

The OSCE Secretariat bears no responsibility for the content of this document and circulates it without altering its content. The distribution by OSCE Conference Services of this document is without prejudice to OSCE decisions, as set out in documents agreed by OSCE participating States.

PC.DEL/496/20
15 May 2020

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1267th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL
VIA VIDEO TELECONFERENCE**

14 May 2020

On manifestations of anti-Semitism in OSCE participating States

Mr. Chairperson,

Last week, we marked the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. The Holocaust was one of the most heinous acts of that war, which we managed to overcome together. While it seemed that we had put an end to anti-Semitism once and for all, this terrible phenomenon continues to pose a serious threat today in countries of the OSCE area.

Russia, unfortunately, is no exception. Recently, in the early hours of 13 April, an unknown person set fire to the “Star of the North” Jewish cultural centre and synagogue in Arkhangelsk. Moreover, individual publications featuring anti-Semitic content appear periodically in my country and are promptly included in the Federal List of Extremist Materials in accordance with the law. The mass distribution of such publications has been made a criminal offence. Between January and April this year, around seven such publications were included in this register. I should like to stress that the problem of anti-Semitism is not alien to Russia, but all incidents are duly responded to and thoroughly investigated by the law enforcement agencies. Anti-Semitism is condemned at the highest State level.

This is in stark contrast to the situation in a number of OSCE participating States, where, rather than nipping anti-Semitism in the bud, the authorities ignore or encourage it – by making national heroes of those who exterminated Jews and other peoples during the Second World War. The outcome of the current policy of promoting nationalist and neo-Nazi sentiment is clear.

A striking example is Ukraine and the Baltic States, where they seem to have forgotten that tens of thousands of Jews were killed during the Nazi occupation with the direct participation of local SS members and their supporters.

The situation in Ukraine is particularly dramatic. According to the US non-governmental organization the Anti-Defamation League, in 2019, Ukraine had the second highest levels of anti-Semitism in Europe, after Poland. This year, given the numerous “memorial” events in honour of Nazi accomplices involved in the extermination of Jews, it is clear that the situation has not improved. Moreover, at least ten anti-Semitic incidents were recorded between January and April, including attacks on members of the

Jewish community, the desecration of Jewish monuments and anti-Semitic rhetoric, including from the mouths of officials.

For example, on 10 January in Uman, a group of around 30 people attacked members of the Jewish community near the grave of Rabbi Nachman and beat them up. Four people were injured. On 18 January, a plaque commemorating 15,000 local Jews who were killed during the Holocaust was desecrated in Kryvyi Rih. In Vinnytsia on 24 February, a man attacked a synagogue, shouted anti-Semitic slogans and beat up a member of the Jewish community.

On 10 May, the Ukrainian media published a copy of the letter sent by a department of the National Police of Ukraine in the Ivano-Frankivsk region to the head of the Jewish community of Kolomyia, Yakov Zalishchiker. They had demanded that he provide a complete list of names of the members of the Jewish community, their home addresses and telephone numbers, as well as the details of Jewish students and the names of the universities and faculties where they were studying. All this was under the banner of allegedly “fighting against transnational and ethnic organized groups and criminal organizations”. Such lists of Jews were compiled in Ukraine during the Nazi occupation.

In that regard, we call on the relevant executive structures of the OSCE to closely monitor the issue of the rise of radical nationalism and neo-Nazi sentiment in the country, to reflect that information in their reports and provide a proper assessment, and on the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine to publish its long-overdue thematic report on that threat.

In Estonia, monuments to SS members are erected and annual gatherings of former SS members and their accomplices are organized. The annual gathering of Nazi supporters at the monument located at the summit of Sinimäe is widely publicized. Not only are the authorities failing to prevent this ceremony from happening, but the Estonian military and members of the Estonian Parliament periodically participate in it.

In Lithuania, the “Forest Brothers” are glorified at the State level. Let me remind you that the backbone of this “movement” were former servicemen who had been listed as members of the SS territorial battalions. They were joined by local nationalists, who, after the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the Baltics in 1941, organized Jewish pogroms there, the cruelty of which often surpassed even the atrocities committed by the Nazis. According to official data, between 1944 and 1956, the “Forest Brothers” killed 25,108 people in Lithuania, including more than 1,000 children, 52 of whom were under the age of two. If anyone considers these figures to be Soviet propaganda, then I should like to point out that, in 2011, a memorial book for the victims of partisan terror, containing the names of the people who were murdered, was published in Lithuania, which had by then already been independent for many years.

