

The OSCE Secretariat bears no responsibility for the content of this document and circulates it without altering its content. The distribution by OSCE Conference Services of this document is without prejudice to OSCE decisions, as set out in documents agreed by OSCE participating States.

PC.DEL/1065/20
3 August 2020

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1277th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

30 July 2020

On human rights violations in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic

Mr. Chairperson,

Unfortunately, the question of defending human rights and OSCE human dimension commitments in the context of the pandemic is being politicized. The attempts by certain countries to portray others as being “more to blame” are puzzling, given that violations are occurring not only “East of Vienna”, but also in European Union countries, the United States of America and other countries. Moreover, with due respect to the latest statement-cum-lecture by the US representative, the human rights situation in the United States leaves a great deal to be desired, even when allowances are made for the pandemic.

Even the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) – many of whose pronouncements, in our view, have not exactly stood out for being geographically balanced – has been obliged to mention that, against the backdrop of the coronavirus pandemic, the number of hate crimes in that North American country has increased, accompanied by an upsurge in anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim sentiment along with a deterioration in the situation of indigenous peoples. Similarly, the situation inside US prisons continues to be challenging.

We emphasize once again that the observance of human rights and freedoms in the context of an emergency cannot be considered in isolation from the overall human rights landscape.

The truth of this argument is starkly borne out by what is going on in the United States, where the killing of an African American man, George Floyd, during his arrest by police officers in Minneapolis has led to mass protests across the whole country. As is well known, there have been instances of excessive and disproportionate use of force by the law enforcement agencies against peaceful protesters and journalists. Things have even got to the point where children have become victims of this arbitrariness, as we described in detail at a previous Permanent Council meeting. We do not intend to repeat ourselves.

The situation that has arisen in the United States is a cause of grave concern for international human rights bodies. We recall that the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Michelle Bachelet, exhorted the US Government to condemn unequivocally “the endemic and structural racism that blights US society” and “to take actions that truly tackle inequalities”. The gravity of the situation is confirmed further by the fact that the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

activated its early-warning procedure in connection with the mass protests against racism taking place in the United States.

Moreover, the application of the death penalty in this OSCE participating State, with the potential it creates for miscarriages of justice to occur and innocent people to be sentenced to death, violates the right to life. The resumption of executions at the federal level, especially coming as it does at the height of the coronavirus pandemic, will hardly serve to promote observance of that basic right. Three inmates have already been executed, and a further execution is scheduled for late August. The administration of capital punishment is unfortunately one area in which the US Government does display consistency, albeit to lamentable effect.

Human rights have also not been fully upheld in some Member States of the European Union in the context of the pandemic. This is confirmed, in particular, by the conclusions of the ODIHR's experts and also by the reports of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights.

The coronavirus pandemic has thus proved to be a real "resilience test" for all the OSCE participating States. Barring a very few exceptions, human rights problems are similar everywhere – and this is something that should be acknowledged above all by those States that would set themselves up as paragons of democracy.

Thank you for your attention.