



## **The Missions of Canada** **and the United States to the OSCE**

### **On Continued Reports of Gross Violations of Human Rights of LGBTI Persons by the Chechen Authorities**

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires, a.i. Michele Sidors  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
November 16, 2017

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Together with 38 other participating States, the United States and Canada have repeatedly addressed in the Permanent Council, as well as during the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, the numerous credible reports of a brutal campaign against gay men in Chechnya, and the apparent attempts by local authorities to cover up abuses that have taken place.

One survivor of and witness to this horrifying violence is Maxim Lapunov, who recently came forward and publicly detailed the abuses and torture he endured at the hands of Chechen security officials. The United States and Canada commend Mr. Lapunov's courage in speaking out, and wish him well as he recovers from his ordeal. We note Russian media reports that authorities are investigating his allegations. Russia's state-run media have reported that Human Rights Ombudsperson Tatyana Moskalkova has vowed to ensure that Lapunov's case is properly investigated, stating "I believe there are grounds to open a criminal case and provide state protection to Maxim Lapunov." Moskalkova has also accused investigators of intentional inactivity in identifying key witnesses to the events Mr. Lapunov described.

The United States and Canada join the EU and other participating States in inquiring if the Russian Federation is prepared to bring criminal charges in Mr. Lapunov's case, and whether the federal government will provide protection for him and any other victims who may come forward, to ensure their security against further abuse or retaliation by security or other government officials, consistent with Russia's international obligations. We repeat our questions to the Russian Federation: is there an ongoing federal-level investigation into these reports? If so, when do you anticipate the investigation to conclude? And will the results be made public?

We urge the government of the Russian Federation to investigate every credible report of abuse based on the victim's LGBTI status, as well as any apparent cover-up of that abuse by local authorities. We also urge Russia to take decisive steps to ensure that all in Chechnya are afforded the human rights protections enshrined in Russian law, including the Russian constitution, and in Russia's international human rights obligations and commitments. Each and every time we have raised our concerns since April, Russia has chosen to reply by

alleging that these claims are false and denying that any criminal investigation is underway. We will continue to raise our concerns until the Russian Federation provides this Council with a serious response.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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