

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. DMITRY BALAKIN,
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1143rd MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

27 April 2017

**On the situation of sexual minorities in the
Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation**

Mr. Chairperson,

We already provided explanations on this matter here on 6 April. We can inform our colleagues in more detail.

As you know, the reason for the manipulation of this issue was the article by journalist Elena Milashina in *Novaya Gazeta*, information for which no proof has been received. Law enforcement agencies have not received statements from potential “victims”. At the same time, all competent Russian agencies were requested to verify the relevant claims, including those quoted in *Novaya Gazeta*.

In turn, the corresponding publication and the subsequent aggravation of the information environment were the result of the actions of the leader of the Russian lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community, Nikolai Alekseev, who in March 2017 organized an application for the holding of public protests in defence of the “rights” of LGBT people in a number of Russian cities – Stavropol, Nalchik, Cherkessk and Maykop.

A rally of citizens who opposed the holding of a gay pride parade took place in Nalchik on 19 March. In the Internet sphere, residents of the regions protested against the planned actions of the LGBT community. The authorities of several other cities refused to allow these protests to be held. Nikolai Alekseev, in turn, appealed those decisions in court.

Elena Milashina’s articles had already been published after Nikolai Alekseev had sent applications to hold gay pride parades. They report that law enforcement agencies allegedly persecute LGBT activists in order to prevent them from marching in certain cities of the North Caucasus.

In response to the information published in *Novaya Gazeta*, the Muslim Spiritual Administration of the Chechen Republic held an extended Majlis in the central mosque in Grozny on 2 April with the participation of 6,000 people from among the clergy and residents

of the Republic. On 6 April, at the initiative of the authorities of the region, a discussion of the subject of this false story was held in the format of a round table on Caucasian traditions in the realities of the modern world, with the subsequent departure of human rights defenders, journalists and public figures for Argun. As a result of these events, its participants condemned, in fact, the provocation of *Novaya Gazeta*.

The Human Rights Council under the President of the Chechen Republic reported that it had analysed the evidence of the alleged persecution of the LGBT community in the Republic and had not found “even indirect proof”. At the same time, Council member Kheda Saratova said that she had not received any complaints on that matter. In this same connection, she noted that she had repeatedly helped the *Novaya Gazeta* journalist gather official information. In her opinion, “this time, Milashina has published materials that are not supported by facts”. She advised her to cross-check the evidence.

I draw your attention to the fact that Nikolai Alekseev himself in an interview with the television channel “Dozhd” and the radio station “Komsomolskaya Pravda” accused Elena Milashina of publishing deliberately false information. He said that there is no “hunt” for representatives of the LGBT community in the Chechen Republic. During his activism, no homosexual from that region had approached him. He expressed the opinion that Elena Milashina’s activities were not concerned with the protection of persons of non-traditional sexual orientation, rather, the journalist was pursuing her own selfish goals.

In addition, the former military commandant’s office building (99b, ulitsa Kadyrova, Argun), referred to in the *Novaya Gazeta* article as a “secret prison” and where representatives of sexual minorities are allegedly imprisoned, is operated by the Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Chechen Republic in the town of Argun as a warehouse, and the adjacent territory – as a car park.

Thus, Elena Milashina’s allegations were not substantiated by the authorities of the Republic, nor by federal authorities, nor even by the leaders of the LGBT community itself.

Moreover, this topic was discussed at the 19 April meeting of Russian President Vladimir Putin with the Head of the Chechen Republic, Ramzan Kadyrov, at which it was also noted that those claims are not supported. So we ask our colleagues to carefully check their information and operate with facts, not with speculation.

Thank you for your attention.