



United States Mission to the OSCE

On the Library of Ukrainian Literature in Moscow

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires, a.i. Kate Byrnes to the Permanent
Council, Vienna
April 6, 2017

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The United States joins Ukraine in voicing its concern about the deliberate and malicious campaign against both the Library of Ukrainian Literature in Moscow and its personnel. This case clearly illustrates how the enjoyment of the freedoms of expression and association are increasingly constrained, and even punished in today's Russia.

In 2015, Russian authorities took the unusual step of targeting a public library, fabricating charges of spreading extremist literature, in order to close a facility housing books donated by Ukraine's large diaspora. In their campaign to stifle the exercise of freedom of speech, Russian authorities targeted and imprisoned the head librarian, deployed armed police to seize books from the Library of Ukrainian Literature, and continue to take steps to close the doors of the library permanently.

We note that the head librarian, Natalya Sharina, remains under house arrest, and her trial, which started last November, continues to drag on while additional charges of embezzlement were added. Some human rights groups believe Ms. Sharina is being targeted as part of a politically-motivated prosecution.

We understand that her house arrest is due to expire on April 28. We call on Russia to immediately release Ms. Sharina, to drop all charges against her, and to allow the free functioning of the Library of Ukrainian Literature in Moscow.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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