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Latvian Human Rights Committee



CLSF Latvijas Cilvēktiesību komiteja  
F.I.D.H. Latvian Human Rights Committee

**МФПЧ Латвийский комитет по правам человека**

Reg. No. 40008010632, address: 102a-15, Dzirnavu Str. Riga, LV1050, Latvia.

Phone +371 26420477, [www.lhrc.lv](http://www.lhrc.lv), [lhrc@lhrc.lv](mailto:lhrc@lhrc.lv)

**Real and fictional combating xenophobia in Latvia, 2018-2019**

Submission for Working Session 13,

Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, September 24, 2019

**[1] Most notable case of hate speech: ignored by authorities**

On October 22, 2018, a famous radio personality, Ms Māra Krontāle, has publicly called to “get rid” of ethnic Russians (*krievi*) like it was done with the Baltic Germans (in 1939, they were pressured to leave Latvia by Hitler and the local dictator Ulmanis, via closing German schools, publications and religious communities):

“We had “got rid” of Baltic Germans. Why wouldn’t it be possible to get rid of [ethnic] Russians? I understand I will now be eaten for racism or Nazism, but still?”<sup>1</sup>

In comments to her statement, Mr Artis Pabriks (soon-to-become minister of defence) has criticized Krontāle’s attitude to Germans, without challenging Russophobia or addressing it:

“I think you will be “eaten” for not knowing history. If the Baltic Germans still were in the current Latvia, we would have been a better country. Read Feldmanis etc.”,<sup>2</sup>

While in some low-profile cases the authorities stand against hate speech, in this case, like in other high-profile cases (see our submission to HDIM in 2018), the Security Police has refused to initiate criminal proceedings.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://twitter.com/MaraKrontale/status/1054404634654203905> In the original Latvian:

““Atbrīvojāties” no baltvāciešiem. Kāpēc tā nevarētu tikt valā no krieviem? Sprotu, ka mani tūlīt noēdīs par rasismu vai nacismu, bet tomēr...?”

<sup>2</sup> <https://twitter.com/Pabriks/status/1054994153996722177> In the original Latvian: “Es domāju, ka jūs “noēdīs” par vēstures nezināšanu. Ja šodienas Latvijā vēl būtu vācbaltieši, mēs būtu labāka valsts. Lasiet Feldmani utt.”

## **[2] Standing against hate speech: harassed by authorities**

On February 20, 2019, Ms Tatjana Ždanoka, a member of the Latvian Human Rights Committee and a former MEP, has made a presentation on lack of response to hate speech in Latvia, at a hearing in the European Parliament. In her speech, which included a reference to Krontāle case and many others, Ždanoka, herself from a Jewish-Russian family, has compared Russophobia in modern Latvia with the interwar Anti-Semitism.

The State Security Service (former Security Police) has reacted this time. By initiating a criminal case against Ždanoka on alleged incitement of interethnic hatred.<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, the State Security Service in its annual report for 2018 attacks those criticizing the annual marches on March the 16th honouring Waffen SS Latvian Legion veterans. The critics are described as “so-called “anti-fascists” ” and placed in the chapter named “Russia’s influence activities and their manifestations against Latvia”. While SSS calls May the 9th “so-called “Victory Day” ”, it describes March the 16th as “Latvian Legionnaires’ Remembrance Day” without any quotation marks. None of these two days is officially recognised (May the 9th was officially recognised as Victory Day in 1965-1991, March the 16th as Latvian Soldiers’ Remembrance Day in 1998-2000).<sup>5</sup> The marches of March the 16th have been notably condemned by bodies of the UN, Council of Europe and the European Union.<sup>6</sup>

## **[3] Xenophobia rewarded at the top level**

In 2018, Mr Abu Meri has called Russian language (that of 36 per cent of Latvia’s population<sup>7</sup>) “a language of a foreign country”, in parliament.<sup>8</sup> In 2019, he became

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<sup>3</sup> Security Police chief’s answer to an application by Mr Harlamovs, 20.11.2018.

<sup>4</sup> Media reports in English

[https://www.baltictimes.com/state\\_security\\_service\\_starts\\_criminal\\_procedure\\_over\\_zdanoka\\_s\\_remarks\\_in\\_european\\_parliament\\_discussion/](https://www.baltictimes.com/state_security_service_starts_criminal_procedure_over_zdanoka_s_remarks_in_european_parliament_discussion/) <https://eng.lsm.lv/article/society/society/security-service-starts-case-over-zdanokas-remarks-in-ep-discussion.a311776/> For the statement itself, see <https://www.facebook.com/tatjana.zdanoka/posts/2235426306519277> or in Russian

<http://www.rusojuz.lv/ru/archive/2019/26486-evroparlament-vzdrognul-ot-politicheskikh-repressij-v-pribaltike/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://vdd.gov.lv/en/?rt=documents&ac=download&id=46> p. 20

<sup>6</sup> <http://defendinghistory.com/will-latvias-new-cabinet-share-european-values-when-it-comes-to-condemnation-of-fascism/96297>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.csb.gov.lv/en/statistics/statistics-by-theme/population/search-in-theme/2747-latvian-mother-tongue-608-population-latvia>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.saeima.lv/lv/transcripts/view/464> in Latvian

Prime Minister's advisor... on integration.<sup>9</sup> And the chair of the council to implement the Integration Guidelines, as well.<sup>10</sup>

**[4] Recommendations for Latvia:**

1. to condemn any kind of hate speech and to persecute one presenting danger;
2. to appoint people committed to multicultural approach to implement integration policy;
3. to refrain from pressure on anti-racism activists in general, in particular - to terminate criminal proceedings against and to apologise to Ms Ždanoka.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://mk.gov.lv/lv/content/ministru-prezidenta-birojs> in Latvian

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.km.gov.lv/lv/ministrija/jaunumi/apstiprinats-integracijas-pamatnostadnu-istenosanas-uzraudzibas-padomes-sastavs-3567> in Latvian