relevant Russian departments, 95 per cent of the Russian citizens returned to their home country as part of an exchange with the Ukrainian side had been subjected to torture and inhuman treatment.

As we have noted several times, the Ukrainian security forces are evidently drawing inspiration from the “best practices” of the United States and a number of European Union countries, with Guantánamo and the secret CIA prisons in Europe serving as their models. We thus have serious reason to doubt the ability and, most importantly, the desire of the Ukrainian authorities to conduct a thorough and objective investigation into cases of torture and inhuman treatment.

We call on the OSCE participating States to fulfil in good faith their international commitments on combating torture and to put an end to its use.

Thank you for your attention.