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

27 April 2017

**On the tenth anniversary of the events in
Tõnismägi Square in Tallinn**

Mr. Chairperson,

Exactly ten years ago, in the early hours of 27 April 2007, a memorial to the millions of Soviet soldiers who lost their lives fighting against Nazism was desecrated. That night, the monument to the Soldier Liberator on Tõnismägi hill in the centre of Tallinn was dismantled and the graves of the Soviet soldiers there were opened. I remember that the monument was torn down despite widespread opposition on the part of the Estonian public, Russia and other countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States. It was also a violation of the norms of international law, in particular Article 34 of Protocol (I) Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, which stipulates that war graves may be moved only at the request of relatives or in cases of investigative necessity. The appeals of the relatives of the interred soldiers to the Estonian Government at that time were ignored.

The local authorities' idea of dismantling the monument at night so as to avoid public grievances did not work out. Thousands of people who disagreed with this sacrilegious decision went out onto the streets of Tallinn and other Estonian cities. The protests were brutally suppressed by the police, with the Government resorting to repressive measures instead of seeking public consensus.

Around 1,200 people were detained during the unrest, and almost 50 were injured. Dmitry Ganin, a Russian citizen permanently residing in Estonia, was killed during that tragic night. Unfortunately, there has still been no progress in the investigation into his death, although ten years have elapsed. The Estonian authorities were unable or unwilling to take real steps to establish who committed this serious crime. I might mention that the police identified five persons who had beaten up Dmitry Ganin and even arrested two suspects at one point. However, after two years, the prosecutor's office closed the case against them, considering their guilt to be negligible. Inquiries by the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation were ignored.

We call on the Estonian authorities to conclude the investigation into this crime and not to use the expiry of the ten-year statute of limitations as a pretext for the formal closure of the criminal case.

I should like to remind our Estonian colleagues that on 28 March 2013 the European Court of Human Rights issued its judgment on the events of the “Bronze Night”, in which Estonia was found guilty of violating Article 3 and Article 5, paragraph 1, of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

Pursuant to Article 3, no one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. As regards the events of that “fateful” night, there were cases recorded of passers-by who just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time being beaten up by the Estonian police or having their hands broken. And then when these people reported this to the local law enforcement authorities, they refused to initiate criminal proceedings, arguing that the police actions were allegedly justified.

Furthermore, the Court’s judgment noted that Estonia had violated Article 5 of the Convention, in accordance with which nationality cannot be used as grounds for detention. In Tallinn, however, as you are aware, during the dispersal of the demonstrations the decisive criterion the police were guided by in making arrests was nationality. According to many eyewitness reports, the police seized many Russians who they just happened to come across. For example, the police attacked the former press secretary of the Night Watch movement, Larisa Neshadimova, who was on duty at the monument, the day before the start of the mass protests. Police officers smashed the windows of the car she was in, injuring her hand, and her colleagues were detained under an obviously fabricated pretext.

In general, it seems that the cover-up in relation to the perpetrators of Dmitry Ganin’s murder is part of the Estonian Government’s attempt to rewrite the outcome of the Second World War, belittle the heroic deeds of the Soviet soldiers and place executioners on a par with liberators. The rallies of Waffen SS division veterans in Estonia and the glorification of the Nazis and their local collaborators serve to confirm this policy. This is very much at odds with the decisions of the Nuremberg Tribunal, other relevant norms of international law, OSCE commitments and the annual resolution of the United Nations General Assembly on combating the glorification of Nazism.

Thank you for your attention.