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PC.DEL/1024/24
5 September 2024

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

Delegation of the Russian Federation

**STATEMENT BY
MR. ALEKSANDR VOLGAREV, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, AT THE 1487th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

5 September 2024

**In connection with the
International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances**

Madam Chairperson,

On 30 August, the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances was observed. That date was established on 21 December 2020 by a United Nations General Assembly resolution in order to draw attention to the importance of eradicating this criminal phenomenon.

Unfortunately, it has not proved possible to make significant progress. Among the reasons for the failure to overcome this type of criminal offence are the inability of “enlightened” democracies to cope with migration flows as a result of their brazen and destabilizing interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States in the Middle East and North Africa, the flouting of international obligations under the pretext of combating terrorism, and irresponsible pandering to corrupt regimes that are abducting people, including for the purposes of quashing dissent and carrying out reprisals against their own citizens.

This can be most clearly illustrated by citing the example of the United States of America, where the CIA prison of Guantánamo is still up and running. Dozens of people continue to languish there, held incommunicado, without trial, without investigation, without the presentation of charges. Another no less pressing problem for the self-styled “leader of the democratic world” is the disappearances of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. The US Government has no scruples about employing draconian methods in the field of migration policy that claim thousands of victims every year, including minors. This was flagged by the United Nations Human Rights Council’s Working Group on Enforced or Voluntary Disappearances in February of this year. According to the Working Group’s experts, US officials are systematically depriving men, women and children of their liberty, “subjecting them [to] incommunicado detention for days, placing them outside of the protection of the law and depriving them of fundamental rights, without ensuring that families, legal representatives or [other] persons with a legitimate interest have access to information about their fate or whereabouts.” They pointed out that “detainees are subjected to inhumane and degrading conditions causing considerable physical and psychological suffering.”

The situation in Member States of the European Union, too, is far from satisfactory. International human rights bodies are concerned about the prevalence of enforced disappearances in the Netherlands. In

October 2023, relevant United Nations experts pointed to the mass disappearance of migrants, including children, at sea while attempting to reach Dutch territories in the Caribbean, some of them potentially victims of trafficking in human beings. They likewise noted how a large number of unaccompanied minors had disappeared from asylum reception centres in the European part of the country. There is reason to believe that many of them have fallen into the hands of traders in “human commodities”. In a separate point, the experts emphasized the *de facto* inaction of the country’s authorities with regard to eradicating such crimes.

According to Lost in Europe, a specialized non-governmental organization, more than 51,000 unaccompanied migrant children have gone missing across Europe between 2021 and 2023 as a result of enforced disappearances or similar practices. The top five in the associated dubious ranking are Italy, where more than 22,000 minors have disappeared, Austria (around 20,000), Belgium (over 2,000), Germany (over 2,000) and Switzerland (over 1,000). However, the real figures are much higher, since gathering such information is difficult and some countries do not maintain any statistics at all.

Madam Chairperson,

The Western alliance countries continue to hypocritically shut their eyes to many crimes by the Kyiv regime and even to abet these. Of particular concern is what played out in the Italian city of Bergamo, where 115 children from orphanages in the city of Berdyansk have been staying in the care of educational establishments since the spring of 2022. Recently it became known that the Kyiv regime had persuaded the Italian authorities to agree to the repatriation of these orphans to their homeland, from where they would subsequently be taken to the United States. There are sufficient grounds for fearing that these Ukrainian minors could become the victims of trafficking in human beings, suffer violence, be murdered, abused or forcibly disappeared. A local court decided to temporarily suspend the repatriation process only under pressure from Italian community activists who could not remain indifferent. In contrast, the official authorities just kept silent.

By these crimes we are also referring to the massive enforced disappearances that the Kyiv regime has been carrying out since 2014. We have spoken on several occasions about the so-called secret torture chambers of the Security Service of Ukraine in Donbas, including in relation to the atrocities committed by right-wing radicals in the notorious prison in Mariupol known as the “Library”. We have been drawing attention to the attempts at a radical purge of the public and political space that have been undertaken since the start of the Russian special military operation, to the killing and detention of journalists, civil society activists and public figures.

As reported by the United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, Nada Al-Nashif, more than 6,000 criminal cases were opened in areas controlled by the Kyiv regime between February 2022 and July 2023 in connection with charges of “collaborationist activity” alone, while independent Ukrainian human rights defenders estimate that the total number of victims of the political terror already exceeds 100,000. The fate of many of them remains unclear. For example, leaders of regional branches of the Immortal Regiment movement, which has been holding events in Ukraine since 2020, have disappeared. There is no information on the whereabouts of the activist Elena Berezhnaya, the political scientist Dmytro Dzhanhrirov, the historian Aleksandr Karevin and many others.

Madam Chairperson,

The facts we have cited once again confirm the long-overdue need to pay close attention to the problem being discussed today. We call upon the participating States to fulfil their international obligations and the representatives of the relevant OSCE structures to duly respond, within their respective mandates, to

these practices. Especially bearing in mind that in a number of countries they are of a systemic nature and are used as an instrument of political repression.

Thank you for your attention.