



## **ECCC Condemns Recent Threats of Violence and Hate Towards Estonians, Ukrainian and All Central and Eastern European Canadian Communities**

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TORONTO - Over the past months, individuals and organizations within the Estonian community in Canada have been targeted with threats of violence and hate. The Estonian Central Council in Canada condemns all forms of discrimination and hate that target specific ethnic groups based on their heritage, religion, language or history, and calls on all levels of government to condemn and investigate these instances.

In one recent incident, a letter sent to Estonia's Honorary Consul threatened violence and the spread of anthrax if Estonians continued to support Ukraine's sovereignty. Threatening phone calls to community members are meant to intimidate them into silence.

Despite being victims of discrimination as "displaced people" when they arrived in Canada in the early 1950s, Estonian WWII refugees have actively contributed to the development of the modern and diverse Canada we know today.

During the Cold War, the Estonian community in Canada -along with other Central and Eastern European communities- was targeted with Russian Soviet era disinformation operations intended to dehumanize and promote discrimination towards them. One tactic that has been aggressively recycled by the Russian government is the manipulation of history to defame all Estonian WWII refugees and their families as neo-Nazis and "enemies" of Canada.

Over the past year, the Kremlin and Russian state media have claimed that Russia's invasion of Ukraine is an operation to "de-Nazify" Ukraine. This same narrative has been amplified by extremist platforms in Canada. One article published on a far-left platform in 2022, accused all Estonian and other European refugees who fled Soviet colonial occupation and terror of being Nazi collaborators and "enemies" of Canada. Authorities have been made aware of this and the Estonian community is considering all options.

Such hate promotes discrimination and encourages the kind of threats and violence that have been experienced by the Ukrainian and Estonian communities and which continue to intensify.

"I urge all community members who are victims of threats, intimidation or violence to report them to The Estonian Central Council and local authorities, the RCMP and CSIS," said Estonian Central Council President, Kairi Taul-Hemingway. "Always keep records of such instances, and include when possible, where the threats came from and the nature of the threat."



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ESTONIAN CENTRAL COUNCIL IN CANADA

“We must not allow the Russian embassy and the extremists who support them to divide and intimidate Canadians into silence through threats of violence and the promotion of false narratives targeting our ethnic heritage or historical experiences,” explained Estonian Honorary Consul Laas Leivat.

The ECCCK has communicated with Toronto Metro Police, and police will be present at the Toronto polling location for the upcoming Estonian election and Estonian Independence Day on February 24 at Tartu College.

The Estonian Central Council has set up a reporting form to track hate, intimidation and violence towards community members here: <https://forms.gle/JPV2KYNc8HphEars5>

under Russian Soviet era colonial occupation is yet another dehumanizing form of hate.