



United States Mission to the OSCE

Closing Reinforced Plenary: Any Other Business

As prepared for delivery by Ambassador Robert Bradtke,
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OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
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The United States for several years has used this agenda item to follow up on the recommendations made by the fact-finding missions resulting from the invocation of the Moscow Mechanism. We must do so again as little progress has been made in the countries concerned.

Nearly two and one-half years have passed since the invocation of the Moscow Mechanism concerning Belarus following the December 19, 2010, post-election crackdown and the issuance of a comprehensive report designed to assist Belarus in meeting its OSCE human dimension commitments. Yet most of the report's recommendations remain unaddressed. We continue to urge the Government of Belarus to review the recommendations seriously and act upon them, especially with respect to measures that would guarantee human rights and fundamental freedoms and facilitate the rule of law.

Among these measures are those guaranteeing freedom of association, including discontinuing the practice of arbitrary denials of registration to NGOs and putting an end to pressure and harassment against NGOs; guaranteeing freedom of expression, including through independence of the media and the free flow of information off-line and online; guaranteeing freedom of assembly and ensuring independence of the judiciary and amending domestic legislation to ensure compliance with international fair trial standards. We also again call on the Government of Belarus to release all political prisoners, immediately and unconditionally, and to restore their political rights.

We continue to be concerned about the human rights situation in Turkmenistan, ten years after the Moscow Mechanism was invoked in 2003. There have, however, been some positive developments this year. We welcome President Berdimuhamedov's decision in June to allow Russian dual citizens to receive new biometric Turkmen passports without renouncing their Russian citizenship.

We note that the new Party of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs won a seat in Parliament in the June by-elections. This party was formed at the recommendation of the president, however, and generally reflects the regime's political views. Both the ruling Democratic Party and the new party will be on the ballot for the parliamentary elections scheduled for December 15, the first time that more than one party has been allowed to take part in a general election. No truly independent parties will be permitted to contend, however, and we remain concerned by the lack of space for genuine political dialogue in the country. We hope that Turkmenistan will take full advantage of OSCE expertise in preparation for this electoral process.

There has been some progress, but many of the profound human rights concerns raised regarding Turkmenistan in the 2003 Moscow Mechanism report remain unresolved, as we have discussed over the past two weeks. These include: arbitrary arrest; torture; restrictions on freedoms of speech, media, assembly, movement, and religion; denial of minimum procedural guarantees satisfying international fair trial obligations and commitments; and discrimination and violence against women.

We remain concerned about the lack of access to persons in prison, including political prisoners. We welcome the release in February of journalists and human rights activists Annakurban Amanklychev and Sapardurdy Khadjiyev a few months short of serving their full seven-year sentences. Both had been arrested on charges of “damaging the image of Turkmenistan” after assisting with an unauthorized French documentary on their country. But their colleague Ogulsapar Muradova died under suspicious circumstances in detention shortly after her arrest. In another case, no information is available on the whereabouts of former dissident Gulgeldy Annaniyazov, who was sentenced to eleven years for reportedly entering Turkmenistan illegally. Finally, we still have no information on the health or whereabouts of former Foreign Minister Boris Shikhmuradov and our former OSCE colleague, Batyr Berdiev. We join the call made during Wednesday’s side event for Turkmenistan to “prove that they are alive.”

Thank you.