



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **Peaceful Protests and Ensuring Constitutional Policing in the United States**

As delivered by Deputy Permanent Representative Kate Byrnes  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
July 14, 2016

The past week has been a difficult one for the people of the United States. The fatal shootings by police of Alton Sterling in Louisiana and Philando Castile in Minnesota, both African American men, are deeply troubling and have prompted peaceful public demonstrations and protests in Louisiana, Minnesota, and other cities throughout the United States.

The U.S. Department of Justice has opened a civil rights investigation of the shooting of Mr. Sterling. The Governor of Louisiana stated that he had full confidence that this matter would be investigated thoroughly, impartially, and professionally. In Minnesota, the Justice Department is currently providing assistance to the local investigation of the tragic death of Mr. Castile.

Colleagues, our delegation has regularly briefed the Permanent Council on federal investigations regarding the police in Ferguson, Missouri, Baltimore, New York, and Chicago, and on actions taken by the U.S. government following the tragic deaths of Michael Brown, Freddie Gray, and Eric Garner. We will continue to update you on the U.S. government response to these incidents, and on efforts to ensure constitutional policing in the United States.

On July 7, President Obama stated that these fatal shootings are not isolated incidents. They are symptomatic of the broader challenges within our criminal justice system, the racial disparities that appear across the system year after year, and the resulting lack of trust that exists between law enforcement and too many of the communities they serve.

To admit we have a serious problem in no way contradicts our respect and appreciation for the vast majority of police officers who put their lives on the line to protect us every single day. It is to say that, as a nation, we can and must do better to institute the best practices that reduce the appearance or reality of racial bias in law enforcement.

President Obama went on to say that all Americans should recognize the anger, frustration, and grief that so many Americans are feeling – feelings that are being expressed in peaceful protests and vigils.

On the same day the President spoke, hundreds of people were peacefully marching through the streets of Dallas, Texas, demonstrating against the killings of Alton Sterling and Philando Castile. As the demonstration was underway, an individual opened fire on the police providing security for the event. Police officers Lorne Ahrens, Michael Krol, Michael Smith,

Brent Thompson, and Patrick Zamarripa were killed. Another seven police officers and two civilians were wounded. President Obama called this a vicious, calculated and despicable attack on police who were doing their jobs, keeping people safe during peaceful protests.

Following the attack in Dallas, Attorney General Loretta Lynch said this has been a week of profound grief and heartbreaking loss. She added that Americans across the country are feeling a sense of helplessness, of uncertainty and of fear. These feelings are understandable and they are justified. But the answer must not be violence. The answer must be action: calm, peaceful, collaborative and determined action. We must continue working to build trust between communities and law enforcement. We must continue working to guarantee every person in our country equal justice under the law. We must take a hard look at the ease with which wrongdoers can get their hands on deadly weapons and the frequency with which they use them. We must reflect on the kind of country we want to build and the kind of society we want to pass on to our children.

As the President and Attorney General have made clear, there is more hard work ahead in our quest for a more perfect union. We are determined to do it.

Thank you, Mr. Chair