

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1102nd MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

2 June 2016

**In connection with the question raised by the United States of America
about harassment of the political opposition in Russia**

Mr. Chairperson,

We have listened with interest to the distinguished representatives of the United States of America and the Netherlands on behalf of the European Union. We note their careful attention to the multifaceted political life in our country. We hope that our colleagues will speak out with the same zeal about the situation in other OSCE participating States and also inform us about what is happening in their countries. Otherwise we end up with a one-sided discussion.

Let me now say a few words about the facts of the incidents in question.

First of all, about the hooliganism of a group of people at the House of Cinematography, where an award ceremony was taking place for the winners of a secondary school history essay competition organized by the non-governmental organization Memorial. I wish to stress that the Russian President's press secretary, Dmitry Peskov, immediately condemned these actions, calling them "absolutely unacceptable". The Presidential Council for Civil Society and Human Rights called on the law enforcement and regulatory authorities to step up the efforts to combat manifestations of political hooliganism. We are not aware of the instances of "physical violence" mentioned by the United States Ambassador. The writer Lyudmila Ulitskaya, who was doused with green disinfectant, confirmed that she had not suffered any physical harm. The police apprehended one of the hooligans directly at the scene and he was then taken to a police station.

In the statements by our American colleague we frequently hear how easily political labels are attached to things. In particular, he said that the action at the House of Cinematography was carried out by some "pro-Kremlin protestors". I should like to clarify where this information is from. It would also be interesting to learn who exactly, according to the distinguished Permanent Representative of the United States, violated the children's rights and which rights exactly.

As regards the amendments to the Russian law on non-commercial organizations, I should point out that the concept of “political activity” has in fact been clarified to avoid ambiguity and differences in interpretation. The areas in which political activity takes place and how it is carried out are now clearly specified. These include State-building and federal governance, ensuring the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Russia, ensuring lawfulness, law and order and security, foreign policy, the functioning of the State authorities and others. The participation of non-commercial organizations in rallies and marches, the dissemination of assessments of State policy, public opinion surveys, participation in the formation of election commissions and in the work of political parties and a number of other types of activity are also regarded as forms of political activity. What is important, however, is that this in no way hinders the activities of non-commercial organizations themselves. It is simply that in the event that a particular organization receives foreign funding, the context in which it is regarded as performing the functions of a foreign agent needs to be understood.

As for the attack on members of the Anti-Corruption Foundation, including Alexei Navalny, the circumstances of this case are being investigated by the Anapa transport police inspectorate, which is establishing the identity of the attackers. Statements have been taken from the victims. Our distinguished colleague has already mentioned video clips on the Internet, but the fact that the fight was provoked by one of Mr. Navalny’s associates, who deliberately elbowed an elderly man standing next to him in the face, probably escaped his attention. Anyone wishing to do so can familiarize themselves with these images on YouTube. Incidentally, it was thanks to the intervention of the police, who, according to the Permanent Representative of the United States, “stood idly by”, that it proved possible to avoid a mass fight.

It is worth mentioning that this is not the first time that Alexei Navalny has been at the centre of a dubious incident of this kind. We have yet to learn whether this was staged and who was responsible. However, we cannot rule out the possibility that he was drawing attention to himself by artificial means, exacerbating the situation and attempting to discredit the Russian authorities in the run-up to the elections.

As regards the conclusion drawn evidently on the basis of such dubious examples that independent civil society in Russia is allegedly “under siege”, I should like to point out that spraying politicians with liquid or throwing cakes, tomatoes, eggs or other items at them is unfortunately not a rare occurrence in today’s world. There are examples aplenty of such provocative actions. In particular, the former Presidents of the United States of America Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, the former Governor of California Arnold Schwarzenegger and the former Secretary of State of the United States of America Hillary Clinton have all been the subject of such attacks. Does the Permanent Representative of the United States consider these undoubtedly disgraceful incidents to be evidence of a departure from democracy in the United States and the exerting of pressure on politicians? Could these incidents perhaps have been “ordered” by the Democratic or Republican Party?

As for the so-called list of “political prisoners” compiled by Memorial, I should like to ask a question in response – is our distinguished American colleague aware that according to a number of human rights associations, including the National Jericho Movement and the Alliance for Global Justice, there are dozens of American political prisoners in the United States? They are predominantly ethnic minority activists, over 80 African American political prisoners. What is more, the statistics do not include those held in Guantánamo without charge, trial or investigation. Is Mr. Daniel Baer aware that the Alliance for Global Justice

reported back in 2013 that there are dozens of people in custody for political reasons in the United States (currently over 60)? Furthermore, the organization has studied the scheme for the “export” from the United States to at least 25 countries of the world of the model of “mass incarceration”. You can familiarize yourself with their work – it makes for very interesting reading.

Thank you for your attention.