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Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1194th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

30 August 2018

**On the arbitrary arrest in the United States of America of the Russian
citizen Maria Butina**

Mr. Chairperson,

On 15 July, Maria Butina, a Russian citizen, was arrested in Washington. Far-fetched allegations that she has been acting as an “agent of a foreign government” have been made against her. Her personal correspondence on social media has been used as “evidence”, from which selected phrases have been extracted and given an intentionally distorted meaning. Nothing that appears in the public sphere in the United States of America stands up to scrutiny.

The claims against our compatriot appear ridiculous. Ms. Butina has already been in the United States for a long time, she studied a Master’s degree in international relations at one of the universities in Washington; she was not hiding from anyone.

It seems that the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), instead of dealing with real crime, is carrying out blatant political orders. This stems, as we understand it, from those forces that continue to drive Russophobic hysteria, for the purpose of which they periodically unearth new fictional bombshells about the alleged “Russian interference in US internal processes”.

There is no doubt that the arrest of Ms. Butina was necessary to maintain such myths. Western media, without even trying to get to the bottom of the matter and without waiting for the final conclusions of official bodies, immediately began to refer to the Russian woman as a spy, to fan the flames, without having any necessary clear facts. This is, incidentally, a question of the alleged independence of the media.

Moreover, it took place just before the Russian-United States summit in Helsinki on 16 July, with the clear aim of instantly minimizing the positive impact of that meeting. It seems that someone took a watch and a calculator and calculated when it was necessary to decide on the arrest of Ms. Butina, to do everything possible to disrupt the outcome of the summit. So everything was timed to the last second.

Ms. Butina has been sent to prison on trumped-up charges, where she is being treated as a dangerous criminal. Such actions can in no way be called arbitrary. She was subjected to severe psychological pressure. What was the impact of an eight-hour search conducted at the time of her arrest, when FBI agents armed with automatic weapons burst into her apartment, smashed up furniture, tore up belongings, ripped up floors and broke down walls.

Prison conditions – the cold, lack of opportunities to walk outdoors and a meagre diet – have caused her health to deteriorate. This already borders on torture, the use of which has long been a practice of US security officials. It seems that it is in this way that the US Government wants to force the student to incriminate herself.

The Russian Federation insists on the innocence of its citizen. Her arrest is due exclusively to the motives of US domestic and foreign policy. She is therefore a political prisoner.

We hope that the United States still remembers its international obligations, including to the OSCE, which relate to freedom of movement, the inadmissibility of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

We demand that the US authorities immediately provide Ms. Butina with full medical assistance, put an end to her baseless criminal prosecution and ensure her early return to her homeland.

There are still Russian citizens, who were unlawfully kidnapped by US intelligence services abroad, detained in the country. These are Konstantin Yaroshenko, Viktor Bout and a number of others, the grave violation of whose rights we have repeatedly raised in the OSCE.

We regard this practice by the United States as illegal and a cause of serious damage to the international system of human rights and freedoms.

Thank you for your attention.