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Délégation du Canada
auprès de l'OSCE

**JOINT STATEMENT DELIVERED BY AMBASSADOR JOCELYN KINNEAR
ON POLITICAL REPRESSION IN RUSSIA
1419th SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

20 April 2023

Mr. Chair,

I am delivering this statement on behalf of **Canada, Iceland, Norway, and the United Kingdom.**

We are deeply alarmed by the prosecution of opposition politician Vladimir Kara-Murza, who was sentenced this week to 25 years' imprisonment on politically motivated charges of treason, discrediting the armed forces and assisting an undesirable organization.

We firstly want to pay tribute to Mr Kara-Murza, a champion for human rights and opposition voices, who has shown immense courage in speaking out against the aggression of the Russian state. I also want to recognise his wife, Evgenia, and commend her on her tireless efforts to promote her husband's cause.

These charges were brought against Mr. Kara-Murza for engaging in legitimate criticism of the political situation in Russia. As he himself observed in his closing statement to the court – he is in jail for his political views, for speaking out against the war in Ukraine and against Putin's regime.

It is evident that Russia continues to completely disregard respect for democratic principles and for universal human rights—including freedom of speech—in relation to its own people and to others around the world. This court ruling is yet another violation of Russia's international human rights obligations.

The Kremlin's persecution of opposition voices and civil society actors is an abhorrent effort to silence those who hold Russia accountable for its actions.

In addition to Mr. Kara-Murza's sentencing, this month has also seen:

- the closure of Moscow's Sakharov Center;
- the designation of yet more civil society actors as "foreign agents" and "undesirable organizations", including Norwegian non-governmental ecological organization Bellona;
- the blocking of websites, including Canada's MacDonald-Laurier Institute, the Woodrow Wilson International Science Center, and the British Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House);
- and the prosecution of multiple individuals for anti-war commentary.
- The Kremlin has further continued in its attempts to intimidate, harass and silence independent journalists, including through the detention of Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich.

We look forward to wholeheartedly supporting the work of the newly appointed UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Russia and we will ensure Russia does not discredit their findings.

Tragically, we could name dozens of other political prisoners. But today Mr. Kara-Murza stands as a symbol of the courageous and principled defence of democratic values and human rights in Russia. The Kremlin's attempts to silence its domestic critics only makes their voices more powerful.

We will therefore join others amplifying his voice, quoting from his closing statement to the court:

"But I also know that the day will come when the darkness over our country will dissipate. When black is called black and white is called white; when at the official level it will be recognized that two times two is still four; when a war will be called a war, and a usurper a usurper; and when those who kindled and unleashed this war, and not those who tried to stop it, are recognized as criminals. This day will come as inevitably as spring comes to replace even the most frosty winter."

We stand with the people of Russia who are fighting for democracy and human rights.

We will continue to press for a better future for the Russian people. We call upon the Russian government to respect its human rights obligations and to allow dissenting voices to express their views without fear of persecution.

Thank you