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**STATEMENT BY
MR. ALEKSANDR VOLGAREV, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1506th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

30 January 2025

**In response to the address by the Chair of the International Holocaust Remembrance
Alliance**

Mr. Chairperson,

We thank Mr. Eric Pickles for his extensive statement and should like to share a number of observations.

Eighty years ago, on 27 January 1945, at the cost of the lives of hundreds of its soldiers and officers, the Red Army freed 7,000 surviving prisoners from the Nazi concentration camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau, which has become a symbol of inhuman cruelty and of the merciless annihilation of millions of people in the name of an ideology of racial supremacy. According to various estimates, at least 4 million people of different nationalities were brutally exterminated during the time that this “conveyor belt of death” was in operation.

We would remind you that after Hitler’s Germany attacked the Soviet Union, Soviet prisoners of war began to be transported to Auschwitz and it was on them that the SS first tested the poison gas Zyklon B in August 1941. Auschwitz was later on transformed into a veritable death camp. We shall cite some figures.

Every day, around ten railway transports carrying people from all of occupied Europe would arrive at the concentration camp. A typical transport consisted of 40 to 50 wagons. In each wagon there were between 50 and 100 people. The resulting total is horrifying – you can do the maths yourselves.

Under the pretext of a mandatory disinfection procedure, people deemed unfit for physical slave labour (mainly women, the elderly and children) were sent to the gas chambers. The bodies of prisoners killed by gassing would be burned in custom-built crematoria. There were 52 ovens operating round the clock, but very often they could not “cope with the workload”.

By way of illustration, we may quote from the minutes of the interrogation of Józef Pietzka, a Polish “kapo” (overseer) at the concentration camp: “I accompanied and was present daily at all the work carried out by my prisoners and, armed with a stick, systematically beat them because they worked slowly and

reluctantly. Every night, my group alone brought from 100 to 500 corpses of murdered people to the crematoria.”¹

Mr. Chairperson,

The inmates of Auschwitz who survived could probably not have imagined in their wildest nightmare that, several decades later, the immortal feat of their liberators would be called into question. That the country on whose territory the death camp was situated would start destroying monuments to Red Army soldiers and blotting any inklings of gratitude out of its historical memory while forgetting that the Third Reich’s “Eastern policy” envisaged the East being totally cleansed of its Slavic and Jewish populations.

In the section entitled “War crimes and crimes against humanity” in the judgment rendered by the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg it is pointed out that “the murder and ill-treatment of civilian populations reached its height in the treatment of the citizens of the Soviet Union and Poland.”

Drawing on a significant body of evidence, the Tribunal found that the aforementioned crimes were “appalling” and that they “were not committed solely for the purpose of stamping out opposition or resistance to the German occupying forces” but, rather, “were part of a plan to get rid of whole native populations by expulsion and annihilation, in order that their territory could be used for colonization by Germans”.

In view of how Soviet soldiers in their millions paid with their lives to liberate Europe from Nazism, it is profoundly cynical and immoral of local establishment figures to try to rewrite history and blur the distinction between victim and executioner.

For several years in a row now, the Russian Federation – which is the successor State of the USSR – has not been invited to the memorial events in Auschwitz-Birkenau under the pretext of “discordance with European values”. In cowardly fashion, the Red Army’s role in liberating that death camp has been hushed up. The senior leadership of the State of Israel was also absent at this year’s commemoration event – in an anniversary year to boot. A paradoxical situation arose in that the voices of the liberators were not to be heard at the ceremony. In contrast, the Kyiv regime’s leaders were in attendance – the ideological successors of Hitlerite collaborators who actively helped the Nazis to exterminate Jews and Russians. Is that, pray, what the notorious “European values” boil down to?

Or maybe they consist in yet again failing to remember the tragic blockade of the Hero City of Leningrad, the lifting of which was another anniversary that we commemorated on 27 January? And what about the German authorities’ refusal to pay compensation to non-Jewish residents of the city who survived the siege, even though by now there are fewer than a thousand left? The 872 days of inhumane ordeals endured by the inhabitants of the city on the Neva will forever be etched in the memory of our country and of all humankind. These crimes were committed not on a battlefield. The massacres of unarmed and defenceless women, children and elderly people were deliberate and systematic punitive actions, as a result of which around 1 million Soviet citizens perished according to various estimates. It is our duty today to preserve the historical memory of the Siege of Leningrad.

1 Translator's note: English translation taken from: <https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/article-839447>.

Mr. Chairperson,

In this milestone anniversary year of the Great Victory over Nazism, memorial events are being organized in the Russian Federation under the auspices of Jewish organizations. They are helping to preserve the historical truth about the horrific events of the Second World War.

In particular, the 11th annual Holocaust Remembrance Week, running from 15 to 31 January, features diverse activities organized by the Russian Jewish Congress with the support of the Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs, the Moscow City Government, the Holocaust Centre and the Embassy of the State of Israel in Moscow. The Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia held a relevant official ceremony at the Jewish Museum and Tolerance Centre on 27 January.

Mr. Chairperson,

Unfortunately, little is being learned from the lessons of history. In the OSCE area there continues to be an increasing tendency towards racial discrimination, xenophobia, religious intolerance and anti-Semitism. This is manifesting itself with particular starkness in the “civilized” countries of the Western alliance.

