



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International
Organizations in Vienna

PC.DEL/1045/18
31 August 2018

ENGLISH only

Statement on illegal detention of Oleg Sentsov by the Russian Federation

As delivered by Ihor Lossovskyi,
Deputy Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna,
to the 1194th meeting of the Permanent Council,
30 August 2018

Mr. Chairperson,

The fate of the Ukrainian citizens, taken hostage by Kremlin as political prisoners, has been in the focus of the Permanent Council from the very beginning of Russia's invasion into Ukraine.

Today we reiterate our resolute protest against the ongoing unlawful actions of the Russian Federation towards Oleg Sentsov and many more Ukrainian citizens, who have been prosecuted by the Russian authorities for their opposition to the Russian occupation of Ukraine's Crimea.

We express our grave concern about the health condition of Oleg Sentsov, who has been on hunger strike since 14 May in his cell in a remote penal colony in the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous District of northern Russia, where he is currently serving a 20-years prison term on utterly fabricated charges of terrorism. Oleg was forced to resort to this extreme form of protest not for his own freedom, but for the freedom to all Ukrainian citizens detained or imprisoned on spurious accusations related to Russia's ongoing hybrid war in Ukraine.

The list of Ukrainian political prisoners, unlawfully held by the Russian authorities, contains more than 70 names and it is constantly growing. These individuals have never perpetrated any crime and were imprisoned on bogus charges, on the basis of false "confessions" obtained under torture, fake witnesses, planted ammunition. The latter was the reason for the arrest and conviction of Volodymyr Balukh, a Crimean farmer who rejected the Russian occupation of Crimea and kept raising a Ukrainian flag over his house in the Ukrainian peninsula.

Mr. Chairperson,

As we speak, Oleg is entering 109th day of his hunger strike. His health condition remains critical and deteriorates daily. He has lost over 30 kg in weight, his life is in severe danger. We remain concerned about his treatment by the Russian authorities, as Ukrainian consular officers and Ukrainian Parliament's Commissioner on Human Rights have been denied access to Oleg Sentsov.

Together with Oleg Sentsov, other Ukrainians, for instance Volodymyr Balukh, continue to hold a hunger strike balancing between life and death behind the Russian bars in protest of Russia's ongoing detention of Ukrainian political prisoners.

Despite the numerous strong calls by the international community, the Russian Federation continues to ignore its Minsk commitment regarding the release of all hostages and illegally detained persons on the basis of "all for all" principle, which applies to abducted Ukrainian citizens illegally detained in Russia.

**Mr. Chairperson,
Distinguished colleagues,**

We highly appreciate the international solidarity, including from the OSCE community, in urging the immediate and unconditional release by Russia of Oleg Sentsov and other Ukrainian political prisoners.

We urge the Russian side to stop the judicial farce, which ruins human lives for the sake of political ambitions. We urge the Russian Federation to comply with their OSCE commitments and their obligations under international law, concerning the respect for fundamental freedoms, and to immediately release Oleg Sentsov and other Ukrainian political prisoners who are still kept in custody on the territory of the occupied Crimea and in the Russian Federation.

We call on the international community to condemn these cynical crimes against fundamental human rights and step up political and diplomatic pressure on the Russian Federation to ensure that all illegally detained citizens of Ukraine are released and guaranteed safe return home.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.