



United States Mission to the OSCE

Release of Political Prisoners in Belarus

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
September 3, 2015

For many years, and as recently as May, the United States has used the Permanent Council to call on the government of Belarus to release all political prisoners immediately and unconditionally, and to restore fully their political and civil rights.

Consequently, the United States welcomes the August 22 release from prison in Belarus of Mikalai Statkevich, Ihar Alinevich, Mikalai Dziadok, Evgeniy Vackovich, Artyom Prokopenko, and Yuriy Rubtsov. The release of these six individuals is a positive development for the people of Belarus and an important step toward normalizing relations with the United States. We reiterate our call for the Government of Belarus to restore the political rights of these six and other former political prisoners.

We also encourage Belarus to honor the U.S.-Belarus December 2010 joint statement in respect to democracy and human rights, and conduct its upcoming elections in accordance with democratic standards as monitored by the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. These steps will strengthen Belarusian sovereignty and independence.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.