In France, according to the Representative Council of Jewish Institutions, a reputable non-governmental organization, hostility towards Jews has reached unprecedented heights. A total of 1,570 anti-Semitic offences were committed there in 2024, only 106 incidents less than the year before. By way of comparison: in 2022 just 436 offences of this kind were committed. However, this is just the tip of the iceberg, since it is the opinion of experts that the victims are afraid of turning to the law enforcement authorities. This is particularly true of students at secondary educational institutions.

Things are not so rosy in the United Kingdom either. According to a recent survey published by the organization known as Campaign Against Antisemitism, a majority of British Jews (58 per cent) are hiding their ethnic/religious affiliation because of a surge in intolerance. Around 84 per cent believe that the authorities are not doing enough to combat anti-Semitism, while 62 per cent are not confident that if they reported an anti-Semitic crime, the police would bring the perpetrators to justice. Three quarters are dissatisfied with how local police forces have been policing anti-Israel marches in their local towns and cities. The authors of the study emphasize that British Jews have lost trust in the criminal justice system as a whole, since it is not protecting them: “We need more arrests, prosecutions, serious sentences and a ban on the anti-Israel marches.”

According to specialized Jewish organizations in the United States of America, there has been a 288 per cent increase in the number of anti-Semitic incidents, which peaked in April 2024. This refers, *inter alia*, to the murder of Jews, attacks on synagogues and violence in schools and universities. The situation in Canada is even worse: last year the number of anti-Semitic incidents increased by 562 per cent, a quarter of them being violent.

As far as Holocaust remembrance is concerned, the state of affairs is also dire. A recent survey in the Netherlands found that 54 per cent of the population were not aware that there had been a mass extermination of Jews in that country during the Second World War. Around 12 per cent of Dutch adults believed the Holocaust to be a myth or that the number of Jews killed had been greatly exaggerated, while 9 per cent were unsure. In addition, 27 per cent of respondents did not know that the celebrated diarist Anne Frank had died in a concentration camp.

Ignorance is also on full display among young people in the United Kingdom and the United States. When asked to name concentration camps, death camps, sites of massacres, transit camps or ghettos they had heard of, 26 per cent of those surveyed in the United Kingdom said that they did not know the name of a single one. The proportion was 33 per cent among those aged 18–29 years in the United Kingdom and as high as 48 per cent among those surveyed in the United States. The authors of the study point out that the findings are “alarming” and “deeply concerning”.

Mr. Chairperson,

It is not surprising that an ever greater number of inhabitants of countries “west of Vienna” are suffering from historical amnesia. This is something that their own authorities are facilitating in every possible way. The EU bloc and the United States are deliberately rewriting history and hypocritically turning a blind eye to the cultivation of neo-Nazi tendencies in Ukraine. We regularly bring this up at Permanent Council meetings, so we do not intend to repeat ourselves. Suffice it to cite a few recent examples of the glorification of Nazism and the falsification of history.

According to official data from the Ukrainian State Film Agency, in 2025 it is planned to allocate no less than 567,450 US dollars from the national budget to the production of yet another film about Stepan Bandera. We would remind you that, on 30 June 1941 in Lviv’s central square, Bandera, acting in the name of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, solemnly pledged “to collaborate closely with National Socialist Greater Germany, which, under the direction of its leader Adolf Hitler, is creating a new order in Europe and the world”. In addition, he referred to Hitler’s troops as “the Allied German Army” in the struggle against the Soviet Union. The text of this speech, entitled the “Act of Proclamation of the Ukrainian State”, was printed by newspapers of the time and is publicly available. On 1 January this year, the anniversary of Bandera’s birth was again celebrated at the State and municipal level.

In December 2024, the authorities in Kyiv once more named a street in honour of a Nazi collaborator, specifically Taras Bulba-Borovets, who maimed and killed hundreds of Jews. The crimes perpetrated by his unit, the “Poliska Sich”, have been documented by, among others, the US historian Jared McBride.

It is only logical that, against this backdrop, various forms of intolerance towards Jews are flourishing. In particular, the Embassy of Israel in Kyiv is sounding the alarm. The diplomats working there recently expressed their “concern regarding a series of antisemitic incidents during the Hanukkah celebrations in Ukraine, as well as the rise of antisemitic comments on social media”. Relevant constructively minded organizations, such as the Ukrainian Jewish Committee, have also drawn attention to the proliferation of hate speech in the Ukrainian segment of the Internet.

Mr. Chairperson,

The aforementioned facts serve as confirmation that attempts to deny the Holocaust and propagate racism, Nazism, neo-Nazism and racial intolerance pose a direct threat to peace and security.

We note the Finnish OSCE Chairmanship’s intention to devote its first event in the human dimension to the combating of anti-Semitism. We regret that, this notwithstanding, the distinguished Permanent Representative of Finland, in his opening remarks just now, made a number of unacceptable and inappropriate observations about my country’s efforts to combat neo-Nazism. That is why we should like to reiterate that it is imperative to take the issue of neo-Nazism into account when liaising on the agenda of OSCE human dimension events. No matter how disagreeable this topic may be for some here, such a conversation is long overdue.

In closing, we would point out once again that, together with like-minded States, we will continue to fundamentally and firmly resist attempts to falsify history and rewrite the outcome of the Second World War. First and foremost, we emphasize the unacceptability of revising the legal and moral verdict delivered at the Nuremberg Tribunal against senior figures of the Nazi regime and their accomplices. We will do everything we can to defend people's right to national, linguistic and cultural identity and to prevent the spread of anti-Semitism, Russophobia and other ideologies of hatred.

Thank you for your attention.