

PC.DEL/539/18

3 May 2018

ENGLISH

Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1184th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

3 May 2018

**On the situation in Ukraine and the need to implement
the Minsk agreements**

Mr. Chairperson,

We are observing an escalation of tension in Donbas. The Ukrainian security forces are stepping up the shelling of residential districts and civilian infrastructure. They open fire not only at night but also during the day, using tanks, mortars and grenade launchers.

The list of casualties of the punitive operation, now called the “Combined Forces Operation”, is growing. According to the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM), one civilian was injured in Dokuchaievsk on 22 April as a result of shelling from the direction where Ukrainian armed forces are stationed. Two civilians were killed and another injured on 28 April. On 29 April, a woman was injured in the Petrovsky district of Donetsk. On the same day, civilians came under fire near the Donetsk People’s Republic checkpoint at Olinevka and one of them was injured. On 1 May, two civilians were injured in Verhnotoretske. All told, five people died as a result of Ukrainian security forces’ fire in April and 24 people were injured. Houses were damaged in Yasynuvata, Mykhailivka, Dokuchaievsk and Kominternove.

Incidents involving casualties among the civilian population should be reflected in separate SMM reports. The security forces are deliberately targeting civilian facilities. This is unacceptable.

Despite the security guarantees, the shelling of the Donetsk filtration station has continued. On 28 April, SMM monitors recorded five explosions of multiple-launch rocket system (MLRS) missiles near Yasynuvata, as a result of which the SMM patrol and the planned rotation of Donetsk filtration station workers were suspended for a day. This gross provocation on the part of the Ukrainian armed forces endangered the lives of the monitors and workers and also threatened the uninterrupted operation of the filtration station, which provides water to more than half a million people on both sides of the line of contact. This is the most graphic example of obstacles to the SMM’s work, making other incidents pale in comparison.

Unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) faced hindrances only in territory controlled by the Ukrainian armed forces. On 27 April, a mini UAV came under fire near Ukrainian armed forces-controlled Novoluhanske, and another two UAVs were jammed near Talakivka and Bohdanivka.

We pay tribute to the courage and selflessness of the monitors, who continued their work patrolling the Donetsk filtration station and also facilitated repairs at other sites along the line of contact. This work provided by the SMM is a real help to the people of Donbas. It is clear and visible for the local inhabitants. Apart from ensuring the uninterrupted operation of the Donetsk filtration station, an important result of the SMM's efforts was that the Vodafone network signal was restored in a number of militia-controlled areas in the Donetsk region.

Last year, the Ukrainian authorities established unacceptable conditions for the continuation of the work of Russian officers in the Joint Centre for Control and Co-ordination (JCCC). Their functions were transferred to the local authorities, and an additional burden was also placed on the SMM. We call on the SMM leadership to spare no time and effort in reaching agreement on security guarantees in the event that there is a need to increase the staff for the communication cell with the JCCC.

The Ukrainian Government is provoking tension in Donbas and building up its forces. The SMM confirms that security forces have occupied the Zolote disengagement area and Ukrainian armed forces' military positions, bunkers, dugouts, trenches, minefields, armed soldiers and military equipment have been observed there. The Ukrainian Government is not respecting the ceasefire regime in any of the disengagement areas, and the Ukrainian armed forces are ignoring the fact that the militia are ready to withdraw their forces in Stanytsia Luhanska.

During the week of 23 to 29 April, the SMM observed 201 Ukrainian armed forces' weapons in violation of the withdrawal lines. In comparison, only 16 pieces of weaponry were found in militia-controlled areas. The monitors observed equipment immediately behind the withdrawal lines only in territory controlled by the Ukrainian Government – in total 68 pieces of equipment, including a number of tanks at Rubizhne railway station.

The Ukrainian Government continues laying mines in Donbas – fresh minefields were discovered by the monitors near Vodiane and Novotoshkivske.

