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United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Media Freedom in Turkey

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
March 10, 2011

The United States wishes to join the OSCE's Representative on Freedom of the Media in expressing concern about recent police actions against journalists in Turkey. We call on the government of Turkey to uphold basic OSCE media freedom commitments. As part of upholding these commitments, those who express differing or critical views must not be targeted for doing so.

We remain concerned about the number of journalists in Turkey who are imprisoned or are facing criminal charges by all appearances in connection with their work as journalists. In the past month alone, 12 journalists were imprisoned, joining others already in pre-trial detention. In the month previous to that another three journalists were arrested and remain incarcerated. We note that many individuals have been imprisoned in Turkey over the years for exercising their right to freedom of expression and expressing their views on social or political topics. We urge that any investigations and prosecutions proceed in a transparent manner, and that all defendants be assured due process in a manner consistent with OSCE standards and Turkey's international obligations.

We also join Representative Mijatovic in calling on Turkey to reform its media laws to ensure they are in full compliance with both its OSCE media freedom commitments and its international obligations with respect to freedom of expression. This includes putting an end to blocking web sites that express opinions on social and political topics or restricting access en masse to blogging platforms.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.