

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY MR. DMITRY BALAKIN,
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1098th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

28 April 2016

**On violations in the United States of America of
freedom of assembly and expression**

Mr. Chairperson,

In recent days, the Washington police arrested over 1,200 peaceful demonstrators. They were not rioting or waving anti-government placards. On the contrary – they were calling for democracy and honest elections. That was precisely what the action was called – “Democracy Spring”. This is a movement which is trying to draw attention to political corruption in the United States, a popular initiative that, incidentally, has been supported by one of the US presidential candidates, Bernie Sanders.

People from different US states, who believe they are living in a free country, gathered on the lawn of the Capitol Building to express their opposition as citizens to corruption and the influence of big money on US politics. But it has become clear that freedom in the United States has rather narrow bounds, and democracy, all the more so. On the very first day of the rallies, more than 400 people wound up in police stations. It has been reported that many of them also had their hands tied. The peaceful rallies, which continued, led to new arrests.

Retirees also came to the Capitol to express their views. They settled themselves on the lawn in folding chairs, carrying placards that read, “I’m not dead yet. I care deeply.” As they put it, they wanted to “use our wisdom and life experience [...] to reclaim our democracy”. But evidently, the members of Congress did not need their wisdom, since by the second day, nearly 100 elderly people who had been protesting peacefully had already been taken to police stations.

Most of those arrested were charged with obstructing law enforcement officers and blocking access to government agencies, and also with not having permission to hold a demonstration.

I might add that the police also arrested Lee Camp, a journalist for *Russia Today*, who was simply carrying out his professional duties and reporting on the events. He was warned that, if he turned up again, he would face much more serious proceedings.

We call upon the US authorities to end these violations of commitments undertaken within the OSCE to ensure freedom of assembly, freedom of expression and freedom of the media.

Thank you for your attention.