



United States Mission to the OSCE

On the Detention of Nadiya Savchenko, Oleg Sentsov, and Oleksandr Kolchenko

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
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Last week, I expressed the concern of the United States over Russia's decision to change where it claims Nadiya Savchenko's so-called "illegal border crossing" into Russia took place from Voronezh to Rostov-on-Don. We suspected this was being done in order to ensure her trial would be held in Rostov rather than Moscow.

This week, sadly, we learned that Ms. Savchenko's trial will indeed be held in Rostov. This is concerning, first, because Rostov is far from the Moscow-based media outlets that are covering Ms. Savchenko's case, and, second, because the Russian Federation, which places restrictions on travels by diplomats, has failed to confirm that diplomatic missions will be able to travel to Rostov and to observe Ms. Savchenko's trial. This change of venue will dramatically decrease the amount of international observation of the trial, which appears to be the goal of Russian authorities.

Russia's decision to move the court proceedings does nothing to change the fact that Ms. Savchenko should not be on trial at all. She is being held in Russia after having been seized in Ukraine by Russia-backed separatists and spirited across the border. We continue to have serious concerns over her treatment in detention and reports that she is ill.

We are also concerned by the cases of Ukrainian filmmaker Oleg Sentsov and activist Oleksandr Kolchenko, whose trials, which are also being held in Rostov, began on Tuesday. Both were arrested in Ukraine, transported to Russia, made Russian citizens against their will, and have been held for more than a year.

We call on Russia to cease these unfounded proceedings and immediately release Oleg Sentsov, Oleksandr Kolchenko, Nadia Savchenko, and all other Ukrainian hostages – a commitment Russia made when it signed the Minsk agreements in September of last year, and again on February 12 of this year when it signed the Minsk Package of Measures.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.