

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/1076/21
8 July 2021

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. VLADIMIR ZHEGLOV,
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1323rd MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

8 July 2021

On human rights violations in Canada

Madam Chairperson,

We are once again compelled to draw attention to the complex human rights situation in Canada.

For more than a hundred years, right up to 1996, there existed residential schools in that country where First Nations children were forcibly placed – ostensibly so that they could be integrated into Canadian society. The “successfulness” of this “integration” speaks for itself: over 3,000 indigenous children died as a result of their stay in these institutions. And these are just the figures that have been published – the real total could be far higher. Evidence of the monstrous treatment of children in these institutions continues to come to light even now. Here are just a few of the most recent examples. At Kamloops, 215 unmarked children’s graves have been discovered, while in Saskatchewan the burial site of 751 children has been unearthed; additionally, the remains of 182 children were found buried near a former residential school in Cranbrook.

These horrifying discoveries have jolted public opinion nationally and internationally. Mass rallies to condemn this dark chapter in Canadian history have been held in Ottawa, Montreal, Edmonton, Calgary, Halifax and St. John’s. Having reached an unprecedented level, the fury spilled over into crimes: historical monuments were destroyed and churches burned down.

Unfortunately, discrimination against the First Nations is not a thing of the past. According to data from international human rights organizations, indigenous peoples continue to be under-represented in the labour market, not least in managerial positions. They have the highest suicide rate, tend to live in poverty and are exposed to chronic diseases and sexual violence. The share of indigenous persons in federal custody has reached a record high, surpassing 30 per cent. This indicator is even higher for indigenous women, who account for 42 per cent of the total female inmate population. These facts are confirmed even by the report on human rights in 2020 published by the US Department of State. Among serious human rights violations, that report, too, includes the unlawful and excessive use of force against indigenous persons by the Canadian law enforcement authorities.

From the sad statistics compiled by local media it emerges that 38 per cent of those killed by the police between January 2017 and June 2020 were First Nations people. Moreover, an indigenous person is

ten times more likely than any other type of inhabitant to become a victim of the law enforcement authorities. A similar tendency may, incidentally, be observed in the United States of America, where the African American population suffers disproportionately from police brutality. But that is of course a separate story in its own right.

Let us push on. There continue to be problems with the water supply on the Canadian reserves, where members of the indigenous peoples live. The water either is difficult to access or is contaminated, which cannot fail to have an impact on the situation of vulnerable population groups, such as children. Significantly, human rights activists have pointed out that neither the federal Government nor the provincial Government of Ontario has undertaken any efforts to overcome the consequences of the mercury contamination that took place over many years, particularly in the First Nations reserve at Grassy Narrows.

We call upon the High Commissioner on National Minorities, Kairat Abdrakhmanov, the Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Matteo Mecacci, and other specialist structures to assess the situation in Canada and closely monitor its development. We hope that the Canadian Government will take all the necessary measures to remedy the plight of the First Nations.

A no less serious problem is the prolonged detention of thousands of migrants in unacceptable conditions. They are often handcuffed or shackled and have no contact with the outside world.

A 100-page report issued in June by the international human rights organizations Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International describes in detail how people may sometimes be held in solitary confinement for months or even years. Besides, no maximum period of detention has been established in Canada for immigrants. In practice this can mean incarceration for many years without trial or investigation. A unique sorry record was set by the detention lasting more than 11 years of a man with an apparent mental health condition.

In short, the persistent systemic human rights violations in Canada once again confirm that the authorities there need to pay the closest attention to what is going on within their own country.

The serious problems affecting the First Nations were flagged up during the Universal Periodic Review in 2018. A broad range of representatives of the international community highlighted various problems, including the need to ensure indigenous peoples' access to land, education and health care, to raise their living standards, to eliminate violence against indigenous women and girls, and so on. A total of 275 recommendations were presented, of which scores deal precisely with the First Nations. We are now in 2021: how many of these recommendations have been taken on board so far?

Moreover, somewhat earlier, the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights – in its concluding observations adopted after reviewing, in February 2016, Canada's sixth periodic report on the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights – expressed its concern over the persisting socio-economic disparities between indigenous peoples and national minorities on the one hand, and "non-indigenous" inhabitants on the other, which were reflected in access to housing, education and healthcare services. The Committee pointed out that such vulnerable groups as persons with disabilities, young people, African Canadians, migrants and members of other national minorities were, together with indigenous peoples, disproportionately affected by unemployment. What has been done about that?

A similar stance was taken by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination after reviewing Canada's combined 21st to 23rd periodic reports in 2017. It noted with concern the unequal allocation of State resources for education and the insufficient funding of mother

tongue education programmes, as a result of which some groups of children – especially African Canadian and indigenous children – did not enjoy equal access to quality education and might well find themselves in a disadvantaged socio-economic situation compared with others.

Such criticisms have been voiced by various other United Nations human rights bodies on many other aspects, too, in relation to the life of indigenous peoples and observance of their rights.

Would it not be time for the distinguished representatives of Canada to move on from their pompous rhetoric about the significance of the First Nations and, instead, start tackling the problems faced by this vulnerable population group?