

Delegation of Belarus

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALYAKSANDR SYCHOV,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS
TO THE OSCE, AT THE MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

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On the human rights situation in Canada

Mr. Chairperson,

We are concerned by the tendency in our Organization for the Permanent Council to focus its attention incessantly and exclusively on countries to the east of Vienna.

It is remarkable, for example, that identical cases concerning the intervention of law enforcement authorities in unauthorized street demonstrations or specific questions relating to the detention of prisoners are given differing attention and interpretations depending on where they take place. These double standards have become so entrenched in the OSCE that our Western colleagues appear to regard them as “a fact of life” and are astonished when we talk about them.

In this context, we should like today to raise the question of the observance of human rights in Canada.

First of all, we are concerned about compliance with OSCE commitments regarding freedom of assembly in that country.

During the G8 and G20 summits in Toronto, 560 demonstrators were arrested while taking part in protest actions. The police were seen to act with excessive harshness in some instances, using various means, including tear gas, to disperse the demonstrators. The day before the summits additional precautionary measures were also taken in connection with potential participants in demonstrations.

The Canadian Prime Minister said that the use of force was the price to pay for security. Thus it would seem that force may be used in Canada to safeguard public order but not in Belarus.

Another serious problem is the growth in intolerance and manifestations of discrimination in Canada. In January this year, for example, acts of vandalism were committed against five synagogues and a Jewish school in Montreal.

We should also like to draw attention to the increasing reports of violations in the regulations concerning the treatment of detainees in Canadian prisons. Among the more recent incidents are the high-profile cases of the prisoners William Saracen and Stacy Bonds.

The Amnesty International report for 2010 contains specific details of the unnecessary use of force by the Canadian police. In particular, it speaks of the use of non-lethal electric prods, which have led to the death of 23 persons in the last eight years.

It is also worth pointing out that the rights of the aboriginal population in Canada are still being violated. There is an extremely high level of violence against women members of aboriginal peoples. Moreover, according to Amnesty International the Canadian authorities have made no progress in the adoption of a national programme to combat violence and discrimination.

Mr. Chairperson,

Our intention in making this statement is to demonstrate that a solid dossier can be compiled for any OSCE participating State, since the situation is far from ideal in countries which describe themselves as “old democracies” and which endeavour to teach others. The OSCE’s gaze is focused simply and exclusively on the east and for that reason the majority of delegations at this table do not even know or attach importance to violations of human rights in Western countries.

We believe that it will be interesting for all delegations to see how the Canadian authorities react to the questions raised by us.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.