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**STATEMENT BY
MR. ALEKSANDR VOLGAREV, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1431st MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

6 July 2023

On the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture

Mr. Chairperson,

Torture and other forms of inhuman or degrading treatment and punishment are one of the most serious human rights violations. In 1997, with a view to eradicating this phenomenon completely and ensuring the effective functioning of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 26 June the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture.

The situation in Ukraine is particularly worrying – the Kyiv regime has been responsible for brutal reprisals against the civilian population over a period of many years. Long before the start of the Russian special military operation, international monitoring bodies, including the United Nations human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine, had repeatedly drawn attention to instances of the use of torture, inhuman treatment, intimidation and sexual violence by Ukrainian formations. These atrocities were committed in secret detention centres operated by the Security Service of Ukraine. The impunity for these crimes was also of particular concern to specialists in international law.

The sadistic practices employed by members of the Tornado nationalist battalion are widely known. Their lawless actions against the population of Donbas sparked such an outcry that even the former Chief Military Prosecutor of Ukraine, Anatolii Matios, was forced to acknowledge the crimes of the armed neo-Nazis. They were convicted, but soon the Kyiv regime needed these thugs again: in 2022, members of the Tornado battalion were released from prison early, handed weapons and given the opportunity to return to Donbas to carry out further crimes against the civilian population.

The torture of captured Russian military personnel being perpetrated by the Ukrainian armed forces, neo-Nazi formations and foreign mercenaries is also unprecedented in its cruelty. Blatant violence, which the Kyiv regime's Western handlers stubbornly ignore, is no longer being hushed up even by international bodies – cases involving the torture of Russian citizens are reflected in reports prepared under the auspices of the United Nations and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).

At the beginning of June, the delegation of the Russian Federation to the Vienna negotiations on military security and arms control distributed the relevant detailed materials. They are shocking.

The horrific evidence of torture, violence and murders committed by Ukrainian neo-Nazis and military personnel is also confirmed in the joint publication by the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, the Russian Military Historical Society and the Foundation for the Study of Democracy, “The Black Book: Atrocities by Present-Day Banderites, 2014–2023”. We urge you to familiarize yourselves with this material, which we are distributing today.

Among the egregious crimes of the Ukrainian neo-Nazis, the terrible tragedy at the Trade Union House in Odessa, where on 2 May 2014 radicals burned dozens of civilians alive in front of the law enforcement agencies, stands out the most. The real perpetrators have still not been brought to justice and those responsible for these atrocities remain at large.

Mr. Chairperson,

The hushing up by the Kyiv regime’s Western handlers of such inhuman practices has long ceased to surprise us. Torture is not alien to some “democratic” OSCE participating States and has been practised in third countries.

The aggressive assault by the United States of America and its allies on Iraq was accompanied by the torture of prisoners in Abu Ghraib prison. The attack on Syria is also known for the horrors that have occurred in the US-controlled Al-Hol refugee camp. According to international human rights organizations, mass disappearances, sexual violence and inhumane conditions of detention may certainly amount to torture and other forms of inhuman treatment. The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic concluded that the suffering inflicted on refugees in the camp “may amount to a war crime”. It should be noted that there are hundreds of children in the camp, who face inhuman treatment on a daily basis, but the US Government is indifferent to their fate.

The US authorities take no less of a cavalier attitude to the long-standing recommendations by international bodies, for example, by the ODIHR, on the need to close down the Guantánamo Bay detention camp.

For the entire civilized world, this institution remains a symbol of torture and inhuman treatment. Last week, the United Nations Human Rights Council Special Rapporteur on counter-terrorism, Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, also came to these conclusions. Following her visit to the base, the expert expressed “serious concerns about the continued detention of 30 men and the persistent arbitrariness that pervades their day-to-day existence”. According to Ms. Ní Aoláin, the detention infrastructure entails constant surveillance, undue use of restraints, and other arbitrary procedures that do not comply with human rights standards. The Special Rapporteur was also left with doubts about the effectiveness of medical care for prisoners and their access to a fair trial. Taken together, this amounts to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, which once again confirms the need to close the prison.

Mr. Chairperson,

Human rights abuses by the United States in this area are taking place with the complicity of European States. A number of countries in the region, including the former OSCE Chairmanships of Sweden and Poland and the current OSCE Chairmanship of North Macedonia, participated for a time in the US “extraordinary rendition” programme. Simply put, they were part of the CIA’s network of secret prisons. Torture, euphemistically referred to as “enhanced interrogation techniques”, became the norm there.

In the European Union, inhuman treatment is also meted out to asylum seekers on a broad scale. The Council of Europe’s Committee for the Prevention of Torture has concluded that conditions of prolonged detention of detained migrants can frequently be characterized as degrading treatment. The practice of

“pushbacks”, to which we referred at the previous Permanent Council meeting, is anything but civilized. Just look at the footage published by *The New York Times* at the end of May this year, which spread around the world, showing the Greek Coast Guard taking illegal migrants out to sea and dumping them on rafts.

However, the inhuman treatment of asylum seekers by EU countries does not end with brutal “pushbacks”. In March of this year, it emerged that EU Member States were also involved in torture outside the region. The United Nations Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Libya came to the depressing conclusion that the European Union had financially and technically supported the efforts of the Libyan authorities to intercept and return migrants. As part of these “operations”, migrants were subjected to torture, arbitrary detention, violence and so on.

The treatment of asylum seekers in US detention centres is no less ruthless either, as is often revealed to the media and relevant civil society organizations. Migrants staying in these facilities have repeatedly reported unsanitary conditions, lack of medical care, beatings and cruelty on the part of the management of these institutions.

Mr. Chairperson,

The problem of the use of violence, arbitrariness and racism among those who are supposed to be concerned about the population’s safety – law enforcement agents – has not gone away either. It is difficult to forget the shocking footage of the cruel, inhuman and prolonged violence meted out by US police officers to African American George Floyd and the brutal dispersal of the demonstrations that followed. The French guardians of law and order are also renowned for their methods of work. The killing of a 17-year-old teenager of Arab descent by a French police officer in Nanterre on 27 June was the third such incident since the beginning of 2023. There is no question that the methods of force used by the police to suppress the current protests in the country may amount to torture and cruel and inhuman treatment. We should like to ask the distinguished Permanent Representative of France whether she would be willing to inform the Permanent Council about the riots in her country and the actions of law enforcement officers in the context of respect for human rights and the Government’s desire to resolve the situation by force. For weeks, the whole world has been shocked by what is happening. We would be very grateful for such information.

Mr. Chairperson,

The aforementioned facts merely confirm the widespread nature of the problem of torture and inhuman treatment and the importance of uncompromisingly combating them in the OSCE area. In this regard, we call upon the participating States to refrain from double standards and to fulfil the relevant international obligations in good faith.

Thank you for your attention.