



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on the Final Human Rights Assessment of the Events of 19 December 2010 in Minsk, Belarus

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
February 9, 2012

The United States remains deeply concerned about serious violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Belarus.

Like the EU, we would like to bring to the Permanent Council's attention the Final Human Rights Assessment of the Events of 19 December 2010 in Minsk, Belarus. This assessment was issued by Neil Jarman, the Special Rapporteur appointed by the Committee on International Control over the Human Rights Situation in Belarus. He was assisted by a group of experts on freedom of assembly and police response measures from OSCE countries.

The following is a summary of the Special Rapporteur's conclusions:

- The Final Assessment cites a lack of information from the Belarusian authorities about the police operation on December 19, 2010, to disperse peaceful protesters, as well as the absence of any inquiry into the accusations of a disproportionate use of force in the police response to the protests. The Government of Belarus has also provided no information on the use of violence towards Vladimir Nekliaev, one of the presidential candidates, prior to the main demonstration.
- The report asserts that given the level of force used against people engaged in a peaceful demonstration in Independence Square, it would have been reasonable to expect the state authorities to investigate complaints about the police action.
- Analysis of the trials and prosecutions has highlighted a number of concerns about the abuse of human rights and the failure to uphold Belarus's obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Similarly, the authorities have failed to investigate a number of complaints of maltreatment and physical abuse while in detention.
- The Government of Belarus has justified its police activities on December 19, 2010, as a necessary response to a violent attack on the Government House, but among the protestors convicted after the event, no one was implicated in any act of violence on that day. Approximately half of those who faced charges or were convicted for the events of December 19 were part of the political opposition to Mr. Lukashenka.

- Collectively, the detentions and prosecutions, along with the ongoing harassment of Belarusian civil society representatives, appear to be an attempt to repress the political opposition and to deter others who might protest against the government.

We also call on the Government of Belarus to study the findings of the Special Rapporteur carefully, and in light of the Report of the OSCE Moscow Mechanism Rapporteur and the OSCE/ODIHR Report on Trial Monitoring in Belarus, to act appropriately upon the recommendations.

We reiterate our call on Belarus to release all political prisoners immediately and unconditionally, to ensure their full rehabilitation, to allow their full participation in political life, and to stop the harassment of political activists, civil society representatives, and independent journalists.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.