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F.I.D.H. Latvian Human Rights Committee
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Submission

for Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, 2018

Working session 17: Combating racism, xenophobia, intolerance and discrimination

[1] Historical memory

1. On December 21, 2017, the Latvian Parliament (Saeima) passed the Law “On status of a participant of World War II”¹ which, first, excludes the persons without the Latvian nationality (mostly the fighters of anti-Hitler coalition) and, second, equals the war veterans of the both sides.

2. An annual march in honor of veterans of the Waffen SS Latvian Legion, in which participated the members of parliament from the co-ruling National Alliance, took place in the center of Riga on March 16, 2018.

In autumn 2017, Riga Regional court deprived the representatives of the Latvian Anti-Nazi Committee for a year of the right to organize political meetings, marches, protest demonstrations. The reason of such court decision was ‘propaganda of violence’, which was just a quiet and peaceful protest demonstration with a poster depicting the victims of Nazis, which took place of March 16, 2017.²

The Latvian Security Police in its report on 2017 accuses anti-fascists of provocations, saying nothing about SS worshippers³.

At the same time, in its annual reports the Security Police focuses on celebration of May 9 – the day of liberation from fascism⁴, particularly criticizing Immortal Regiment March.

It must be said that the Senate of the State of New York adopted a respectful resolution on the theme of Immortal Regiment March, reading as follows: “This significant march, which first

¹<https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=296248>

²<http://defendinghistory.com/latvian-court-rules-that-depicting-nazi-violence-of-1941-on-a-placard-is-illegal/90473>

³<http://dp.gov.lv/en/?rt=documents&ac=download&id=33>, p.16

⁴<http://dp.gov.lv/en/?rt=documents&ac=download&id=33>, p.18

started in Russia in 2011, has become an international event (..) The Immortal Regiment has a goal to preserve the memory that Americans, British, Soviets, Chinese and other countries of the Allied Powers fought together, defeated Nazism and won World War II (..) be it RESOLVED, that this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 4th Annual New York Immortal Regiment March”.⁵

[2] Racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism

Regrettably, we have to note the growth of bursts of nationalism, anti-Semitism and Russophobia among the Latvian national elite over the past year. Ruling politicians, high-ranking civil servants, leaders of public opinion make statements, which conflict with the European values.

I'll give several examples:

1. The Latvian writer Didzis Sedlenieks publicly called the Russian-speaking people ‘despicable’ and “a genetic deviation from universal human values⁶”. In autumn 2018, the Security Police repeatedly refused to initiate criminal proceedings related to his unconcealed racist statements against the Russians.
2. The Security Police refused to initiate a criminal proceeding concerning a number of statements by the parliamentary secretary of the Ministry of Justice Jānis Iesalnieks, who, in the opinion of many residents, incites ethnic hatred.⁷
3. A member of parliament from the National Alliance, Mr. Šnore, despite his public humiliating remarks regarding the Russians living in Latvia, which were reprimanded by the parliamentary ethics commission and which, according to the Security Police, ‘can touch a certain part of society and do not further social cohesion’, was awarded with the highest award of Latvia - the Order of Three Stars. The Chapter of Orders, an organization under the President of Latvia, refused to deprive Mr. Šnore of this highest award of Latvia.⁸ Despite the Russophobic remarks, he continues to hold the high post of the chairman of the Latvian delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

We believe all this is a consequence of idle attitude by the Latvian authorities. The statements get a specific undertone:

Aleksandrs Kiršteins, a member of parliament from National Alliance, hinted in his Twitter that protests against transfer of language of education in the Russian schools to the Latvian

⁵<https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/resolutions/2017/j4960>

⁶http://www.mixnews.lv/ru/society/news/242470_genprokuratura-poru4ila-pb-es4e-raz-proverit-slova-zhurnalista-o-russkoyazy4nyx/

⁷<https://vesti.lv/statja/politika/2018/05/31/v-pb-ne-uvide-li-kriminala-v-slovah-iesalniesa-o-primenenii-sily-protiv-russkih>

⁸ <http://rus.delfi.lv/news/daily/latvia/shnore-ne-lishat-ordena-treh-zvezd-za-vyskazyvanie-o-russkoj-vshi.d?id=49429157&all=true>

language are ruled by the agents of world Zionism⁹, and that the melodies of a summer music festival in Latvia in 2018 resembles the melodies of the Khazar Khaganate¹⁰.

Recommendations to Latvia:

- to deprive of government awards for the statements, which incite ethnic hatred;
- not to nominate to international organizations persons, who are unable to further the development of the European values;

Recommendation to Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe:

To foresee a possibility of depriving the delegates of the Parliamentary Assembly of their mandate for statements, which conflict with the values of OSCE.

⁹<http://vesti.lv/news/deputat-ceima-russkii-yazyk-mezhdunarodnogo-sionizma>
<http://baltnews.lv/news/20180104/1021526145.html>

¹⁰http://baltnews.lv/riga_news/20180726/1022177704.html