



**Plenary Session 8: Fundamental Freedoms II,
including:
- Freedom of expression, freedom of the media
- Safety of journalists**

**Coordination des Associations et des Particuliers
pour la Liberté de Conscience**

STATEMENT ON THE CASE OF VALERY ENGEL

Distinguished Participants,

I wish to draw your attention to a case that calls into question Latvia's commitment to the fundamental principles of the OSCE — democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights. This concerns **Dr. Valery Engel**, an Israeli historian born in Russia, visiting scholar at Rutgers University, and **UN counter-terrorism consultant**. He lived in Latvia for 20 years, was married to a citizen of that country, and raised his daughter there.

In February 2026, the Latvian authorities revoked his permanent residence permit and banned him from entering the country. **Without a trial. Without a criminal case.** The stated reason is very provocative: "for participation in the implementation of Russian non-military measures of influence." Yet Dr. Engel **has never supported Putin** and has openly condemned Russia's actions.

So, what is his "crime"?

In court, he was charged with writing scholarly works that Latvia's State Security Service deemed a threat to Latvia. For example, a publication in the American online journal *Fair Observer*, in which he criticized the ineffectiveness of certain anti-Russian sanctions, was considered such a threat. He wrote that sanctions should be targeted and hit Russia's military capabilities, not ordinary citizens — and that collective responsibility is prohibited under international law.

But this is only one episode. He was also accused of:

- **Preparing annual scientific monitoring reports on the situation of minorities in Europe and North America.** Since 2015, these reports have been presented here, at the OSCE platform in Warsaw. There are numerous reviews by leading scholars from American, Canadian, and European universities attesting to the high scholarly value of these studies, and I can present them here. Dr. Engel was the editor-in-chief, not the author, of these studies. However, the Latvian security authorities deemed these works a threat because they contained criticism of Western countries and Ukraine. In their view, Russia could exploit this. But what about the substantial amount of criticism of Russia contained in these works? Latvia chose to overlook that. So, is it now forbidden to criticize the West at all? That is no longer about the free world or Western values! How are we different from Russia in this case?

And so on, in the same vein.

How was the decision made?

The State Security Service of Latvia simply **declared** that his works posed a threat. Without expert review. Without evidence. Reviews from leading scholars in the US and Canada, which confirmed the scholarly nature of his work — the court ignored them.

Dr. Engel himself was denied the right to participate remotely in the proceedings. And his wife, a Latvian citizen, was not allowed to appeal the decision that separated her from her husband.

Some of the information was classified and was not provided to a lawyer with access to state secrets. The state security service, however, maintains that the main thrust of the charges is set out in the publicly accessible portion. But if this is true, then it must be stated that academic freedom and freedom of speech in general are being grossly violated in Latvia, because Engel was punished for his opinion as a scientist. Why do I say "punished"? Because a representative of the State Security Service stated in court that the purpose of the ban was to ensure that Engel could not "comfortably" remain in the EU. In other words, this is not about security, but about **punishment for independent opinion**.

What does this mean for the OSCE?

This case exposes a systemic problem: **independent scholarly opinion is being equated with a threat to security**. Instead of evidence — subjective assessments by security services. Instead of an independent court — a political verdict.

If this can happen to a UN expert, what awaits ordinary citizens?
We call on the OSCE to:

1. Demand that Latvia provide an explanation for this decision.
2. Ensure Engel's access to the classified materials in his case and his right to a fair trial.
3. Assess the practice of using the "national security threat" instrument to suppress academic freedom.

Academic freedom and the right to independent opinion must not be bargaining chips. If Europe wants to remain Europe, it must respond to this challenge.

Thank you.