



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

### **Statement on the Two-Year Anniversary of the Violent Suppression of Peaceful Protestors in Belarus**

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
December 20, 2012

Yesterday marked the two year anniversary of the December 2010 presidential election in Belarus. Following that election, which fell significantly short of internationally recognized democratic standards, police violently broke up crowds of peaceful demonstrators. Many people were beaten and more than 700 were detained, including seven presidential candidates.

The legacy of these actions continues to be felt in Belarus today. Several democratic opposition activists remain imprisoned. One of those prisoners, Zmitser Dashkevich, was to be released from prison this week, but his sentence was extended by one year, an action which is consistent with a lack of judicial independence and selective targeting of the democratic opposition. We reaffirm our call for the immediate, unconditional release and rehabilitation of all political prisoners. The government continues to fail to respect fundamental freedoms of speech, association, and assembly, as reflected in last week's final report by ODIHR's election observation mission on the September 2012 elections in Belarus.

We recall the December 1, 2010, joint statement between the United States and Belarus, which affirmed that enhanced respect for democracy and human rights remains central to improving bilateral relations. We encourage the government of Belarus to work with OSCE institutions to ensure compliance with the Organization's goals and values. And we continue to stand with the Belarusian human rights defenders, independent journalists, and civil society activists who seek to build an open, democratic future for their country.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.