United States Mission to the OSCE

On Freedom of Assembly in Russia

As delivered by Acting Deputy Chief of Mission Elisabeth Rosenstock-Siller
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
March 25, 2021

We are concerned by the Russian government's continued contempt for the rights to peaceful assembly and freedom of association. While this has been obvious in the authorities' responses to peaceful mass gatherings for quite some time, on March 13 Russia used dubious grounds to disrupt a conference of 194 independent city and municipal councilors in Moscow by arresting every attendee, including journalists covering the event, and charging them with administrative violations for allegedly "cooperating with an undesirable foreign organization."

Russian authorities also extended the period of house arrest for members of Aleksey Navalny's associates working on anti-corruption causes and other opposition figures facing politically-motivated criminal charges for allegedly violating sanitary rules during the January 23 demonstrations. This follows media reports that police searched the homes of multiple Navalny associates around the country.

All OSCE participating States have committed to ensuring the rights to peaceful assembly and freedom of association. In fact, my esteemed Russian colleague addressed himself at length to this subject only last week. We call on Russia to honor its commitments and stop arresting Russian citizens and elected leaders for espousing independent views, joining non-governmental organizations, and participating in peaceful gatherings.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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