



## United States Mission to the OSCE

### **Working Session 10 Tolerance and Non-Discrimination I: Combating racism, xenophobia and discrimination**

As prepared for delivery by Ambassador Michael Kozak,  
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OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting  
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Respect for the rights of persons belonging to national minorities is a cornerstone of the Helsinki Final Act.

The wounds of conflict still deeply scar the countries of southeastern Europe. The threat of violence is real. In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, for example, the collective privilege of select groups can trump the individual rights of citizens. The pervasive consideration of ethnicity in government and political life has created the paradox that some citizens are actually excluded from public offices because of ethnicity. Agreements regarding ethnic power-sharing formalize discrimination even for appointed posts, depriving persons otherwise eligible of positions of authority. Returnees, particularly Bosniaks in Republika Srpska, face intimidation and discrimination, including in education and employment, and belligerent refusals to acknowledge past wrongs and memorialize the victims.

Serbs in **Croatia** face intimidation and revisionism from extremist elements in society. We urge Croatian authorities to condemn aggressive nationalist views. The presence of two government ministers at the unveiling of a monument to an extremist Croatian émigré who murdered a Yugoslav ambassador in 1971 sends the wrong message.

We applaud **Kosovo** for administrative changes to ensure minority students are eligible to attend public universities, making Kosovo's higher education sector more inclusive. However, members of the Serb and other minority communities still face varying levels of institutional and societal discrimination in areas such as employment, property, social services, language use, and the freedom of movement. We urge Belgrade and Pristina to implement agreements reached via the EU-led Dialogue talks, which will help end Serb parallel institutions and ensure that Kosovo's authorities and society respect and protect the rights of all citizens regardless of ethnicity. Kosovo should be represented here.

The political crisis in **Macedonia** makes inter-ethnic tensions a concern. We urge a renewed commitment by all to the letter and spirit of the Ohrid Framework Agreement. We also encourage more effort to improve opportunities for young people through integrated education.

We urge **Kyrgyzstan** to improve access for ethnic Uzbeks to education and to media in their native tongue, and to stop targeting ethnic Uzbek clerics with charges of "terrorism" on the basis of ethnicity.

The **Russian Federation** has severely curtailed fundamental freedoms of Ukrainians living in the Donbas and Crimea regions of **Ukraine**. The occupation authorities in **Crimea** banned the legitimate representative body of the Crimean Tatars, the Mejlis, as an “extremist” organization. Tatars have been subjected to unjust detentions, kidnapping and torture, disappearances, and arbitrary searches of their homes, schools, and places of worship. Tatar leaders and activists face arrests, interrogations, politically-motivated prosecutions, imprisonment, seizures, harassment, and intimidation -- several of them for belonging to what the Russians falsely claim are terrorist groups. Akhtem Chiygoz and four other Tartars languish in pre-trial detention on questionable charges in connection with a pre-occupation demonstration. Ervin Ibrahimov, an activist and board member of the Executive Committee of World Congress of Crimean Tatars, has been missing since May, his suspicious disappearance unaddressed by occupation authorities. Tatar leader, Ilmi Umerov, who was just released from forced psychiatric confinement, still faces criminal charges for affirming the internationally-recognized fact that Crimea remains part of Ukraine.

Members of other communities are targets for discrimination in Russian-occupied Crimea including ethnic Ukrainians who try to maintain their Ukrainian identity, a right that is perceived as disloyal.

Ethnic Georgians face restrictions on their freedom of movement and domestic property rights in the occupied regions of **South Ossetia and Abkhazia**. In Moldova, Latin-script schools remain limited for children in the separatist region of **Transnistria**. **Georgia** and **Moldova** have taken positive steps over the past year to improve the situation for members of minority populations. The Moldovan Parliament’s November 2015 decision to establish a permanent joint working group with the People’s Assembly of Gagauzia is a positive step. We commend Georgia’s State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration for 2015-2020 and its Action Plan.. We call for the full implementation of the State Language Law.

**Russia’s** policies and actions concerning ethnic Russians in other states are dangerous. We should express our legitimate concern for the rights of persons belonging to national minorities in other countries without ethnic bias, inflammatory rhetoric, or destabilizing intent.

We underscore the importance of maintaining the independence of the High Commissioner on National Minorities and ODIHR.