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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1083rd MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

17 December 2015

**Regarding the problem of racism and intolerance in the
United States of America**

Mr. Chairperson,

Not much more than a year ago, we were following the extremely dramatic events in the United States town of Ferguson, which triggered mass protests in the country against police abuse of power and impunity for the murder of black citizens. We heard, including here at the OSCE, repeated assurances by United States representatives that steps would be taken to prevent such situations and to increase trust in society.

Unfortunately, history has repeated itself this year. This time one of the largest metropolises – Chicago – erupted. This was triggered by the release of a video recording of the brutal murder of 17-year-old Laquan McDonald, whose family had been seeking justice in court for over a year. From a police car camera video recording made available to the public, it can be seen that the officer shot the unarmed black teenager several times in the back before finishing him off as he lay on the ground. Sixteen gunshot wounds were found on the deceased's body. Human rights activists were outraged that the police hushed up the murder for more than a year, and the city authorities obstructed the investigation. Significantly, the city mayor was among those categorically opposing the release of the video. Only after the general public had seen the footage was the police officer charged with murder.

Citizens' peaceful protests against blatant racial discrimination and impunity were also brutally suppressed by that same police force.

Meanwhile, it turned out that this was not an isolated incident. Human rights activists cited several other similar incidents in Chicago and other cities, calling for a review of the results of internal investigations into those cases. Especially since in July 2015, an oversight office inspector dealing with one of these situations was dismissed after disagreeing with the police version. According to the statistics, police officers were found guilty only in 2 of more than 400 cases.

According to human rights organizations, Chicago is one of the three least prosperous metropolises in the United States. Over the past decade, the municipal authorities have paid over 500 million dollars in compensation to victims of police abuse of power, most of them people of colour. The situation in the country as a whole is not much better. According to a *Washington Post* investigation, two people die every day in the United States as a result of police shootings. Half of those are African Americans. However, criminal proceedings are instituted against law enforcement officials in only 1 per cent of these cases.

A year after the killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson and of Eric Garner in Staten Island the echoes of another tragedy rang out: in August 2015 Vester Flanagan shot the white journalist Alison Parker and her cameraman Adam Ward live on air because they had made racist remarks. A horrifying incident occurred in September this year in Delaware when police officers shot a disabled black person in a wheelchair. Events in the United States clearly demonstrate that the root causes of social and ethnic tension in that country have not been eradicated and that racial problems are a reality. Also, a significant number of crimes are actually committed by the members of law enforcement bodies themselves.

As well as racial problems, intolerance against Muslims is also on the rise in the United States. According to the non-governmental Council on American-Islamic Relations and other human rights organizations, acts of vandalism against mosques have become more common in the country (more than 60 recorded cases in 2015). Muslim community leaders complain of increasing Islamophobia and threats and slurs against them. The situation has also been exacerbated by the recent anti-Islamic remarks by certain presidential candidates.

The discussion on the issue of Syrian refugees is also raising the temperature further. The Obama administration did promise to accept up to 10,000 Syrians. However, even these plans, it seems, are doomed to failure in that the governors of about thirty states are opposed to accepting refugees, considering such a course unsafe.

According to a recent Bloomberg poll, 53 per cent of Americans do not want to accept Syrian refugees and a further 11 per cent believe that asylum should be granted only to Christian refugees. The majority in the House of Representatives voted to suspend the programme on transferring refugees from Syria and Iraq.

In conclusion I should like to stress that the United States authorities should not forget that African Americans and Muslims are a segment of the country's population which deserves to be treated with dignity.

Thank you for your attention.