



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on the Worsening Human Rights Situation in Crimea

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
February 5, 2015

The United States remains deeply concerned about the worsening human rights situation in Crimea, which remains a part of Ukraine and which Russia occupies. We have recently seen a spate of incidents that highlight Russia's disregard for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the people of Crimea, particularly the Crimean Tatars.

On January 26, armed, masked men in military clothing surrounded the headquarters of ATR, the only television channel broadcasting in the Crimean Tatar language in Crimea. The Russian occupation authorities sought video recordings of demonstrations that occurred in early 2014, when residents of Crimea protested against the then ongoing Russian military intervention on the peninsula. Observers believe that the Russian occupation authorities wanted the video recordings in order to identify and punish individuals who exercised their freedoms of peaceful assembly and expression by taking part in these protests.

On January 29, the Russian Investigative Committee detained the Deputy of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis Akhtem Ciygoz for "organizing and participating in riots." The "riots" in question were the early 2014 public protests against Russia's effort to annex its neighbor's territory through the use of force.

Another troubling incident occurred on January 30, when Russian occupation authorities detained Crimean Tatar activist Seydamet Hemedzhi, from the NGO Sebat, apparently because of statements he made on a talk show that were critical of Russian occupation authorities in Crimea.

These incidents point to a larger trend of the Russian government: harassing individuals who oppose Russia's occupation of Crimea. The United States renews its call on Russia to end this occupation immediately and return control of Crimea to Ukraine.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.