



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Recent Protests in Bosnia and Herzegovina

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
February 20, 2014

The United States would like to draw attention to the recent protests which have taken place across many cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina since early February. As we have previously stated in Sarajevo and Washington, we condemn the violence that occurred during some of the protests. We strongly support the right of citizens in Bosnia and Herzegovina to the freedoms of peaceful assembly, association, and expression. For their part, the leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina have a responsibility to address the concerns of citizens, including calls for reform, and to respect the rights of their citizens. Strong public discourse and two-way dialogue between citizens and leaders are fundamental elements of a healthy democracy.

We call on the leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina to ensure peace and to address citizens' legitimate calls for reform while respecting Bosnia and Herzegovina's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We urge all parties to avoid polarizing ethnic rhetoric.

We offer our full support for the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina and the many activities it oversees that seek to build trust between citizens and leaders. With its wealth of expertise and extensive field presence across the country, the Mission is extraordinarily well-placed to assist in promoting dialogue within Bosnia and Herzegovina on the important issues raised by the peaceful protestors. We encourage the leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina to take advantage of the resources of the Mission and of the OSCE institutions in general, including the Office of the Coordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities, to help them as they address the challenges facing the country.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.