

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY RUDENKO,
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RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1006th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

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On the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture

Mr. Chairperson,

On 26 June we marked the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. This topic is most relevant to the OSCE participating States, including Russia. Quite a number of commitments have been adopted in the OSCE on countering torture and eradicating the cruel and inhuman treatment of persons under investigation and in prison. The participating States acknowledged that no exceptional circumstances may be invoked as a justification of torture and that “preserving and guaranteeing the life and security of any individual subjected to any form of [...] inhuman or degrading treatment [...] will be the sole criterion in determining the urgency and priorities to be accorded in taking [...] remedial action”.

Although some progress has been observed in the OSCE area in this field, not everything is satisfactory.

In a number of countries, in particular the United States of America, these commitments are systematically violated. As you know, despite opposition from the intelligence services, the Chair of the United States Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, Ms. Dianne Feinstein, continues to insist that a report criticizing the methods of torture widely used by the CIA under George Bush Junior be made public. An investigation by the Committee revealed that, in addition to waterboarding, persons suspected of terrorism were subjected to prolonged immersion in ice-cold water. Other methods, including sleep deprivation and slamming prisoners into the walls were used in combination over lengthy periods of time. In that same connection, the Senate Select Committee investigation showed that the intelligence services already had most of the information obtained under torture prior to the interrogation. Serious doubts are therefore raised as to the value of information obtained in such an inhumane way.

The conditions of detention in United States prisons have not undergone any significant changes in spite of last year’s high-profile hunger strike by prisoners in California. According to a report by Human Rights Watch, the treatment of prisoners in the state’s prisons is akin to torture. Troublesome prisoners are frequently held in punishment cells for

weeks and sometimes months at a time without being allowed out for exercise. For example, 106 persons have spent more than 15 years in punishment cells in total, and 23 persons more than 25 years. The state authorities are opposed to fundamental changes in the punishment cell system and merely considering the possibility of reducing the term to three years.

We have repeatedly drawn the Permanent Council's attention to the continuation of the practice of detention without trial and the use of torture at Guantánamo prison. We were disappointed at the recent decision by the United States Federal Court to lift the ban on the force-feeding of the Syrian citizen Abu Wa'el Diab who is imprisoned in Guantánamo. I might recall that international human rights experts and a number of United Nations human rights bodies have classified force-feeding of prisoners as a form of torture.

I shall not go into details regarding the conditions of detention, level of violence and exploitation of inmates of private prisons in the United States. For example, prisoners have dubbed the Corrections Corporation of America prison in Idaho the "Gladiator School". Evidently, it is not without reason that United States human rights activists refer to the United States private prison system as a "national disgrace".

We are surprised at the absence of a response by the OSCE not only to the continuing practice of the death penalty in the United States but also to the use of new drugs during executions, which results in execution being turned into a horrifying, excruciating form of torture. The most recent case, the execution of Clayton Lockett, shocked the world. However, despite the ongoing investigation by the authorities, other prisoners on death row still fear that they may suffer the same fate. Among them are Charles Warner, whose execution has been postponed by six months, Robert James Campbell (Texas), Russell Bucklew (Missouri) and Richard Poplawski (Pennsylvania), who in the light of the most recent "torturous" execution have lodged appeals with the courts.

The detention conditions of convicted prisoners serving sentences of varying duration in United States prisons and the refusal to provide them with appropriate medical care pose a real threat to their lives. The dramatic deterioration in the health of the Russian pilot, Konstantin Yaroshenko, who was sentenced by the United States courts to 20 years' imprisonment not for a crime he has committed but merely for criminal intent, is extremely worrying. He continues to be denied medical care despite the requests made by his lawyer and the demands of representatives of the Russian Consulate General. Mr. Yaroshenko is in a critical condition. In addition to acute heart failure, he is unable to eat because his teeth were knocked out when he was subjected to torture during detention and investigation.

We once again call on the United States to implement its commitments in full and take immediate steps to rectify the aforementioned human rights violations in prisons, put a stop at last to the practice of detention without trial and ensure that the Russian civilian and pilot, Konstantin Yaroshenko, receives urgent medical care.

Thank you for your attention.