



United States Mission to the OSCE

Right of Reply to the Russian Federation on the First Anniversary of George Floyd's Death

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Courtney Austrian
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
May 27, 2021

Thank you, Madam Chair

I am going to be brief in my response. I would like, first of all, to thank my Russian colleague for his great interest in the events in my country and his concern. It is much appreciated. I am also going to paraphrase a British poet, John Donne, in saying the death of any of our citizens diminishes us all. I would like to assure my esteemed colleague that the U.S. judicial system is looking into and investigating the cases that he has raised, including the case of Dante Wright and I have every confidence that justice will be done.

You also discussed the right for peaceful assembly and that is something that is expressly protected under the U.S. Constitution and throughout American history, people have gathered peacefully to protest injustice and demand accountability from our leaders and to effect change. Sometimes more effectively than others, I will grant that.

While peaceful protest is the right of every American, but violent protest is not. Those who use the right to peaceful protest as a cover for destruction or criminal activity will be prosecuted under the law.

Many Americans exercise their right to peaceful protest to address the challenges our society faces and I think we put the spotlight on those challenges on a fairly regular basis in my country. The United States and free and open societies around the world are strengthened when people exercise their right to freedom of speech and peaceful protest and when governments are held accountable through freedom of expression, including for members of the press, and for rule of law.

As I said at the beginning, we are looking for a "more perfect union," I do not pretend that we have found that yet.

Thank you very much.

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