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Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY  
MR. ALEKSANDR VOLGAREV, ACTING PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF  
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1552nd MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

5 February 2026

**On the ongoing violations of the rights of the  
Russian and Russian-speaking population in Latvia**

Mr. Chairperson,

Just recently, in January of this year, we raised the issue of the deteriorating human rights situation in Latvia in the Permanent Council. We focused in detail on Latvia's violations of its obligations in the area of democratic freedoms and human rights, including with regard to national minorities. We cited specific facts and statistics and revealed the uncomfortable truth about the undoubtedly political subtext of the authorities' persecution of historian and activist Viktors Guščins.

Meanwhile, the situation has deteriorated significantly in less than a month. The "flywheel" of repression continues to spin. On 27 January this year, a show trial was held in the Riga District Court. The scholar and historian Alexander Gaponenko was found guilty of the charges brought against him for allegedly inciting ethnic hatred (Article 78 of the Criminal Code) and assisting a foreign State in acts directed against Latvia committed by a group of persons (Article 81). He was sentenced to ten years' deprivation of liberty.

No matter how hard our opponents try to prove otherwise, this case also has a purely political motive. The charges were brought immediately after Mr. Gaponenko took part in a round table organized by the Institute of CIS Countries. In his statement, he spoke about the well-known facts concerning discrimination against the Russian and Russian-speaking population in Latvia. Given the advanced age of the convicted man and his poor health, this is tantamount to a death sentence, as the Latvian authorities are well aware. This, it seems, is precisely what they are counting on.

On the whole, an increasing number of our compatriots are being detained under spurious pretexts or threatened with arrest. Everything that is happening serves as further confirmation of Latvia's policy of persecuting on trumped-up charges people it considers to be "undesirable". This is a clear violation by Latvia of its OSCE commitments and its commitments under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

In anticipation of the response by the representative of Latvia, I should like to ask a question – alas, a rhetorical one. Is this also a purely criminal matter? How could a 71-year-old scholar become a “malicious criminal” and a “threat” to the State? Or perhaps, in Latvia’s view, freedom of expression is now undermining the foundations of the establishment? In this regard, I should like to quote the Latvian representative’s words, spoken on 22 January this year, in response to our statement: “Our integration policy is based on democratic values, but it also, of course, takes into account the geopolitical situation.”

We call upon the Latvian Government to show common sense and upon the relevant OSCE executive structures to respond appropriately. We have already sent the relevant appeals to the Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Ms. Maria Telalian, and the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Mr. Christophe Kamp.

Thank you for your attention.