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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1096th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

14 April 2016

**On the violation by Turkey of human rights and the norms of international
humanitarian law in relation to the Kurdish minority**

Mr. Chairperson,

Gross and systematic violence continues to be used against the Kurdish minority in Turkey. According to the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey, over 300 civilians have died during the so-called counter-terrorism operation conducted by the Turkish Government since July 2015. By late March 2016, around 80 corpses had yet to be identified. According to a recent announcement by the mayor of the city of Diyarbakır, Mr. Fırat Anlı, 600 civilians had already lost their lives. Human rights advocates claim that there were many women, children and elderly people among the dead. The investigation into cases which had been opened earlier regarding mass graves discovered in the south-east of the country has not been completed.

Tanks, aircraft and artillery have been used against the Kurds. Indiscriminate and excessive force has been used in defiance of the norms of international humanitarian law. These actions have already received the censure of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Nils Muižnieks, and a number of non-governmental organizations, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

Several regions in the provinces of Bingöl, Mardin and Tunceli have been declared “security zones”. A curfew continues to be in force there, as a result of which the population has been deprived of timely access to food and basic necessities; social and educational institutions have stopped working; access for politicians, journalists and representatives of humanitarian organizations has been restricted. People have had to flee their homes. Reports from the International Crisis Group indicate that there are a total of over 355,000 displaced persons.

The city of Nusaybin, Mardin province, has effectively been under siege for a long time. Artillery was deployed during an operation against supporters of the Kurdistan Workers' Party. The resulting humanitarian situation which has emerged in the city is exceedingly complex and can be compared to that of the beleaguered city of Cizre, Şırnak

province, where the majority of the residential buildings are not being restored. The fleeing population of the town of Sur, Diyarbakır province, has suffered terribly. Some 3,000 companies have closed down there, while 20,000 local inhabitants have abandoned their homes. The confiscation of privately-owned land or land controlled by religious organizations in Sur is alarming. This includes territories which host monuments listed as United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage sites.

The picture emerging from reports by journalists and witness accounts is shocking in its brutality. Attention should in particular be drawn to reprisals by Turkish forces against civilians who had been taking refuge in the cellars of residential housing in Cizre. It has been established that in one building, some 150 people were burned alive. This has been confirmed in particular by a member of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (Turkish parliament) and by former member of the European Parliament, Ms. Feleknas Uca, as well as in a host of interviews with family members of the victims in press publications such as *Deutsche Welle*.

According to the Platform for the Struggle for the Rights of Women Held Captive by Force, which defends the interests of Yazidi Kurds, the Turkish authorities have noted numerous cases of attempted Islamization and pressure exerted on Yazidi refugees arriving from Iraq and staying in Diyarbakır province.

Developments of this kind in Turkey cannot be regarded as civilized. They have not escaped the attention of Turkish civil society, whose opinions the authorities try to hush by force. It is worth remembering that at the start of this year, a string of arrests occurred of academics and intellectuals in Turkey who had signed the petition “we will not be a party to this crime” and had expressed critical views of the military operations in the south-east of the country. Investigations were launched against over one thousand individuals. The cue for the start of the repressions was in fact the words of the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who equated the actions of the academics to those of terrorists. Concern on this account has already been expressed within the OSCE Permanent Council.

The surprising backdrop to this is that the United States of America and the European Union have not expressed any distinct views on the actual violence perpetrated against the Kurds. This latest display of double standards is clearly due to the political situation.

Let us not forget that by carrying on its military operation against the Kurds, Turkey is violating human rights commitments adopted in the OSCE, including against ethnic minorities, as well as the relevant norms of international humanitarian law.

We call on the Turkish Government to refrain from reliance on force to resolve the deadlock in the Kurdish problem, which dates back many years, and to safeguard the rights of Turkey's Kurdish civilian population.

Thank you for your attention.