

PC.DEL/48/11  
21 January 2011

ENGLISH  
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ANVAR AZIMOV,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

20 January 2011

**Regarding the verdict against Mikhail Khodorkovskiy and Platon Lebedev**

Mr. Chairperson,

We are compelled to exercise our right of reply in connection with the statements we have just heard from the distinguished representatives of the United States of America and the European Union regarding the case of Mikhail Khodorkovskiy and Platon Lebedev.

Let me be frank. I am surprised at the suggestion that the former managers of the Yukos oil company are “political prisoners” and that the fresh charges brought against them by the court allegedly point to the need to “ensure enhanced protection of human rights and the rule of law in Russia”.

I should like to point out to our distinguished colleagues that the question they have raised lies exclusively within the competence of the judicial system of the Russian Federation. Any attempts to exert pressure on a court, including from outside, are in our view inadmissible. As the President of the Russian Federation said in his end-of-year interview with the heads of leading Russian television channels, no one has the right to interfere in the prerogatives of the judicial authorities. What is more, I should like to call your attention to the untimely nature of today’s statements, since the procedures provided for by the law, including the possibility of appealing against the sentence, have yet to be completed.

I might recall that in the case of Khodorkovskiy and Lebedev we are talking about serious charges of tax evasion and money-laundering of proceeds obtained through criminal means. In the United States and the countries of the European Union such actions are considered to be punishable offences. As far as we are aware, in the United States they result in sentences of life imprisonment. We regard as unfounded the talk of a supposedly selective approach to justice. Russian courts hear thousands of cases having to do with the responsibility of entrepreneurs before the law.

I should like to take this opportunity to express our deep concern regarding the assassination attempt on 8 January in Tucson on a congresswoman from Arizona, Gabrielle Giffords, during which 6 persons were killed and 13 injured. Among those who perished in that bloodbath was a nine-year-old girl. We express our condolences to the

families and friends at their grievous loss. We trust that in the days and weeks ahead American society will discuss what was, in terms of its scale and cynicism, an outrageous crime and will answer the questions as to how and why it happened and what can be done to minimize the likelihood of something similar happening again in the future. We also trust that our American partners will keep the Permanent Council informed as regards the progress of the inquiry.

I should also like to touch on the subject of Julian Assange, the Australian founder of the notorious WikiLeaks website, which specializes in the publication of classified, including secret, information. That site was founded in 2006. It is significant that until recently the sensitive material posted on it caused no one any particular concern and that the site itself continued to operate as usual. However, no sooner had Assange sent leading international print publications an electronic file of documents on the war in Afghanistan and, a little later, published the correspondence of State Department officials than he instantly found himself facing problems. It was suddenly discovered that he had either raped or sexually molested some woman or other. A Swedish court immediately issued an order for Assange's arrest. One has to ask oneself whether this speed displayed by Themis, the Goddess of Justice, was the result of some kind of pressure. In any case, this is exactly the impression one has.

I might also note that in Scandinavian countries it is virtually impossible for a plaintiff to lose a case involving the charge of rape since, under Swedish law, for example, rape means anything the woman doesn't like. Things go from bad to worse. Interpol issued a "red notice" for the Australian, which is tantamount to putting him on their "most wanted" list. Calls have also been heard from Capitol Hill to the Obama administration urging that criminal proceedings be lodged against Assange.

Let us look at what exactly the founder of this Internet portal is being accused of. If it is the disclosure of secret information, one should recall that he has never worked for the government and never signed any pledge not to divulge classified information. One has to ask: why is it that importunate and shameless paparazzi can photograph people without their consent, interfering in their private, public and political life, and this is not regarded as the disclosure of secrets? Why is news about Al-Qaida regarded as freedom of speech, whereas if that same information comes from WikiLeaks it is considered to be the divulging of secrets? Why are high-ranking US representatives calling for Julian Assange to be tried under United States law, even though he is not a citizen of that country? Furthermore, United States law, as far as we are aware, provides for the prosecution of civil servants responsible for leaking information, but not of foreign citizens who have received this information and passed it on to third parties. Why have payment systems refused to transfer donations for Assange and why has Amazon refused to host his site? Is this not the result of unprecedented pressure being brought to bear by certain State agencies? Lastly, how does all of this square with the commitment to absolute freedom of the Internet proclaimed by the delegation of the United States within these walls?

All in all, whichever way you look at it, there is a growing conviction that the hounding of Julian Assange is a result of his publication of hard-hitting material revealing the workings of American diplomacy. As a result, as the Australian has said, "a new type of tyranny, a new type of privatized censorship, a new type of digital McCarthyism is being pushed from Washington". Assange has also admitted that he is constantly receiving death threats and that his lawyer and children are being threatened, and, what is more, has claimed

that most of these threats are coming from members of the United States armed forces. As the expression goes: there is nothing more to say.

We intend to continue to follow up this subject.

Thank you for your attention.