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United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on the Opposition Protests in Albania

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires, a.i. Harry R. Kamian
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
May 16, 2019

Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Ambassador Hasani, for raising this important issue. Doing so reflects the seriousness with which your government is taking this incident.

The United States condemns the violence that took place during the May 11 protests in Tirana as well as those responsible for it. There were several injuries and significant property damage, including at the residence of the OSCE Head of Presence in Albania, Ambassador Borchardt. No foreign diplomat or mission, including the OSCE's, should ever be a target of violence. We thank the Government of Albania for its quick response and protection of the residence, and we remind all participating States of their responsibility in this regard.

Peaceful demonstrations are essential to healthy democracies. The right of individuals to assemble peacefully and to protest against government policies and practices is a universal human right. Excessive force by the state and violence by protestors, however, damage reform efforts and have no place in the democratic process, in Albania or anywhere else. The United States reiterates the need for dialogue and constructive engagement to resolve the political impasse.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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