



United States Mission to the OSCE

Right of Reply to the Russian Federation's Claims of Foreign Interference in Duma Elections

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires, a.i., Courtney Austrian
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
September 23, 2021

I too would like to thank my Russian colleague, and since he mentioned my country, exercise my right of reply. We are not aware of any credible evidence or reports that support Russia's claims of outside election interference.

Russia marginalized civil society activists, independent media, and opposition groups ahead of the elections through the selective application of repressive laws and censorship of the Internet, including applying pressure on technology companies to restrict content. Dozens of Russian activists, journalists, and opposition figures were forced to flee the country as a result of the crackdown.

The Russian people, like all individuals, have the right to freedom of expression, which includes the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas regardless of frontiers; to form associations to pursue common ends; to exercise religious freedom; and to have their voices heard through free and fair elections.

These baseless allegations are designed to deflect attention from the real threat to the integrity of these elections -- the increasingly repressive environment Russian authorities have created to advantage ruling party candidates by obstructing electoral transparency, marginalizing independent media, and preventing opposition participation.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

###