Mr. Chairperson,

On 30 April, the Ukrainian authorities announced the end of the so-called Anti-Terrorist Operation. Naturally, no terrorists were found. Since the very beginning, this was a punitive operation against those who disagreed with the nationalist regime that had come to power in Kyiv. You will remember the images from April 2014 when ordinary people in Donbas stopped Ukrainian armed forces' armoured vehicles with their bare hands. But four years ago, on 2 May 2014, the Ukrainian Government launched the active stage of the military operation in Sloviansk and Kramatorsk, using artillery, tanks and the air force. Two helicopters were shot down. It was on that day that casualties on a massive scale actually started. In total, over a period of four years, no less than 10,000 people have been killed and around 30,000 injured, there has been massive destruction and hundreds of

thousands of displaced persons. Responsibility for this lies entirely with the instigators of the bloody adventure – the Ukrainian leadership in Kyiv and its sponsors abroad.

The tragedy in Odessa on 2 May 2014 was a defining moment of the conflict. At least 50 people were burned alive in Trade Union House by a nationalist mob. To this day, the authorities are shielding the instigators and perpetrators. They – and I quote – “largely failed to investigate their deaths, focusing on alleged crimes committed by individuals seeking more autonomy.” These words are taken from a report on Ukraine by the United States Department of State, which usually endeavours to cover up any crimes by the Ukrainian Government. International organizations and non-governmental organizations have also drawn similar conclusions.

Here is another quote from the State Department report. “The government generally failed to take adequate steps to prosecute or punish most officials who committed abuses, resulting in a climate of impunity. Human rights groups and the United Nations noted significant deficiencies in investigations into human rights abuses committed by government security forces, in particular into allegations of torture, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention, and other abuses reportedly perpetrated by the Security Service of Ukraine.”

The Anti-Terrorist Operation was nationalist in essence, inhumane in its goals and criminal in its execution. It should have been stopped. Changing only the format of the operation is unlikely to lead to peace. This is clear from the increasingly militaristic rhetoric, the boosting of the Ukrainian armed forces with imported weapons and the arrival of Western instructors in Donbas. We caution the Ukrainian Government against any attempts at repeating the military adventures of summer 2014 and winter 2015.

We urge all OSCE participating States not to become party to the Kyiv regime’s war crimes and not to provoke a disastrous military confrontation in the centre of Europe.

Does the Ukrainian Government’s indulgent attitude towards neo-Nazism deserve support? Marches took place in Ukraine at the end of April in memory of the Galicia SS Division. The glorification of the criminal Stepan Bandera has almost become a State-sponsored cult. As for Right Sector, C14 and Azov, these neo-Nazi organizations are operating freely and with impunity in Ukraine. We urge the SMM to prepare a dedicated report on nationalist activity in Ukraine at the earliest opportunity.

The crackdown on the rights of the Russian-speaking population and national minorities in Ukraine has reached an unprecedented level in the areas of language policy, education and the media.

In the social sphere too, the Ukrainian Government has demonstrated a contemptuous attitude towards its citizens living in Donbas. Since January 2017, there has been a trade embargo in place, which has severed economic ties between businesses on either side of the line of contact. The region was cut off from Ukraine’s currency and financial system even earlier. The payment of pensions and social benefits has been made as complicated as possible. The Ukrainian Government has created problems with the issuance of identity documents, diplomas and vehicle number plates.

The Kyiv regime is trying to use popular religious sentiments for political ends, provoking a split in society by encouraging attacks on the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

Enough has been said about freedom of the media in Ukraine, but I should like to draw the attention of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media to these latest examples. On 1 May, Italian journalist Giorgio Bianchi, who had planned to attend the commemorative events in Odessa, was detained at Kyiv's Boryspil airport. On the same day, Ukrainian border guards prevented another journalist from entering the country – Jan Rychetský of the Prague-based *Parlamentní Listy* online media outlet. He has been banned from entering Ukraine until 2020.

In conclusion, I should remind you once again of the need for full implementation of the Minsk agreements, including the political aspects. The Ukrainian authorities continue to ignore them. In Kyiv they do not want the outcome envisaged under the Steinmeier formula. Their fantasy is that local elections will take place in Donbas only after the Ukrainian armed forces “restore order” there. Otherwise, so they say, the elections will not be honest and fair. Local elections in 40 merged territorial communities in Ukraine on 29 April showed what Kyiv-style fairness looks like. According to Oleksiy Koshel, head of the Committee of Voters of Ukraine, political parties and candidates set a record in terms of the volume and scale of vote buying. If the most recent election campaigns are anything to go by, “this impunity has allowed politicians to turn the elections into a supermarket for selling votes.”

It would not be a good idea for Donbas to emulate such a standard.

Thank you for your attention.