



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **Abduction and Arrest of Azerbaijani Journalist Afgan Mukhtarli**

As delivered by Acting Deputy Chief of Mission, Michele Siders  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
June 8, 2017

Our collective OSCE commitments to ensure the exercise of the freedom of expression date to the founding of this Organization. In 1994 in Budapest, the participating States affirmed “that freedom of expression is a fundamental human right and a basic component of a democratic society.” More recently, in Astana in 2010, the participating States acknowledged that “We value the important role played by civil society and free media in helping us to ensure full respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy, including free and fair elections, and the rule of law.”

In light of OSCE commitments and international obligations to respect freedom of expression, the United States is disturbed by the reported abduction in Tbilisi, Georgia, and subsequent arrest in Azerbaijan, of Azerbaijani journalist Afgan Mukhtarli on May 30. We are also troubled by the May 25 arrest in Azerbaijan of deputy Popular Front Party chairperson Gozal Bayramli.

We urge the government of Azerbaijan to act in accordance with its OSCE and international commitments and obligations and release all those incarcerated for exercising their human rights and fundamental freedoms. We are closely following the Georgian investigation into the reported abduction, and urge that it be full, transparent, and timely.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.