



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

# **Statement on the Three-Year Anniversary of the Violent Suppression of Peaceful Protestors in Belarus**

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
December 19, 2013

Today marks the third anniversary of the December 2010 presidential election in Belarus. Following that election, which was not free or fair, police violently broke up crowds of peaceful demonstrators. Many people were beaten and more than 700 were detained, including seven presidential candidates.

It is regrettable that, despite the consistent urging of participating States and ODIHR's expert recommendations for improving respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in the country, the government of Belarus continues to repress its own citizens. Several democratic opposition activists remain imprisoned. One of those activists, Uladzimir Yaromenak, was recently given a new three-month, politically-motivated prison sentence for allegedly failing to comply with the requirements of "preventative police supervision." We reaffirm our call for the immediate, unconditional release of all political prisoners and the restoration of their political rights.

We urge the government of Belarus to enhance its respect of fundamental freedoms of expression, association, and assembly. We are disappointed that city authorities in Minsk restricted the right of Belarusians to stage a peaceful march and rally for the human rights of LGBT persons on December 10 and 12. The United States will continue to stand with Belarusian human rights defenders, independent journalists, and civil society activists who seek to build an open, democratic future for their country.

We once again call on the Government of Belarus to honor its OSCE commitments.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.