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PC.DEL/84/23
27 January 2023

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY
MR. ALEKSANDR VOLGAREV, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1408th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

26 January 2023

On the recent anti-Islamic attacks in Europe

Mr. Chairperson,

Interconfessional and inter-ethnic harmony is a distinguishing feature of Russia, where religious sensitivities are respected and protected. More than 200 years ago, it was in our country that the Holy Koran was first printed in its original form, according to all canonical rules. The inviolability of sacred writings is guaranteed by federal law, and spiritual and moral values have become the foundation of society and the State.

Against the background of the mutually respectful and legally protected existence of all religions and confessions in the Russian Federation, we note a serious rise in Islamophobia in the OSCE area, which has already become the norm in a number of participating States. We have drawn attention to this disgraceful problem on more than one occasion at Permanent Council meetings. Here is a very recent example. Another ugly and provocative attack on Islam by radicals took place in Stockholm on 21 January. Rasmus Paludan, the notorious leader of the far-right extremist Hard Line party, burned a sacred Muslim book, the Holy Koran, in protest at Türkiye's stance on a number of issues on the international agenda. The action was carried out with the knowledge of the Swedish law enforcement authorities, who used the pretext of "freedom of speech", albeit in a very idiosyncratic sense.

This is not the first time radicals have spoken out against Islam in European countries. Repeatedly at their public events, which are still allowed in "tolerant" Europe, they have vandalized books and images sacred to the faithful. The total rejection and ignorance of such radicalized youths demonstrates the true attitude of the "civilized West" towards those who are not, in their view, part of their own peer caste. This is nothing new for the Old World, however.

We have witnessed how political immorality and permissiveness, in the guise of specious utterances about "freedom of speech and expression", are being translated into incitement of religious discord and insulting the feelings of believers – this time Muslims. Russian religious organizations, in particular the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Russia and the Moscow Patriarchate, have condemned the actions of these radicals. We are puzzled by the silence of the relevant OSCE executive structures and senior functionaries of our Organization in connection with this act of blatant religious intolerance.

Mr. Chairperson,

The OSCE has amassed a significant number of commitments on tolerance and non-discrimination, including the Ministerial Council decisions in Sofia (2004), Ljubljana (2005), Brussels (2006) and Madrid (2007). However, the task set by the OSCE Ministerial Council in Basel in 2014 to develop declarations on combating Christianophobia and Islamophobia has yet to be fulfilled. We call upon the OSCE Chairmanship of North Macedonia and the Irish Chairmanship of the Human Dimension Committee to prioritize this crucial task.

Thank you for your attention.