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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE 1093rd MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

17 March 2016

**On the violation of the rights of Russian journalists in  
Lithuania and Latvia**

Mr. Chairperson,

We should like to draw attention to the problem of the violation of Russian journalists' rights in Lithuania and Latvia.

On 10 March, All-Russia State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company correspondents were expelled from Lithuania after trying to interview members of the Russian opposition who had come to take part in the so-called Free Russia Forum organized in Trakai by the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Incidentally, the very fact that an event for the Russian opposition was held in a country that pursues policies which are far from friendly to the Russian Federation runs counter to the Helsinki Final Act principles of non-intervention in internal affairs.

The journalists on the list of undesirable persons stand accused, as has become habitual for Lithuania, of being a "threat to national security". In addition, attempts were made to indict a film crew with supposedly "unethical", hooligan behaviour, although what really happened can be seen from the footage that the correspondents managed to shoot, even without any commentary. A polite request for an interview made to the far from obscure Garry Kasparov descended into insults aimed at the journalists who were provoked in every possible way into a scuffle. The video is freely accessible on the Internet for anyone wishing to familiarize themselves with it. The Lithuanian authorities did not conduct any kind of investigation, but simply expelled the entire film crew.

This is the latest example of the Lithuanian authorities obstructing journalists' professional activities and a flagrant breach of the rights of media workers as provided for in international documents.

Evidence of this is easy enough to find. Article 13 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states that an alien may be expelled from a State only in accordance with law. Not to mention the founding document of our Organization – the Helsinki Final

Act, in which the participating States reaffirm that the legitimate pursuit of their professional activity will neither render journalists liable to expulsion nor otherwise penalize them.

Since the accusations against the Russian journalists are based on articles regarding threats to national security in the Republic of Lithuania Law on the Legal Status of Aliens, it would not be uninteresting to refer to the Lithuanian Law on the Basics of National Security of 19 December 1996. Pursuant to that, the main objects of national security shall be:

- Human and citizen's rights and freedoms as well as personal security;
- The values cherished by the nation, its rights and conditions for a free development.
- Independence of the State;
- Constitutional order;
- Integrity of the territory of the State;
- Environment and cultural heritage;
- Public health.

Obviously, the Russian journalists' attempts to cover an event or interview their fellow nationals who are not Lithuanian citizens did not constitute a threat to the objects of national security.

The upshot is that this reason was cited by the Lithuanian authorities simply because no other grounds for expelling the Russian journalists could be found.

There is also no available evidence that the correspondents were carrying out their activities on the territory of the Republic of Lithuania illegally or pursuing other activities posing a threat to Lithuanian national security.

It is regrettable that we have not seen a public assessment of these incidents by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media.

We call on the Lithuanian authorities to stop persecuting journalists on the pretext of defending the State from non-existent threats and we look forward to clear explanations on the substance of the matter.

We are no less appalled by the decision of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Latvia to prohibit the entry into the country of the lawyers for a representative of the international news agency Russia Today. And this is not the first typical example of democracy Latvian style. Or rather, European style. Because this is all happening with the tacit consent of the European Union, a well-known advocate of freedom and pluralism in the media.

The coverage by independent journalist Graham Phillips of the Waffen SS legionnaires' procession held in Riga yesterday earned him deportation and a three-year ban on entering Latvia. The correspondent was trying to get the procession participants to explain why they were glorifying fascism, which resulted in police officers forcibly removing him

from the event and detaining him at a police station for several hours. The integrity of this British freelancer is well known – multiple attempts have been made to brand him as a “propagandist” for his attempts to cover events impartially. Since that had no impact whatsoever on his professional status, it was only a matter of time before the Latvian authorities included Graham Phillips, a European Union citizen, on their list of undesirable persons.

First came the entirely groundless decision in Latvia to refuse to register a representative of the Russia Today news agency and then, in an attempt to camouflage the hidden political background to that issue, our lawyers who were to take part in an appeal against that legally unfounded verdict were not allowed into the country. This means that now even Russian lawyers constitute a “threat to national security” in Latvia. Clearly, Latvia sees arguments about the need to observe generally accepted regulations on freedom of the media as a particularly dangerous weapon of theirs.

We should like to hear explanations from our Latvian colleagues, and their European Union partners – not arguments from the realm of double standards, but a well-grounded assessment of the legitimacy of the actions of Member States Latvia and Lithuania towards media workers.

Thank you for your attention.