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**STATEMENT BY  
MR. DMITRY POLYANSKIY, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE  
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1550th MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

22 January 2026

**On the ongoing violations of the rights of the Russian and Russian-speaking population  
in Latvia**

Mr. Chairperson,

Latvia's ongoing violations of its obligations and commitments related to democratic freedoms and human rights, including with regard to national minorities, are a source of particular concern.

The Latvian authorities are pursuing a consistent policy of cancelling all things Russian. In so doing, they pay scant regard to the fact that such "cancel culture" is primarily hurting their country's own population, history and traditions, which are inseparable from ours. However, this does not hold the Russophobes back but, rather, merely spurs them on.

We shall not dwell in detail on all the instances of flagrant violation of the rights of Russian and Russian-speaking people, who, by the way, make up about 40 per cent of the population of that Baltic State. Anyone wishing to do so can consult the relevant reports by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which we are circulating at the OSCE and which contain references to, *inter alia*, data from international organizations and human rights bodies. We shall cite just a few particularly egregious facts that cannot be passed over in silence. The Latvian representatives will be hard put to shrug these off with lame excuses or to chalk them all up to "Kremlin propaganda", though, as experience shows, our colleagues continue shamelessly to take that tack.

We would remind you that – contrary to the judgment of the Nuremberg Tribunal and numerous international instruments, including the resolution adopted annually by the United Nations General Assembly on combating the glorification of Nazism – Latvia, along with Canada, Estonia and Lithuania, continues to unapologetically honour SS criminals. "Forest Brothers", many of whom are former Waffen-SS legionnaires, enjoy a privileged status, in contrast to veterans of the Great Patriotic War who fought against the Nazis.

The Latvian leadership's revanchist aspirations reached their apogee with the adoption of legal prohibitions on celebrating Victory Day on 9 May, on displaying symbols of victory over Nazism and on

holding events near Soviet war memorials. “Offenders” face being thrown into prison under the infamous Article 74.1 of the Latvian Criminal Code (“justification of genocide and war crimes”).

An open “war on monuments”, the sacrilegious exhumation of graves and the desecration of memorials to the soldier-liberators have become an everyday reality in Latvia. In their Russophobic frenzy, the authorities even dismantled a monument to military commander and hero of the Patriotic War of 1812 Mikhail Barclay de Tolly, who died in the early nineteenth century. This can only be described as knuckleheaded ignorance.

Over the past few years, the Latvian authorities have been using contrived pretexts to persecute prominent human rights defenders and public figures. There are hundreds of such politically motivated criminal cases. Just look at the show trial against Member of the European Parliament and leader of the Latvian Russian Union party Tatjana Ždanoka.

European standards on the treatment of prisoners are grossly violated, including with regard to the well-known scholar Alexander Gaponenko. Owing to unbearable conditions of detention, Oļegs Buraks, a veteran of the Latvian Interior Ministry, died in prison, as did political prisoner Valerijs Dudens and Igors Bobirs, who had been arrested on fabricated charges of espionage. Journalists who are not in the authorities’ good books have also been targeted, including Andrejs Jakovļevs, Vladimirs Dorofejevs, Ludmila Pribiļska, Sergejs Melkonovs, Aleksandrs Malnačs, Andrejs Solopenko and Alla Berezovska, among others.

The crowning “achievement” of these despicable Russophobic repressions was the arrest, in December 2025, of Viktors Guščins, a prominent historian and human rights activist. What made him so displeasing to the powers that be in Riga? The answer is obvious. Not only is the detainee an ethnic Russian, but he is also an active fighter against the falsification of history and a defender of the rights of our compatriots.

And what about the disgraceful phenomenon of institutionalized statelessness? Just think about it: some 165,000 inhabitants of Latvia, or almost 9 per cent of the population, fall into that category. The Latvian authorities do not recognize them as members of a national minority and, accordingly, have excluded them from the scope of application of the Council of Europe’s Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. “Non-citizens” living in that country are discriminated against. They are all denied a range of social, economic and political rights. In particular, they may not vote or be elected; they may not occupy posts in the civil service; they may not sit as judges. We could go on and on.

However, the Russophobes are still not satisfied – the Government of that Baltic State now intends to deport all those who fail to pass “filtration procedures”. Following the adoption of some much-discussed amendments to the immigration law of Latvia, around 3,000 people have already been forced to leave its territory. Thousands of Russian speakers have a continued threat of deportation hanging over them. Officials in Riga are not in the least bothered about the fact that many of these people are elderly and have health issues.

The Latvian authorities continue to make the Russian language out to be one of the principal threats they are faced with. One of the main tasks set out in the National Language Policy Guidelines for 2021–2027 is to combat the consequences of the “Soviet occupation” in the linguistic mores of society. Hence the squeezing out of the Russian language from all spheres of public life in that country.

From 1 January 2026, Russian-language television and radio broadcasting in public media has ceased to be allowed. In addition, the value added tax on the sale of books in Russian is being hiked up. And this

despite the fact that the information space in Latvia is being strictly censored (as illustrated by the blocking of television channels, websites and Russian information resources).

The Baltic xenophobes are doing their utmost to deprive our compatriots' children of the right to be educated in the Russian language. In a resolution adopted on 2 April 2025, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, which can hardly be suspected of being sympathetic to Russia, called upon Latvia to ensure the right of persons belonging to a "non-titular" nation to receive an education in their native language, including in private schools and kindergartens specially set up for that purpose. However, the powers that be in Riga will not take orders even from the Council of Europe.

Against this backdrop, Russophobia has become deep-rooted among Latvian politicians, who allow themselves to make racist statements with regard to Russians. Such pronouncements merely serve to exacerbate inter-ethnic confrontation.

All the aforementioned facts, which can scarcely be disputed, indicate that the Latvian authorities are not only pandering to neo-Nazis, but have also set out to put neo-Nazi ideology into practice. The policy of racial discrimination against the Russian and Russian-speaking population of Latvia serves these very purposes.

We call upon the relevant OSCE executive structures to finally take a stand against the ongoing repressions and react to the widespread discrimination that Russian and Russian-speaking people in Latvia are enduring.

We would ask that this statement be regarded as an official request addressed to the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Christophe Kamp, the Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Maria Telalian, and the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Jan Braathu.

Thank you for your attention.