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**STATEMENT BY
MR. ALEKSANDR VOLGAREV, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1480th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

4 July 2024

On the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture

Madam Chairperson,

In 1997, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 26 June as the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. It was established to draw attention to the need to eradicate this scourge and to ensure the implementation of the provisions of the relevant Convention. Today, however, we are farther away from its realization than ever. One of the reasons is the totally irresponsible behaviour of so-called “enlightened” democracies, which manipulate this topic to further their base aims and resolve their own tasks of the moment.

Madam Chairperson,

In the context of today’s discussion, we see no point in disavowing yet another round of lies about alleged torture and ill-treatment by Russian armed forces. We will allow our Western colleagues to play out this “theatre of the absurd” on their own. We should like to draw attention to another issue. The truth about the atrocities of the Kyiv regime can no longer be hidden. It is significant that articles have appeared in the British press attesting to the arbitrary treatment in Ukrainian prisons of people accused of allegedly collaborating with Russia. And this is not to mention the evidence collected by international human rights bodies, which cannot keep silent about the atrocities committed by representatives of the Kyiv regime against the Russian military. There is evidence of beatings with wooden hammers and sticks, electric shock torture, staged executions and threats of sexual violence. In short, the image of Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s regime and its patrons is, to put it mildly, unsavoury. And this is only a small fraction of what has been happening in the Ukrainian armed forces “torture chambers”.

Madam Chairperson,

Given the reckless indulgence of and silence about the crimes of the Ukrainian military, the increasing tendency in Western countries to solve problems by means of torture and other inhuman treatment is hardly surprising.

This is well illustrated by the example of the United States of America. As we know, the death penalty is authorized there, the only Western country where it is allowed, and is carried out using methods that are known to be inhumane. One of the most recent egregious episodes was the execution of an Alabama state prison inmate in January of this year using pure nitrogen. We will refrain from giving details here; they are easy to imagine. But there can be no doubt that an untested method of suffocation with nitrogen gas could be described as torture or cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. It is most regrettable that such savagery is taking place in this day and age in a country that proclaims itself to be an “immutable moral authority”.

Another enduring symbol of anti-humanism is the CIA’s Guantánamo Bay special prison. Prisoners continue to be subjected there to methods incompatible with human dignity. Systematic torture and abuse, including sleep deprivation, noise exposure and waterboarding, have also been reported on many occasions by leading US publications. According to public records, nine prisoners have died in US custody in the past eight years, several of them under highly mysterious circumstances. And yet the US Government brazenly ignores the constant appeals of human rights organizations to stop the abuse. One such appeal can be found in the statement by Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, the United Nations Human Rights Council Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, in June 2023.

We emphasize that the use of such practices is a flagrant violation of both US domestic law and its international legal obligations. Typically, US politicians were going on about the intention to close “this branch of hell on earth” ten years ago. As we can see, however, no headway has been made so far. Despite numerous promises, no specific timeline has yet been given for the prison’s closure.

The Lithuanian authorities also refuse to co-operate with competent international bodies, denying that there was a secret CIA prison in the country in from 2005 to 2006. They continue to stonewall, despite the fact that the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has essentially found Lithuania complicit in the torture and disappearance of prisoners under secret US programmes. In addition, the Lithuanian Ministry of Justice paid compensation to a former prisoner in fulfilment of the ECHR decision. We remind Lithuania of the need to comply with the provisions of international treaties prohibiting torture, guaranteeing the right to life and a fair trial and to finally acknowledge that it is at fault.

Madam Chairperson,

We are forced to note that torture and inhuman treatment are also used by a number of Western countries against their own populations.

In the concluding observations on the latest periodic report of Romania published in 2023, experts from the United Nations Committee against Torture mentioned numerous cases of prisoners, including helpless victims who were handcuffed, being beaten. The experts stress that, despite numerous observations by international human rights bodies, “special intervention units” continue to operate in detention centres, where torture is widely practised. The Committee also notes the “excessive use of restraints, including the strapping of detainees to beds unsupervised and for extended periods, excessively tight handcuffing and the handcuffing of detainees to items of furniture”.

In the case of Denmark, the Committee’s experts see the continuing ill-treatment in psychiatric institutions as a danger. They are concerned about information on the increasing use of “forms of chemical restraint”. They urgently recommend to Denmark that “physical or chemical means of restraint are used only as a last resort in order to prevent the risk of harm to the individual or to others, and only when all other reasonable options fail to satisfactorily contain that risk”.

Madam Chairperson,

Torture has existed for centuries as a tool of persuasion and interrogation. However, the brutal torture legalized by the United States after 11 September 2001 has effectively been given a second life. Sadly, according to various opinion polls, the acceptability of torture among the public in the Western alliance countries is as high as 30 per cent, and up to 50 per cent in the United States. It is justified by the need to fight terrorism or by other “noble” pretexts.

Instead of making absurd accusations against Russia, we suggest reflecting upon the medieval period in which Western society is living. We also urge the participating States to refrain from double standards and to fulfil the relevant international obligations. In other words, they should look first at themselves.

Thank you for your attention.