



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

# **Statement on LGBT Rally in Georgia and Incident of LGBT Hate Crime in the United States**

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
May 30, 2013

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

In the May 16 meeting of the Permanent Council, the United States raised the issue of International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia—IDAHO. In our statement, we noted that people continue to be killed, arrested, and harassed in the OSCE area because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Sadly, the intervening two weeks have provided a number of examples of horrible violence against persons on the basis of their sexual orientation. Such acts of intolerance have no place in democratic societies.

The United States condemns the May 17<sup>th</sup> attack on a peaceful rally to mark the International Day Against Homophobia in Tbilisi, Georgia. Fourteen people were hospitalized after participants in a counter-demonstration attacked the LGBT rights rally. Prime Minister Ivanishvili condemned the attack, saying that the right to gather peacefully and to freely express one's opinion is fundamental to Georgian democracy; acts of violence, discrimination and restriction of the rights of others will not be tolerated; and any perpetrators of such acts will be dealt with according to the law. We understand six individuals have been arrested and several other investigations are underway. We call on the government to investigate these events fully and to bring to justice all those who have violated the law. We encourage all participating States to enable LGBT persons to exercise their rights to freedom of assembly and association without fear of attack. Fundamental freedoms and human rights belong to all individuals, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

Just one day after the May 17 incidents in Tbilisi, my own country witnessed the murder of a man, who was killed allegedly on the basis of his sexual orientation. Mark Carson was fatally shot in the head while walking through the West Village of New York, just blocks from the Stonewall Inn—one of the most important landmarks in the struggle for LGBT rights. Law enforcement officials are treating the case as a hate crime, and have filed murder and weapons charges against a suspect, alleging he hurled a series of anti-gay insults at the victim before shooting him in the head. New York Police have also reported a rise in bias-related crimes in New York this year, noting five attacks against gay men in New York City in the three weeks before the murder of Mark Carson.

Just weeks after our commemoration of IDAHO, there is strong evidence that all participating States can and must do more to protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all people, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons. Furthermore, recent hate crimes data available to the U.S. government as reported by state and local law enforcement

agencies across the country have shown an increase in hate crimes directed against individuals on the basis of sexual orientation. Under a law passed in 2009, the United States can federally prosecute crimes based on sexual orientation, gender and gender identity, and these investigations and prosecutions are a priority of the Obama Administration.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.