



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Human Rights Day

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
December 11, 2014

Yesterday, on December 10, we celebrated UN Human Rights Day, created to mark the adoption of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This year's theme, Human Rights 365, underscores that our goal should be to spread awareness and support for human rights around the globe every day of the year. In the OSCE region, human rights are an essential component of a comprehensive approach to security, and we affirm that all governments are responsible for the protection and advancement of human rights and fundamental freedoms. It is crucial that governments engage with their citizens and civil society in a serious and continuous dialogue about protecting and advancing human rights.

While we are proud of the progress we have made in the United States, our work is not done. Recent events in the United States have sparked important conversations about race, the justice system, and the sense of trust that must exist between law enforcement and the communities that police serve and protect. We know that the vast majority of police departments work tirelessly to protect the civil and constitutional rights of the communities they serve, and we will continue to act to address the breakdown in public trust in law enforcement that we have seen.

We will share more about the outcomes of investigations and policy reviews as we are able. But today I wanted to share a small piece of President Obama's remarks from last week. He said:

“(...) I am absolutely committed as President of the United States to making sure that we have a country in which everybody believes in the core principle that we are equal under the law (...). I want everybody to know here, as well as everybody who may be viewing my remarks here today, we are not going to let up until we see a strengthening of the trust and a strengthening of the accountability that exists between our communities and our law enforcement.

And I say that as somebody who believes that law enforcement has an incredibly difficult job; that every man or woman in uniform is putting their lives at risk to protect us; that they have the right to come home, just like we do from our jobs; that there's real crime out there that they've got to tackle day in and day out -- but that they're only going to be able to do their job effectively if everybody has confidence in the system.

And right now, unfortunately, we are seeing too many instances where people just do not have confidence that folks are being treated fairly. And in some cases, those may be misperceptions; but in some cases, that's a reality. And it is incumbent upon all of us, as

Americans, regardless of race, region, faith, that we recognize this is an American problem, and not just a black problem or a brown problem or a Native American problem. This is an American problem. When anybody in this country is not being treated equally under the law, that's a problem. And it's my job as President to help solve it.”

We embrace the idea and the message behind Human Rights 365 and will continue to do our part to spread awareness and support for human rights today and every day.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.