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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE
1307th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL
VIA VIDEO TELECONFERENCE**

25 March 2021

On massive and systematic violations of human rights in the United States of America

Madam Chairperson,

As we promised at the meeting of the Permanent Council last week, we should like to draw attention to the massive and systematic violations of human rights in the United States of America. Police violence, inequality in voting rights, a clampdown on freedom of speech and assembly, discrimination against national and religious minorities – there is a non-exhaustive list of serious human rights issues in that OSCE participating State. We note with regret that the coronavirus pandemic has aggravated the existing problems and created new ones. The crime rate is rising while political and social divisions are widening.

A major cause for concern continues to be the rabid campaign of persecution that is under way in the United States against the participants in the so-called storming of the Capitol on 6 January this year and, indeed, against all those who do not agree with the results of the last presidential election. According to the available information, the Federal Bureau of Investigation has instituted more than 400 criminal proceedings and filed over 500 applications for search warrants and summons to be issued for suspects; it has already brought charges against and arrested around 200 people. As for the other demonstrators, they are being subjected to severe pressure, including psychological “processing” (menticide) of their relatives and friends – that is, psychological coercion to extract forced confessions from them. Fear of the authorities has reached such levels that people who have not been officially indicted are being dismissed from work and subjected to public ostracism. Yet, in most cases these are ordinary citizens who are anxious about the situation in their country and are standing up for their convictions.

The US Tech Giants, too, have become actively engaged in this witch-hunt, which is reminiscent of the notorious McCarthyism years. For example, Twitter alone has suspended more than 150,000 accounts of those who support “conspiracy theories”. According to a representative of that company, algorithms that allow one to identify terrorists and paedophiles were used to combat “domestic extremists”. I would remind you of a fact from US history, namely, of how in the 1950s an entire system was developed for the persecution of dissenters. This could potentially repeat itself, albeit now on a completely new technological level.

It is a curious situation, though. When it is a question of purportedly ensuring the security of US citizens, social media in that country do not hesitate to shut down “harmful” accounts. However, when other countries are involved – as was in particular the case when the Russian regulatory body demanded that Twitter block posts urging minors to commit collective suicide – there suddenly crop up all sorts of “difficulties” in restricting access to such dangerous information.

The censoring of the information sphere by US information technology companies is a glaring example of human rights and fundamental freedoms being violated. We are particularly concerned about the blocking of Russian-language accounts. Thus, restrictions have been imposed on around twenty Russian media outlets, not to mention private users. Here are some fresh examples.

On 14 January, Twitter temporarily blocked the account for the Sputnik V vaccine, while on 13 February it did the same with the account of the Russian delegation to the Vienna negotiations on military security (access was restored by Twitter shortly afterwards). On 12 March it became known that YouTube had restricted access to the film “Crimea: The Way Home” (significantly, this was done five years after the film’s release) and that Instagram had initially prevented the television channel Krym 24 from publishing content (its ability to do so was admittedly restored later on). We regard as inappropriate the assertions by our US colleagues to the effect that these are private companies which are free to act as they see fit. There have long since ceased to be any doubts as to their being under the control of certain State circles. Even the US segment of the Internet is teeming with information on that score. For how else can one explain the fact that executives from the Big Tech corporations are regularly invited to hearings at the United States Congress? By the way, as we have learned, the heads of Facebook, Twitter and Google are today, that is, on 25 March, due to testify before the members of Congress yet again.

At the last meeting of the Permanent Council, my US colleague, comparing the legislation of Russia and the United States on foreign agents, claimed that the US Government does not limit the ability of Russian media outlets such as Russia Today to go about their work. In reality the situation is quite different. That news company was forced to register as a foreign agent in the United States back in 2017. It has been completely barred from access to the White House and several other State institutions. Over there they evidently prefer to release for broadcasting only such information as comes from their own sources; alternatives containing another point of view are not appreciated.

A further alarming sign of a selective approach towards freedom of the press is the fact that the US Government has effectively taken over the reins of a campaign by a number of Western States (I shall not list them, since you know them all) in support of repressive measures against media outlets in Ukraine. The US Government has openly endorsed the shutting down of media outlets in that country and the persecution of their staff, including journalists, under the spurious pretext of “combating disinformation”, which in reality is just a cover for purging the information sphere of alternative and independent sources.

Problems of racism directed at both African Americans and members of other racial and national minorities are of a systemic nature in the United States, and they unfortunately continue to intensify. We note a sharp rise in crimes directed at Asian Americans. According to Congressman Alcee Hastings, the number of such crimes increased by 150 per cent over the past year. The US non-governmental organization Stop AAPI Hate has recorded around 4,000 crimes against such individuals. The massacre of six female US citizens of Asian origin in the city of Atlanta that occurred on 16 March confirms that racial antagonisms have not gone away in the United States. Experts and civil society representatives are sharply criticizing the new Administration for not hastening to take measures.

Closely linked to this is the problem of police brutality, which has effectively become part of everyday life. Police cars knock down demonstrators; police officers destroy private property and blithely

shoot to kill when faced with people who are not even offering resistance. The participants in peaceful demonstrations and journalists covering such rallies are targeted with rubber bullets, tear gas and other items of riot control equipment. That is what happened, for example, on 21 March in Miami Beach, where pepper-spray balls were fired at people going out on to the street, most of them blacks. So black lives do not matter any more in your country? Moreover, law enforcement officers are held accountable at a rate that is unacceptably low for a State that aspires to being a global leader in the protection of human rights.

Death sentences, which often have blatantly racist overtones, continue to be carried out in the United States. Seventeen people were executed in 2020. On 13 January this year, a woman was killed by lethal injection for the first time in 67 years. At least 13 more people are scheduled to be executed in 2021. It should be noted that the methods of capital punishment used are frequently comparable to torture, as we have already said here on a number of occasions.

Under the new Administration, the plight of child refugees living on the border between the United States and Mexico has become significantly aggravated. As reported by the television channel CNN, at least 5,000 adolescents who arrived in the United States unaccompanied by adults are currently being held under the supervision of the US border force in premises that are not designed for long stays. Contrary to US legislation, many of them are being held in overcrowded conditions for more than ten days. They are not allowed out on to the street or given the chance to take a shower; many of them are forced to sleep on the floor without a mattress. Significantly, the daily number of migrant children is approaching 500.

We once again urge the US leadership to strictly fulfil its commitments and, instead of engaging in unsolicited lecturing, to pay serious attention to the situation “back home”. The US people have long been in need of adequate protection for their rights within their own country.

Thank you for your attention.