



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement Regarding the Execution of Clayton Lockett in Oklahoma

As prepared for delivery by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
May 8, 2014

A number of my colleagues have shared their concerns with me and members of my delegation regarding events on April 29 when the State of Oklahoma sought to execute Clayton Lockett for the murder of Stephanie Neiman.

Mr. Lockett's execution was halted by the State of Oklahoma, and Mr. Lockett subsequently died of a heart attack. In a statement, Oklahoma Governor Mary Fallin noted that she has asked "the [Oklahoma] Department of Corrections to conduct a full review of Oklahoma's execution procedures to determine what happened and why."

On May 2, President Obama said that "[w]hat happened in Oklahoma is deeply troubling." President Obama noted that he will ask Attorney General Eric Holder and others for "an analysis of what steps have been taken, not just in this particular instance, but more broadly in this area." President Obama said that Americans need to "ask ourselves some difficult and profound questions around these issues."

We recognize that there is intense public discussion and debate on the issue of the death penalty both within and among nations. As President Obama remarked, this debate will continue in the United States. While we respect the views shared by persons who seek to abolish capital punishment or to impose moratoriums on its use, the ultimate decision regarding this issue must be addressed through the domestic democratic processes of individual participating States and be consistent with their obligations under international law.

The United States respects the concerns of those that oppose the death penalty, but reminds that the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which the United States is a party, provides for imposition of the death penalty for the most serious crimes when carried out pursuant to a final judgment rendered by a competent court, and accompanied by appropriate procedural safeguards and the observance of due process. This includes the right to seek pardon or commutation of sentence in all cases. The imposition of the death penalty, in appropriate circumstances, has also been upheld by the United States Supreme Court.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.