



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement regarding inspections of NGOs in the Russian Federation

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
April 11, 2013

The United States is deeply concerned by indications that Russian authorities continue to take actions that restrict space for civil society. Law enforcement, tax offices, and other regulatory agencies have recently mounted unannounced inspections not only of international human rights organizations like Amnesty International and long-established non-governmental groups like the Moscow Helsinki Group and Memorial, but also of environmental and religious organizations throughout Russia. Hundreds of searches have taken place at the offices of organizations across Russia since March 6. The United States remains committed to supporting the development of civil society and respect for fundamental freedoms around the world, and we will continue to monitor the situation in Russia closely.

In raising this issue at the Permanent Council, we note that many prior OSCE commitments, from Principle VII of the Helsinki Final Act forward, emphasize the ability of civil society to monitor and seek implementation of the human rights and fundamental freedom commitments to which we have unanimously agreed.

Most recently, in Astana in 2010 we reaffirmed “the important role played by civil society and free media in helping us to ensure full respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy, including free and fair elections, and the rule of law.” (6)

These inspections and searches launched against the Russian and international NGO community seem to be aimed at intimidating and disrupting the work of civil society and run counter to Russia’s OSCE commitments. These raids, taken together with the recent package of legislation that restricts the operations of civil society constitute a disturbing trend.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.