

PC.DEL/1052/14
8 September 2014

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ANDREY KELIN,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1015th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

4 September 2014

**In response to the statements by the European Union and the United States
of America on Bolotnaya Square and non-profit organizations**

Mr. Chairperson,

We take note of the statements by the representatives of the United States of America and the European Union. We shall inform our capital of the concern of our Western partners, which we regard as an uncalled-for attempt to exert pressure on the independent judicial system in our country.

Frankly, we do not understand where the representatives of the European Union saw violations of freedom of speech and assembly. All of the accused in this affair were found guilty by the court of taking part in mass riots and attacking police officers. This is fully in keeping with international practice and the commitments signed by Russia.

I recall that the demonstration on Bolotnaya Square by the opposition, which had been sanctioned by the Moscow authorities, turned into a confrontation with the police as a result of provocation by demonstrators. As a result of the disturbances, tens of people were injured, including around 80 police officers. More than 400 people were detained. The overwhelming majority of them were released shortly afterwards.

Only 28 persons were charged with the criminal offences under Article 212 (Mass riots) and Article 318 (Use of violence against a representative of authority) of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation. Some of them fell under the recent amnesty. Only eight were not subject to amnesty because they were charged with using violence against representatives of law enforcement bodies. According to Russian legislation they are entitled to appeal or request a pardon from the Head of State. Their lawyers are in fact looking into this at the moment.

We consider the statements by our Western partners to be a further illustration of the double standards in their reactions to disturbances beyond their borders and in their own countries.

A typical example of the difference is the appeals to the authorities of some OSCE States, which are regularly portrayed as some kind of “violators” of OSCE commitments, not to use force in the face of disturbances, including blatant acts of violence against law enforcement bodies – all this against the background of police brutality in Ferguson and the dispersal of demonstrations in Paris, Nantes, Madrid and Hamburg; or, for example, the use of dogs to “restore order” at rallies in the United Kingdom. Not once have we heard clear explanations concerning the fines and various prison sentences given to protesters by courts in the countries of the European Union and the United States.

As for the law on non-profit organizations and the list of “foreign agents” introduced by the Ministry of Justice, it is true that after the amendment to the relevant law, the Ministry of Justice placed a number of non-profit organizations in the register, including the Golos association and its regional organization, the Centre for Social Policy and Gender Studies, the funds Kostroma Centre for Civic Initiatives and Institute for Development of Freedom of Information, and the regional organizations Women of the Don Region and the St. Petersburg Committee of Soldiers’ Mothers.

The decisions by the Ministry of Justice were made on the basis of information concerning political activities of the organizations financed by funds coming from foreign donors. For example, Soldiers’ Mothers advise young persons wishing to avoid conscription and also military deserters, providing them with legal assistance in their complaints and claims with money coming from abroad. And yet this organization is not registered as a foreign agent.

I should like to point out again that the entry in the register of the Ministry of Justice in no way restricts the activities of these organizations nor the receipt of foreign financing. It is inappropriate to speak of pressure of any kind, not to mention persecution, of non-profit organizations. No sanctions whatsoever are imposed on them or on the heads of the foreign funds providing them with financing; they are not detained for hours at the border (as, for example, the head of the international movement World Without Nazism in Latvia) or refused entry on the pretext of importing cartons of cigarettes (like journalists from the television channel Zvezda in Estonia). Nor are they declared persona non grata on account of differences in the interpretation of history as, for example, happened to Alexander Dyukov, director of the Historical Memory Foundation, in Lithuania.

If any of our partners hope that going on all the time about the persecution of representatives of civil society or inflating the events on Bolotnaya Square will lead to it becoming another Maidan, they can rest assured that for the Russian people the tragic lessons learned from this neighbouring country furnished the best explanation for the reasoning behind the court decisions regarding the “Bolotniks”.

As for the attacks on the journalists, according to our information, unknown persons did indeed prevent photographs from being taken of the funerals and graves of the Russian paratroopers, insisted on destroying photographs and used force to remove the journalists from the cemetery. The head of the Pskov Oblast Regional Office of the Ministry of the Interior Boris Govorun reports that the police left for the scene and documented what had happened. An investigation is currently under way to identify the journalists’ criminal assailants.

While there can be no doubt about the need to punish the people who attacked the journalists, it should be pointed out that funerals and cemeteries are extremely delicate and sensitive subjects and that journalists themselves would do well to weigh the desire to obtain material for publication against the respect for the feelings of the family and relatives of the deceased. Even less should they chase after sensational stories, given that connections with events in Ukraine have not been proven in any way and require detailed examination.

Thank you for your attention.