



**LIETUVOS RESPUBLIKOS NUOLATINĖ ATSTOVYBĖ  
PRIE TARPTAUTINIŲ ORGANIZACIJŲ VIENOJE**

**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA  
TO THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN VIENNA**

**Statement**

**on the Russian Federation actions against Lithuanian officials and its judicial system  
as delivered by Ambassador Aurimas Taurantas, Permanent Representative of  
Lithuania to the International Organisations in Vienna,  
at the 1229<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council  
23 May 2019**

Lithuania would like to draw attention of the participating states to the recent actions of the Russian Federation, which are contradicting the international law as well as the principles and commitments of the OSCE.

Almost 30 years ago, after Lithuania restored its independence, the Soviet Union used military force seeking to re-incorporate our country and to remove the legitimate government.

During the most dramatic episode of that aggression, 14 civilians were killed and more than 800 were wounded when Soviet troops stormed the TV Tower and the Radio and Television building in Vilnius in the early hours of January 13, 1991.

The so-called January 13 case was launched to investigate the act of aggression against civilian population. It was the largest and most thoroughly examined legal case in modern Lithuanian history.

After 28 years, the people of Lithuania finally got the legal evaluation of these tragic events. By the ruling of Vilnius Regional Court, adopted 27 March 2019, 67 former Soviet officials and servicemen were found guilty and sentenced for war crimes and crimes against humanity because of their direct involvement in those events. Majority of the defendants were sentenced in absentia.

During investigation, Russian authorities took all possible measures to pro-actively hide and protect decision makers and perpetrators of this act of armed aggression against Lithuania's civilians, thus shielding them from liability. Out of 289 requests of Lithuania for legal assistance, based on bilateral agreements, only five were partially fulfilled by the Russian Federation.

Moreover, instead of demonstrating understanding and respect for the rule of law principle the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation recently initiated proceedings against Lithuanian judges, prosecutors and investigators directly involved in this case.

We consider these criminal investigations instituted by the Russian Federation against Lithuanian officials as politically motivated act of open pressure and disregard of Lithuania, its judicial system and law enforcement officials. Meanwhile, a propaganda and disinformation campaign is conducted in the state controlled media in the Russian Federation, developing conspiracy theories and slandering the government of Lithuania.

Such actions of direct interference with the independent judiciary of sovereign state and harassment of its judges and other officials for exercising their constitutional functions should neither be tolerated nor justified.

Lithuania is deeply concerned, that the Russian Federation continues systematically undermine the fundamental principles and commitments of the OSCE, where the rule of law is a cornerstone among them.

Russia must stop politicization of history, one-sided interpretation of International Law and realize that justice is ensured by courts, not by Kremlin and that there is no statute of limitations for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Instead, Russian Federation should double its efforts in strengthening and ensuring independence of its own judicial system.