



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Blocking of Social Media Sites in Turkey

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
March 27, 2014

The United States is concerned by recent actions by the government of Turkey that blocked access to social media sites such as Twitter.

We wish to add our voice to the chorus of criticism this action has received from inside and outside Turkey. We strongly oppose any move by an OSCE participating State that runs counter to our shared commitment to protect the fundamental freedom of expression, including the right enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights “to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”

Attacking the medium – whether Internet or mobile platforms or traditional print and broadcast media outlets – is not an acceptable response to a message that the authorities don’t like. Furthermore, experience has shown that it will not ultimately prevent citizens from continuing to call for greater transparency and accountability in government.

We, too, note yesterday’s decision of an Ankara court that ruled the blockage illegal. We call upon the government of Turkey to respect this ruling and for the country’s telecommunications authority to immediately restore Twitter service, and also call on authorities to abstain from further attempts at unlawful restrictions in this regard.

The United States echoes the sentiments expressed by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Dunja Mijatovic, that the Turkish government “should protect and encourage pluralistic discourse both offline and online, instead of stifling it.”

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.