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Valery Engel, 1-st Vice-President of the International Human Rights Movement "World without Nazism"

THE NEED TO PROTECT LATVIAN HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS

Dear colleagues,

My name is Valery Engel. I am the 1-st Vice-President of the International Human Rights Movement "World without Nazism".

Speaking of tolerance, I would like to inform you that exactly one year ago myself and many of my colleagues here in OSCE Conference in Warsaw presented the first report on radical nationalism, which later contributed to the publication of *White Papers of Hate*. We conducted several presentations of this book and handed copies to Presidents of Ukraine and Russia, even though the book raises critical issues related to these countries.

We were also seeking to hold a presentation in Latvia. However, this proved more difficult than we anticipated. 4 hotels out of five rejected us referring to some phone calls, allegedly from "authorities". We were eventually allowed to conduct the presentation in one of Riga hotels, but only after we applied for holding this event on the street. Furthermore, we were left without interpretation services, as the few companies providing this service were also subjected to the same pressure, according to them. The bus taking German antifascists to participate in the discussion was detained by police. As a result, the presentation was conducted in a half-empty hall.

Since then, my colleagues and I became subjected to additional inspections when crossing Latvian borders. Last time, I had to go through such inspection on September 25th, 2014, when arriving in Riga International Airport. Customs officers explain that there is a certain "flag" in the database.

I am a permanent resident of Latvia. My wife and child are citizens of Latvia, who were born and currently live in Riga. I have a certificate of absence of administrative offences, as well as a signed letter from the acting Chief of Latvian Customs, Mr Martukans, stating that there are no claims towards me and my details are not included in any databases of offenders or other "black lists". Nevertheless, these inspections continue and border officers keep referring to some flag in the computer, which orders additional checks, including searches of personal belongings. In principle, border control is a normal thing, but not when it is targeted on a regular basis. I am not even talking about little incidents that started appearing in my everyday life, such as shattered glass placed at the gates of my house in Riga, wilful damage to my car's varnish and so on.

In addition, in the recent report of the Security Police of Latvia, me personally and my organization were called "the enemy of Latvia", because we, supposedly "discredit Latvia in the eyes of World public opinion". In the same time the other countries, for which we also published a lot of unpleasant materials treated with understanding to these facts. Yesterday in the corridor of our Hotel was on duty the Latvian TV crew. By the nature of questions asked by the

correspondent, I guess that in the near future we can see on the Latvian TV movie once again discrediting human rights defenders that protect the rights of minorities in Latvia.

Meanwhile, Guidelines and Principles on protecting human rights activists, presented at this conference several days ago, clearly state that “government institutions and officials must refrain from any intimidating and repressive actions

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In addition, member-states must protect human rights activists against such actions of non-state subjects and take measures to prevent them. Public authorities must openly condemn such actions and treat them with zero tolerance”.

Since I am not sure if tomorrow I won't be separated from my family by Latvian authorities under any pretext, I am asking OSCE to take my personal situation under control.