



United States Mission to the OSCE

On the Abduction and Detention of Ukrainian Citizens by the Russian Federation

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires, a.i. Kate M. Byrnes
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
February 4, 2016

The United States condemns the continued detention of Nadiya Savchenko, Oleg Sentsov, Oleksander Kolchenko, Stanislav Klich, Mykola Karpyuk, Akhtem Chygoz, and all other Ukrainians unjustly held in Russia and in Russian-occupied Crimea. Human rights groups estimate that there are currently at least 20 such cases.

The United States continues to monitor Ms. Savchenko's trial closely. On February 1, Ms. Savchenko, who continues her hunger strike in protest of her illegitimate and ongoing imprisonment and prosecution, testified in her own defense. She implicated a former employee of the Russian presidential administration and the former head of the so-called "Luhansk People's Republic" by name as having abducted her from Ukraine in June 2014. These serious charges should be fairly considered and all evidence examined. However, the judges have refused a defense motion to summon these individuals to testify and have shown contempt throughout the trial for their obligation to ensure a fair, equal, and transparent process.

The United States continues to call on the Russian Federation to investigate promptly and impartially allegations of torture made by Ukrainian citizens Stanislav Klich and Mykola Karpyuk, who are the subjects of a show trial in Chechnya based on charges that they killed Russians during the first Chechen conflict. We have appealed for this repeatedly in the Permanent Council, with no response from the Russian Federation.

We also note our deep concern regarding the continued detention of the Deputy Head of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis, Akhtem Chygoz, in Russian-occupied Crimea on charges of supposedly participating in a "mass riot." The trial of Mr. Chygoz and several Crimean Tatar co-defendants began on December 28. Their relatives were barred from attending the proceeding. On January 15, police arrested journalist Zair Akadyrov at the court house, and later interrogated him, in apparent retaliation for his coverage of Mr. Chygoz's trial.

These cases raise serious concerns about Russia's respect for the rule of law and its international obligations and commitments. This abrogation of commitments has deprived Savchenko, Klich, Karpyuk, and Chygoz of their fundamental rights. The charges against Ukrainian citizens held for politically-motivated reasons should be dismissed. These individuals should be released immediately and, in the case of those being held within Russia, be allowed to return to Ukraine. The failure of Russia to do so continues to contravene its OSCE commitments as well as its commitments under the Minsk agreements.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.