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Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. VLADIMIR ZHEGLOV,  
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE 1321st MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

24 June 2021

**On serious human rights violations in Lithuania**

Madam Chairperson,

We should like once again to draw attention to the human rights situation in Lithuania. The Lithuanian authorities declare their intention to “protect universal rights and freedoms around the world”, but do not, however, intend to apply this approach to themselves.

Manifestations of neo-Nazism and anti-Semitism, and violations of the rights of national minorities are becoming widespread in Lithuania. History is being rewritten to suit the political agenda, and Nazi criminals and their accomplices are being declared heroes at the prompting of the authorities.

A typical example revealing the situation in this country is the ruling of 31 March 2021 by the Court of Appeal of Lithuania in a trumped-up case concerning well-known events that took place in Vilnius in January 1991. In it, the prison sentences of 16 of the 67 persons previously found guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity by the Vilnius Regional Court were increased. Most of them were sentenced *in absentia*. The Russians Gennady Ivanov and Yuri Mel have fallen victim to this repressive policy: they are sitting in a Lithuanian prison as a result of unjust sentences handed down by a local court. Their prison sentences were recently increased from four to five years and seven to ten years respectively.

Freedom of speech and the media in Lithuania is not as it should be. Back in July 2020, the authorities banned seven Russia Today channels from broadcasting. This decision was supported by the then Minister of Foreign Affairs Linas Linkevičius, who proudly stated that “Lithuania started applying restrictions on Russian media seven years ago.”

In addition, in February, the Radio and Television Commission of Lithuania threatened to suspend the Russian television channel RTR-Planeta from broadcasting after the 13 January edition of the “Vesti” news programme was broadcast. One of its stories dealt with the January 1991 events in Vilnius. We would recall that back in 2018, the Commission had already imposed a 12-month ban on the retransmission of this Russian television channel. It is conspicuous that this illegal ban was overturned by the Supreme Administrative Court of Lithuania on 12 May 2021. This once again underlines the bias of the Lithuanian authorities towards Russian media.

Initiatives by the authorities aimed at restricting freedom of expression are affecting not only the media but also individuals, for example, those who point to the involvement of the infamous Forest Brothers in Nazi crimes against the Jews. This is a legitimate concern for international monitoring bodies. In its concluding observations on Lithuania's fourth periodic report back in 2018, the United Nations Human Rights Committee pointed to the practice of including such individuals in the annual reports of the Department of State Security and the Second Department of Operational Services of the Lithuanian Ministry of Defence (military intelligence). The absence of any information regarding the criteria for such a publication or its justification was highlighted.

In that context, we should like to recall that in May 2019 a court imposed a heavy fine on Viačeslav Titov, a member of the Klaipeda city council representing the interests of Russian-speaking voters – and only because he was not afraid to speak out openly against the glorification of one of the Forest Brothers' leaders, Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas, who has the blood of countless civilians on his hands. The words of the people's elected representative were regarded by the local judiciary as a "desecration of memory", "incitement to hatred" and "denial of the Soviet occupation". Six months later, the Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Lithuania prematurely terminated Mr. Titov's mandate as a councillor.

The journalists Aurimas Drižius and Vladimiras Klopovskis, the anti-fascists Birutė Dilpšienė, Henrikas Jodiška, Laima Plungienė and Romas Plungė, Socialist People's Front activist Agnė Grigaitė and others have come under severe pressure from Lithuanian opponents of "dissent". Arrests, searches and interrogations are taking place, as are open threats from the local security services and media harassment.

Against the background of the 80th anniversary of the outbreak of the Great Patriotic War, the long-standing problem of anti-Semitism in Lithuania cannot be overlooked. It has been gaining momentum there lately. These conclusions have been repeatedly confirmed by the Kantor Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry and the Israeli Ministry of Diaspora Affairs. Incidents include the demolition of monuments, and threats and insults to members of the Jewish community, not to mention the neo-Nazi marches that take place regularly in Lithuanian cities. The glorification of Nazi henchmen has become the main element of the Lithuanian Government's policy on "history". And this in a country where some 220,000 Lithuanian Jews, that is 95 per cent of the Jewish population, perished at the hands of the Nazis and their local accomplices during the Second World War.

There are plenty of serious problems in general in Lithuania – and this is by no means a complete list. Unfortunately, the European Union looks on benignly at the negative processes taking place in the country. We therefore call on the authorities in Vilnius and Brussels to take immediate steps to remedy the situation in accordance with their international commitments. The specialist structures in our Organization, including the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Representative on Freedom of the Media, should provide them with the necessary assistance.

Thank you for your attention.