



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on LGBT Rights in the Russian Federation

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
July 19, 2012

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We note our continued concern about new laws in Russia that restrict the freedoms of expression and assembly for all Russians, but which are especially distressing to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals. On July 7, several individuals in St. Petersburg were arrested at two separate events for attempting to exercise their rights to expression and assembly. At one event, two people were arrested for holding an unsanctioned Pride rally, despite earlier having received permission for it, permission that was later rescinded. According to press reports, they were the only two participants. At another rally protesting authorities' refusal to sanction LGBT-themed events, six other individuals were arrested for failure to comply with a police order and for violating rules governing public gatherings. This, too, was an event with less than a dozen participants.

We call on Russia to meet its obligations to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and to fulfill its OSCE commitments.

The United States places great importance on the protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all people.

As Secretary Clinton has said, gay rights are human rights, and human rights are gay rights. Government protection of the rights to assemble peacefully and to exercise freedom of expression should apply to all individuals without distinction.

In a final note I'd like to comment on a Russian Foreign Ministry asserting that expressions of concerns by the government of the United States concerning legislation in the Russian Federation "amount to interference in the country's internal affairs." I would like to remind all participating States of our reaffirmation in Astana, where we all agreed "...that the inherent dignity of the individual is at the core of comprehensive security." We further reiterated that "human rights and fundamental freedoms are inalienable, and that their protection and promotion is our first responsibility." And finally and most importantly we reaffirmed that "categorically and irrevocably ... the commitments undertaken in the field of the human dimension are matters of direct and legitimate concern to all participating States and do not belong exclusively to the internal affairs of the State concerned."

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.