



Permanent Mission of Ukraine
to the International Organizations in Vienna

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Statement on “Abduction and illegal detention of Ukrainian citizens by the Russian Federation”

As delivered by the Delegation of Ukraine
to the 1090th meeting of the Permanent Council,
18 February 2016

Mr. Chairman,

The Delegation of Ukraine expresses again its resolute protest against the on-going unlawful actions of the Russian Federation in relation to the people's deputy of Ukraine and PACE member Nadiya Savchenko, Ukrainian filmmaker Oleg Sentsov, civil society activist Oleksandr Kolchenko and other Ukrainian citizens, who had been abducted from the territory of Ukraine and remain illegally detained by the Russian authorities.

We reiterate that their criminal prosecutions in Russia are illegal and illegitimate as they constitute a flagrant violation of norms of international law, OSCE commitments and the Minsk agreements. Unfounded criminal prosecution of Ukrainian citizens in Russia has become part of the Kremlin's anti-Ukrainian policies.

The situation of the illegally detained Ukrainian citizens in Russia continues to gravely deteriorate and repressive measures towards them increase.

The Russian court continues its politically motivated proceedings, ignoring ample evidence of the innocence of Nadiya Savchenko, as well as her diplomatic immunities as PACE member. Ms. Savchenko is in the 63rd day of her hunger strike to protest against the illegal and inhumane actions of the Russian authorities.

Oleg Sentsov and Oleksandr Kolchenko were transported from Rostov to the remote Russian regions of Yakutiya and Chelyabinsk respectively to complicate the scrutiny of their cases by the human rights defenders. It also presents significant difficulties for the work of their defence lawyers and further worsens the conditions of their illegal detention.

According to the defence lawyer of another political prisoner, Henadiy Afanasyev, his health conditions severely deteriorated since he was moved to reportedly one of the worst places within the Russian penitentiary system - the Syktyvkar penal colony N25 in Russia's Komi Republic, known for its GULAG colonies, recognized as a major instrument of political repression in the Soviet Union. His lawyer reported Afanasyev's serious illness, but he cannot receive adequate

medical treatment. The Ukrainian consular officials have not been admitted to Henadiy Afanasyev in violation of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations.

We emphasize that the Russian Federation bears full responsibility for the life, health and observance of the rights of all Ukrainian citizens kept behind bars in Russia.

In addition, the transfer of Oleg Sentsov, Oleksandr Kolchenko and Henadiy Afanasyev to the remote Russian regions significantly limits the possibility for their relatives from Ukraine to visit them and therefore violate Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which guarantees the right to respect for family life.

We condemn the recent decision of the Tarasovskiy District Court of Rostov oblast of Russia to extend Mr. Lytvynov's illegal detention for another 6 months, following already 18 months of unlawful incarceration in Russia. The court continues to ignore the evidence of his innocence presented by the defence. Moreover, despite Lytvynov's refusal, the state defence lawyer was assigned granting the Russian authorities additional instrument of influence on the case.

We remain concerned over the reports that the illegally detained Ukrainian citizens continue to face torture and other ill-treatment. These reports remain ignored by the Russian authorities.

Against this backdrop, on 11 February 2016 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine called on the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture, the UN Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention of the UN Human Rights Council and the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances of the UN Human Rights Council to closely monitor the situation with the citizens of Ukraine, illegally detained by Russia.

We again encourage the OSCE Chairmanship, OSCE Institutions and the participating States to use all instruments available to facilitate the release of Nadiya Savchenko, Oleg Sentsov, Oleksandr Kolchenko and others.

We reiterate again our call on the Russian Federation to immediately grant consular access to all Ukrainian citizens kept in custody in Russia.

We urge Russia to comply with its legal obligations and political commitments and to immediately and unconditionally release all Ukrainian citizens illegally detained or imprisoned in Russia.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.