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HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATIONS THAT REQUIRE THE COUNCIL'S ATTENTION

Letter dated 20 June 2007 from the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the President of the Human Rights Council

The Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations at Geneva presents its compliments to the President of the Human Rights Council and has the honour to forward herewith the document "On the situation in Estonia". The Permanent Mission further requests the President to issue the aforementioned document as an official document^{*} of the Council.

The Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the President of the Human Rights Council the assurances of its highest consideration.

^{*} Reproduced in the annex as received and in English.

Annex

THE SITUATION IN ESTONIA

Once again attention must be drawn to the disquieting situation in Estonia.

Events in Tallinn at the end of April this year, provoked by the actions of the Estonian authorities in dismantling the memorial to the Soldier-Liberator and exhuming the contents of the adjoining military burial ground, had, among many other consequences, that of throwing light on the profound crisis stemming from the policy of integration in Estonian society pursued by the Estonian authorities in recent years. However, instead of acknowledging the existence of the serious problems in this area, Tallinn, benefiting from the connivance of the European Union and a number of other international organizations, is continuing to pursue a policy of exacerbating the situation and “tightening the screw”.

A large-scale propaganda campaign of blatant lies and disinformation is being conducted, aimed at justifying the actions of the Estonian leadership, the search for guilty parties and efforts to repair the country’s sullied reputation. All available methods are being used to persecute the leaders of the Russian diaspora, local human rights defenders and journalists from the Russian-language media. A veritable witch-hunt is unfolding.

A graphic example of the level of “democracy” and “Neanderthal” political thought in Estonia, where those who think differently are openly persecuted by thesecurity services, is the recently published annual report of the Estonian security police. This document specifically declares the officially registered and legally operating Constitutional Party, which represents the interests of the Russian-speaking population, to be “a subversive enterprise, funded and directed by the Russian authorities, whose purpose is to conduct anti-Estonian activity, an instrument of propagandistic attacks to blacken Estonia’s image in the world”. Its major sponsors and ideological patrons, it is bluntly alleged, are diplomats from the Russian Embassy in Tallinn, the Moscow mayor’s office, the Russian media and the Russian security services. The leader of the party, a member of the Coordination Council of Russian Compatriots, is described as an extremist who has received instructions and funding from Russian emissaries.

The list of “unreliable” organizations also includes the Tallinn information centre for human rights, which works together with many recognized international human rights organizations.

The Estonian authorities are pursuing a policy aimed at instilling a demonized image of Russia in Estonian society, and discrediting activists from the Russian-speaking minority. Efforts to whip up anti-Russian hysteria reached their apotheosis in an interview given by the Estonian Minister of Justice, R. Lang, published in the newspaper *Sakala* on 26 May this year, in which he stated that serious disturbances whose purpose was to overthrow the Estonian Government were planned on 9 May in Estonia, the plan for the “uprising” having been devised in Russia. It is difficult to describe such utterances as other than paranoid delirium.

The pressure exerted on journalists from Russian-language media by the Estonian security police has increased, with the aim of minimizing the likelihood that the press will

publish material casting doubt on the legitimacy of the disproportionate use of force by the police when breaking up the demonstration during the night of 26-27 April this year. "Preventive chats" between the security police and representatives of the media have become the order of the day.

The annual festival "Vivat Russia!" in Estonia, which enjoys great popularity among the Russian-speaking population, and is traditionally scheduled to coincide with the holding of Russia Day, has been suspended. According to its organizers, the reason is that they have been denied the use of venues for performances by popular Russian artistic groups and other events, while the owners of concert halls do not conceal the fact that a "political decision" lies behind the refusal.

Court proceedings continue against activists from the non-governmental organization "Nochnoi Dozor" who spoke out against the dismantling of the memorial to the Soldier-Liberator and are accused of organizing the disturbances. Political pressure is being exerted on the court: long before the court's decision was handed down, Estonian Minister for Foreign Affairs U. Paet publicly declared the "Nochnoi Dozor" activists to be guilty.

Another area of concern is the investigation of the killing of Russian citizen D. Ganin on 27 April this year, whose progress is unjustifiably slow. Over a month has passed, but the victim's mother has received no more than a notification of his death. Despite several requests by the lawyer representing the interests of the victim's mother, the Estonian authorities continue to refuse to grant the injured parties access to the case file. Bearing in mind what is known of the circumstances surrounding the death of D. Ganin, who, according to witnesses, bled to death in front of the police after they failed to provide him with the necessary assistance, the question arises of whether Estonia is interested in establishing the true reasons for the death of this Russian citizen.

One cannot be misled by the attempts of the Estonian authorities to depict the reburial of the remains of the opponents of fascism which were exhumed in Tallinn as "civilized and in keeping with international standards". The close relatives of three fighters, I.M. Sysoev, A.M. Bryantsev and V.E. Volkov, not wishing to participate in this blasphemous act, have called for the remains to be reburied in Russia.

Persecution of Russian-language schools in Estonia has been stepped up. The other day a court in the town of Tartu denied a request by the families of the pupils in the Pushkin gymnasium in Tartu who had objected to the closure of this educational institution on the far-fetched pretext that there was an insufficient number of pupils. The school had previously sought to continue teaching entirely in Russian. The authorities not only refused, but declared this educational institution closed.

Immediately after the events in Tallinn on 26 and 27 April this year, the Estonian Minister of Education, T. Lukas, held a number of meetings with schoolchildren and teachers from Russian gymnasiums, at which he spelt out the basis of the "Estonian version of history". During these "lessons", the schoolchildren were told (and in some cases were obliged to repeat aloud) that the representatives of the non-Estonian population in Estonia are "occupiers or their descendants". In conclusion T. Lukas spoke of his intention to "speed up" the reform of Russian-language education by means of a full switch-over to the State language of instruction (the

previous Government spoke of the phased introduction of Estonian, up to 60 per cent of all subjects).
