



## United States Mission to the OSCE

### **Reply to the Russian Federation on the Report by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Dunja Mijatović**

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
June 18, 2015

Because my country was mentioned I'd like to take the opportunity to reply to a few points made by our distinguished Russian colleague.

First, with respect to the treatment of journalists covering Ferguson and Occupy Wall Street, I have spoken on this in the past in this forum, and I would just reiterate that the United States is fully committed to upholding our constitutional protections for journalists, as well as our OSCE commitments, and that the President on the United States spoke out publically to say that it was unacceptable to prevent journalists from covering protests, that this was something that needed to be fixed, whenever and wherever there had been mistakes. So we've had leadership at the very top of our government, in calling out mistakes and also reaffirming commitments.

There is no question that the United States as a matter of policy supports the idea that the commitments that we have made at the OSCE and the responsibilities that we have under international law with respect to universal principles apply to all governments, including ourselves. There is no double standard. There is one standard that applies to everyone, including ourselves.

Double standards are bad. The kinds of double standards that we've heard talked about today aren't real. But the real double standard that we need to protect against is the double standard that is wrapped up inside arguments that suggest Russians or Belarusians or any citizens of any OSCE state are not deserving of the exact same rights as the citizens of other states, or not capable of enjoying the exact same rights as those of other states. That notion is a kind of chauvinism, a kind of racism or xenophobia that we should not tolerate. No one has the right to say that people who live in Russia don't deserve the same respect for their rights as people who live in America.

Second point. Given that the distinguished Russian ambassador decided to raise differences in the ways that various cases are handled, I would assume – and I have a question for the Representative on Freedom of the Media – but I would assume that there is a practical consideration that goes into deciding how to respond to a particular case: whether something appears to be systemic; whether it's a long-standing case; whether a public statement, or the absence of a public statement, might afford some level of safety to an individual. I assume that those are the considerations that the Representative's office thinks through before deciding to either pursue quiet diplomacy or public diplomacy. And I would ask the

Representative on Freedom of the Media whether there are any countries for which you do not consider public statements or private diplomacy to be an option? Is there any country which you would not use private diplomacy for, or any country for which you would never make a public statement?

Finally, our distinguished Russian colleague has once again raised concerns with offensive speech. And I will reiterate that I find many of the statements made by the Russian delegation in this forum to be offensive. I also support the Representative on Freedom of the Media's point that none of us has a right to not be offended.

The Russian statement today was a deplorable attack, and an embarrassing one. The fact that the Russian Federation feels compelled to make such attacks says nothing about Dunja Mijatović, or the institution of the Representative on Freedom of the Media – and a great deal about the insecurity of the Russian Federation.

Russia often demands to be treated as a big country in this forum. No big country should act so small.

Thank you.