



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

### **Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in Azerbaijan**

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer  
to the Special Permanent Council, Vienna  
August 19, 2015

The United States is deeply troubled by the decision of an Azerbaijani court to sentence human rights and peace advocates Leyla and Arif Yunus, who have been detained for more than a year, to eight-and-a-half and seven-year prison terms, respectively. Their convictions appear to be solely connected with their human rights work and participation in constructive people-to-people programs aiming to ease tensions and build confidence in the region. We are further troubled by reports of irregularities during the judicial process. We are particularly concerned about their health, and we urge the authorities to release them immediately on compassionate grounds. It is in Azerbaijan's interest to meet its international obligations and its OSCE commitments to uphold human rights, including those pertaining to minimum fair trial guarantees, a critical step toward achieving a bright, prosperous, and stable future.

We are also closely watching the ongoing trial of investigative journalist Khadija Ismayilova, which began in Baku on August 7, and we reiterate our call for her release. We urge Azerbaijan to adhere to its commitments to respect the rights of individuals to express their views freely and without fear of reprisal.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.