



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Concerns of Increasing ISIL Threat to OSCE Region

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Special Permanent Council, Vienna
September 8, 2014

The United States joins the European Union in expressing its grave concern over increasing terrorist threats, particularly by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). This group of extremists, who have exhibited repulsive savagery and cruelty, present a shared threat to a broad array of countries, including within the OSCE region.

The United States and the international community were appalled by the brutal murders of journalists James Foley and Steven Sotloff, whose innocent lives were cut short by barbaric acts. ISIL has also slaughtered thousands of civilians in Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon. Borders have not stopped these criminals from developing a vast network of terror, and there is evidence to suggest that these violent extremists will not be satisfied at stopping in Syria and Iraq. Given that OSCE participating States either border or lie very close to the region most affected by ISIL's acts of terror, it is important that the OSCE acknowledge and discuss the increasing ISIL threat to OSCE participating States and OSCE Partners for Cooperation. Only when a broad coalition of countries understand this threat and take action against it will ISIL be disrupted and ultimately defeated. We also remain concerned with the regional threat posed by Al Qaeda-linked al-Nusra Front.

The OSCE, through its Anti-Terrorism Unit, has conducted workshops and seminars focused on preventing violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism. The United States is a strong supporter of these initiatives, particularly those that amplify moderate views and highlight the negative consequences of joining the fight.

In addressing the foreign terrorist fighter threat, we encourage other countries to partner with us in developing common strategies, sharing information and good practices, updating criminal justice procedures and counterterrorism related legislation, building national and community capacities, and keeping this issue at the top of the OSCE's security agenda. We look forward to adopting a list of foreign terrorist fighter recommendations, developed under the auspices of the Global Counterterrorism Forum through the leadership of the Netherlands and Morocco, later this month in New York.

Under the leadership of the Chairman-in-Office, the OSCE has addressed head-on the issue of terrorist financing, particularly kidnapping for ransom, through important discussions at this year's Counterterrorism Conference. The United States underscores that kidnapping for ransom is a vicious cycle that provides incentives for terrorists to kidnap more victims or demand greater political concessions. The United States has adopted a No-Concessions Policy, which protects our citizens by refusing to give into to these demands. With a united and collaborative approach, OSCE participating States can address this dangerous phenomenon.

In all of these activities, we welcome the engagement of the OSCE's Partners for Cooperation – particularly in the Mediterranean region – who are affected by the expanding threat and look forward to participating in the upcoming “Kidnapping for Ransom” workshop in Malta. The United States will continue to give its strong support to these important initiatives. As Secretary Kerry has previously stated, “extremists are defeated only when responsible nations and their peoples unite to oppose them.”

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.