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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE  
1313th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL  
VIA VIDEO TELECONFERENCE**

13 May 2021

**On human rights violations in the United Kingdom**

Madam Chairperson,

We are seriously concerned about the continuing systematic human rights abuses in the United Kingdom, as we have repeatedly stated here. However, as time passes, more and more disturbing stories emerge.

Thus, after the publication of the Government Report on racism in the country at the end of March, the topic has taken a new turn. At issue are the immediate conclusions of the document, to which the United Nations Human Rights Council's Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent reacted harshly on 19 April. The UN experts "categorically rejected and condemned" the conclusions of the case study. In particular, they criticized the idea that racism in the United Kingdom is allegedly "individualized" and "discrete" rather than institutional, or even "a product of the imagination of people of African descent".

The experts recalled the findings and recommendations of the Working Group following the 2012 visit to the United Kingdom, the 2016 Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the 2018 report of the UN Human Rights Council Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. All of these reviews highlight the damaging impact of institutional racism and deep-rooted inequities in health, education, employment, housing, the criminal justice system and other areas of British society.

According to the international experts, inequalities in the United Kingdom can be seen in the decisions and actions of employers, teachers and others on whom people of African descent depend. This reflects the legacy mindsets of racial hierarchy in society.

Against this background, they urge the British Government to reject the findings of the Report, which are inconsistent with the facts cited in the same document. We would also add and call into question the objectivity not only of its compilers, but of the Government's entire system for informing the public about the real state of affairs in the country.

The findings of the UN experts are echoed by the British organization Show Racism the Red Card, which fights for tolerance and equality in that country. According to it, racial discrimination can be seen in the United Kingdom in the lack of access to education, housing and employment for people of African descent, as well as in police prejudice against them.

In that regard, I should like to recall the 1990 Copenhagen Document of the CSCE, in which the participating States, among other things, “clearly and unequivocally condemn[ed] … racial and ethnic hatred … xenophobia and discrimination against anyone”.

The situation with regard to freedom of assembly is also serious. For months now, people have been taking to the streets of British cities under the slogan “Kill the Bill” because of the new Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill. This instrument expands the powers of the police, allowing them to limit even peaceful protests. Its adoption would put freedom of assembly in that country at serious risk.

The problems in that area are still plain to see. We have repeatedly pointed to instances of the violent dispersal of demonstrations by the British police. They were repeated on 1 May, when about a hundred people were detained.

In the media sphere, too, things are complicated. At the meeting of the Permanent Council on 29 April, we already drew attention to one of the UK Government’s legislative initiatives (bills) to counter “hostile States”, which is essentially the equivalent of the US Foreign Agents Registration Act. I should remind you that this instrument involves the creation of a kind of register of foreign agents, a database in which registration will be compulsory for all natural persons and legal entities acting for such States on UK territory. Failure to register will be grounds for criminal prosecution and deportation. It looks like the UK Government has outdone even its teachers in Washington.

The situation with the Australian journalist Julian Assange continues to cause concern. He is still held in Belmarsh prison in the United Kingdom, awaiting extradition to the United States of America, where the death penalty is widely applied. In the meantime, he is being held in strict isolation, while the coronavirus is spreading in the prison, not to mention the fact that doctors “from the outside” whom Mr. Assange trusted are not allowed to see him.

The UN Special Rapporteur on torture Nils Melzer has spoken repeatedly on this subject. Likening it to the conditions of the WikiLeaks founder’s forced stay of many years in the Ecuadorian embassy in London, he called on the British authorities to release him from prison immediately. According to Mr. Melzer, the measure “is neither necessary nor proportional”. However, that request, too, has remained unanswered.

We again urge the UK leadership to strictly comply with commitments on freedom of assembly and the media, on combating racial discrimination, which is institutionalized in that country, and on eliminating ill-treatment and ensuring adequate health care in prisons and other places of detention.

Thank you for your attention.

Madam Chairperson,

In view of the detailed comment by the distinguished Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, we should like to exercise the right of reply.

A few remarks on the substance and content. Yes, the initiatives we have mentioned by the British authorities have not yet been adopted. But just yesterday, in the Queen's Speech to the British Parliament, Queen Elizabeth II indicated the authorities' desire to put these measures into practice. For example, in the context of the Telecommunications (Security) Bill, which envisages the creation of a foreign agent database, reference was made to the intention of the British authorities to introduce the initiative in Parliament. In the context of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, the speech identified as one of the benefits of the bill "better protection of the rights of the law-abiding majority by providing the police with the necessary powers to deal with highly disruptive protests and tackle unauthorized encampments that cause nuisance and misery for local people". The intention is undoubtedly a good one. However, it appears that the UK Government is presenting as a public benefit precisely what it itself criticizes other States for at the OSCE.

As for the suppression of protests by force, numerous images can be found on the Internet of violent dispersal of demonstrations by the police. We have spoken about them on several occasions at Permanent Council meetings and have also shown a video.

The implication of all this is that the United Kingdom is standing up for rights in international forums that it is unwilling or unable to guarantee even for its own citizens. I stress that there is no such thing as a perfect democracy. Every country has its problems. Before rushing to comment on human rights issues on international platforms, the authorities should address them first at home. Only in that way will the OSCE participating States be able to engage in equal dialogue in the name of our Organization's basic goals of security and co-operation in Europe.

Thank you for your attention.