The glorification of one of the leaders of the “Forest Brothers”, Adolfas Ramanauskas (Vanagas), is telling. As you know, he led a group that was involved in the mass shooting of Jews in the Lithuanian town of Druskininkai in 1941. This is asserted by the Simon Wiesenthal Center with reference to the diaries of Adolfas Ramanauskas himself. Moreover, the 1957 verdict of the Supreme Court of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic states that he was involved in the killing of 8,000 civilians. Similarly, members of the Lithuanian Activist Front Jonas Noreika and Kazys Škirpa actively participated in the Holocaust in Lithuania and are revered by the Lithuanian authorities.

The report of the Kantor Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry for 2019 states that the indulgence of neo-Nazis in modern Lithuania has a negative impact on the country’s Jewish population.

Moreover, the results of a major study on attitudes towards the history of the Holocaust in EU Member States – the Holocaust Remembrance Project, conducted with the support of Yale University,

Grinnell College and the European Union for Progressive Judaism – were published on 25 January 2019. The study states that in Lithuania, the authorities are impeding recognition of the scale of collaboration between Lithuanians and the Nazis, Nazi collaborators and war criminals are still honoured for their anti-Soviet resistance, and the Lithuanian Government has proposed passing a law to forbid discussion of controversies around the Holocaust.

Processions in honour of the members of the Latvian Volunteer Legion are held every year in Latvia. This year, against the backdrop of the coronavirus pandemic, the procession had to be cancelled, but admirers of the SS still held a memorial ceremony at the Freedom Monument in Riga, where officials were also spotted. On 8 May, Latvian Minister of Defence Artis Pabriks laid flowers at the graves of members of the Latvian Volunteer Legion in the Brothers' Cemetery in Lestene.

Incidentally, this Legion incorporated all Latvian police battalions, a number of whose members, such as the commander of the 1st Police Regiment Riga, Roberts Osis, have been officially recognized as war criminals. One of the Legion's campaigns was Operation "Winter Magic", which was an anti-partisan operation carried out in the territories of modern-day Russia and Belarus. During the operation, several hundred villages were destroyed. At least 12,000 civilians were shot and burned, more than 2,000 of whom were children under 12 years of age. Around 15,000 civilians were sent to work in Germany and in the Salaspils concentration camp.

In addition, members of the infamous Arajs Kommando – an auxiliary police unit consisting of Latvians – joined the Latvian Volunteer Legion between 1944 and 1945. According to various sources, between 26,000 and 60,000 Jews were killed at the hands of the unit's members.

And this is all happening against the background of the fact that anti-Semitism remains a problem in the country. A survey conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights in 2018 revealed that one in three Jews in Latvia were afraid of being insulted or physically abused because of their ethnicity.

There has been an alarming surge in anti-Semitism in other EU countries, including France, Germany and the Netherlands.

For example, the Kantor Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry reports that in France in 2019, the number of anti-Semitic incidents increased by more than a quarter (27 per cent). In addition, about 60 per cent of racist crimes were also motivated by anti-Semitism. A total of 1,142 such crimes had been recorded.

Anti-Semitism in the United Kingdom has grown steadily over the past four years. A total of 1,805 cases of anti-Semitism were recorded in 2019. The number of physical attacks increased by 27 per cent.

Despite the high number of incidents recorded, the actual figure could be even higher. The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights has indicated that 75 per cent of cases are not reported at all in EU countries.

The number of serious anti-Semitic incidents in Switzerland has doubled.

Anti-Semitism is also on the rise in North America. A rapid growth in anti-Semitism has also been observed in Canada. The local branch of the Jewish organization B'nai B'rith has reported 2,207 incidents, including 14 serious incidents. In other words, there are over six anti-Semitic incidents every day in the Canadian provinces.

The United States of America is facing a very difficult situation. The Anti-Defamation League report states that, in 2019, there were 2,107 cases of anti-Semitism across all American states except for Alaska and Hawaii. In 40 years of such statistics, this was a record. For example, last year in the United States there were 61 cases of anti-Semitic violence, 919 acts of vandalism and 1,127 cases of verbal abuse or rights violations.

Even in the face of a global pandemic, anti-Semitism in the United States has not abated. For example, media reports have shown that of the 15 cases of anti-Semitism recorded in the country between 30 March and 2 April, 12 were related to intrusions into online events.

Unfortunately, these regrettable examples can and will continue. It is therefore important to resolutely counter anti-Semitism and xenophobia and suppress manifestations of aggressive nationalism and neo-Nazism, as mandated by our OSCE commitments.

Thank you for your attention.