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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,  
AT THE 1273rd MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

2 July 2020

**On the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture**

Mr. Chairperson,

In 1997, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 26 June as the annual International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. This date was not picked at random, for 26 June 1987 was the date of entry into force of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. This is an important reminder that no extraordinary circumstances – not even a public health crisis – can ever justify reneging on obligations to prohibit torture.

One would think that, thanks to the significant corpus of international human rights obligations, the phenomenon of torture should have been eradicated long ago. However, the reality is quite different.

In the United States of America, there continue to this day such practices as indefinite detention without trial, the extradition of detainees in circumvention of established procedures, the forcible and clandestine transferring of detainees to secret prisons on the territory of other countries, extended unlawful confinement and interrogations making use of torture and other kinds of inhuman or degrading treatment. Moreover, all this frequently takes place with the direct involvement of other States, including some OSCE participating States.

We stress once again the unacceptability of the US Government's misuse of the principle of extraterritoriality to avoid having to fulfil its international obligations or apply federal law, which prohibits the use of torture.

There have been instances of the US intelligence services, including the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), using "enhanced interrogation" techniques, force-feeding prisoners and denying them adequate medical assistance, all of which ultimately result in torture or other inhuman or degrading treatment.

These are all facts that can be substantiated. In particular, a report entitled "How America Tortures" was published in December 2019 by Mark Denbeaux, a professor at the Seton Hall University School of Law in Newark who at the same time is acting as a lawyer for one of the former detainees of Guantánamo Bay known as Abu Zubaydah. The report is based, among other things, on testimony by this former inmate and on information from the CIA, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and other US government

agencies. It contains descriptions of instances of torture, including the barbarous method of simulated drowning known as “waterboarding”. Incidentally, the United Nations Human Rights Council’s Special Rapporteur on torture, Mr. Nils Melzer, has unequivocally referred to waterboarding as a form of torture.

Of particular concern is the situation in Ukraine, where such practices as arbitrary arrests, solitary confinement, torture and ill-treatment of civilians keep occurring – not to mention the fact that the culprits responsible for the violent events of 2 May 2014 in Odessa’s Trade Union House, where people were burned alive in full view of representatives of the law enforcement agencies, continue to this day to enjoy complete impunity.

The Ukrainian Government is not taking effective steps to investigate the systematic violations of human rights perpetrated by the Ukrainian security forces and also by nationalist battalions, which are notorious for their neo-Nazi discourse. The crimes they have committed include arbitrary arrests, the use of torture, ill-treatment and intimidation of people – also carried out at unofficial places of detention – with a view to obtaining information, or forcing them to make confessions or to agree to collaborate.

As we have pointed out a number of times, the Ukrainian security forces are evidently drawing inspiration from the “best practices” of the United States and several European Union countries, with Guantánamo and the CIA’s secret prisons in Europe being particularly “exemplary” in that respect. The operation of such establishments and the use of these inhuman practices have been roundly condemned in relevant documents of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and in numerous decisions issued by the European Court of Human Rights. We expect the Ukrainian authorities to undertake a thorough and objective inquiry into cases of torture and inhuman treatment, and ultimately to return to observance of the universal norms of human conduct.

We also wish to express our regret over the fact that our efforts last year to reach consensus in the work on a relevant draft document for the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Bratislava were unsuccessful. Russia was among those that did their utmost to identify universally acceptable wording and to invest the document with an authoritative tenor. However, owing to the reluctance of a number of countries to acknowledge the problems we raised, the draft text could not ultimately be approved.

Thank you for your attention.