

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
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AT THE 1145th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

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On the celebration of Victory Day and on neo-Nazism in Ukraine

Mr. Chairperson,

Two days ago, the world marked the Great Victory over Nazism in May 1945. At that time, 72 years ago, nobody could have suspected that Nazi ideology would rear its head again in Europe. It is especially galling to observe this scenario in Ukraine, whose people suffered huge losses during the Second World War.

We have already mentioned today that out of more than 50 countries, only in Ukraine did the police detain peaceful demonstrators for wanting to honour the memory of the Soviet soldiers who brought liberation from Nazism. This, in a country where according to the results of a survey by the Ukrainian Independent Information and News Agency, 80 per cent of the population support the celebration of the Second World War Victory Day.

According to numerous media reports, including Ukrainian ones, the victory parades almost everywhere in Ukraine were accompanied by provocations. Already the day before the commemorations, the nationalists were issuing threats, vowing to do all they could to combat the victory celebration. For example, the leader of the neo-Nazi organization “Volunteer Movement of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists”, Nikolay Kokhanivskiy, pledged to respond to the Immortal Regiment procession by organizing a violent initiative entitled the “Mortal Regiment” – the name says it all.

In Kyiv, the event entitled “No one is forgotten, nothing is forgotten” – equivalent to the Immortal Regiment – was, notwithstanding the intimidation, attended by around 20,000 people. Attempts to oppose this were made by local radicals carrying portraits of Nazi supporter Stepan Bandera and chanting the slogan: “Bandera will come, bringing order”. From the windows of the building housing the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), radicals pelted the marchers with smoke bombs, bottles and rubbish. A police officer was injured as a result.

Nationalists also tried to bar the people taking part in the event from entering the Park of Eternal Glory in Kyiv, throwing rocks and smoke bombs at them. Near the obelisk of the

unknown soldier, they provoked fights, yelled nationalist slogans, threatened elderly marchers with violence and insulted them. The police did not respond when the veterans appealed to them to restore order, only intervening when burning firecrackers landed on the police themselves. The police also did not allow the marchers to unfurl the Victory Banner and forced the veterans to remove their St. George ribbons, arresting one person for attempting to raise a banner depicting the ribbon.

The nationalists also tried to obstruct the Russian diplomats who had come to lay a wreath near the eternal flame and the monument to the liberator of Kyiv, General Nikolay Vatutin.

In Odessa, the former leader of the local chapter of the Right Sector, Sergey Sternenko, tried to bring a portrait of the commander of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), Roman Shukhevych, to the veterans' column, provoking a conflict which could only be stopped after the police intervened. This did not calm down the radicals, who went on shouting nationalist slogans. The police arrested 15 people taking part in the celebration on the grounds that they were trying to unfurl red banners and wear St. George ribbons.

In Zaporizhia, red flags were taken from activists and provocateurs ridiculed photographs of soldiers who had died in the war. In Mykolaiv, radicals carried portraits of Roman Shukhevych and provoked fights with peaceful demonstrators. In clashes in Dnipro, eight participants in the ceremonial parade and six police officers were hurt.

And these were far from all of the acts of aggression in Ukraine against veterans and others taking part in the memorial processions. Incidentally, these restrictions on freedom of speech and assembly as well as the Ukrainian Government's ban on Soviet symbols have been condemned by the Ukrainian branch of the human rights organization Amnesty International which our Western colleagues are so fond of citing.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian President Mr. Petro Poroshenko is not holding back on extending victory congratulations to former UPA members who did everything they could to prevent that victory during the war years.

Neo-Nazi groups operate openly in Ukraine. Torchlit processions (most recently in Kyiv and many other cities in January 2017), defamation of Second World War veterans, swastikas and other Nazi symbols in the insignia of the "volunteer battalions", desecration of monuments to Soviet soldiers and the Babi Yar memorial – all have become "normal behaviour" there. Ukraine is the only OSCE participating State where Nazi divisions (the "Right Sector") have been incorporated into the security bodies.

Kyiv is pursuing a targeted policy to falsify recent history, in which the atrocities of the OUN-UPA, which has on its conscience the death or torture of thousands of peaceful Ukrainians, Russians, Jews, Poles, Sinti and Roma and members of other nationalities, is being passed off as a struggle for freedom. Stepan Bandera, who became tainted through his collaboration with the Nazis, has essentially become the symbol of the new Ukraine. Take note of the material from the Jewish Committee of Ukraine, which has compiled multiple instances of vindication and rehabilitation of Nazism in the country.

Fortunately, realization about the increasing glorification of the Nazis and their supporters in Ukraine is dawning, albeit very slowly, in other countries to the west of Vienna.

Politicians in Poland have voiced their disapproval of the fact that over the past few years, Ukraine has been constructing a cult of the personality around Stepan Bandera, who committed genocide against the Polish people. Outstanding recent articles in the United Kingdom's *Guardian* newspaper and the United States *New York Times* have detailed the outbreak of neo-Nazi revanchism in Ukraine. The refusal of the United States Congress House of Representatives to fund the militarized nationalist group, the so-called Azov brigade which is part of the Ukrainian National Guard, is also telling.

Let us hope that this trend will hold and that the Ukrainian Government will be forced to listen, if not to the voices of its own people, then to the opinion of its Western backers, and will stop singing the praises of the Nazis and their supporters.

We call on the OSCE and its specialized bodies to pay the closest attention to this matter and to respond appropriately to any manifestations of neo-Nazism and radical nationalism in Ukraine.

Thank you for your attention.