



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

### **Freedom of Expression in Turkey**

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
January 21, 2016

The United States wishes to express its concern about reports in Turkey of academics being investigated and subjected to penalties for expressing their opinions about the conflict in the southeast of Turkey. The United States considers such actions to be part of a troubling trend in Turkey, in which official bodies, law enforcement, and judicial authorities are being used to discourage legitimate political discourse. While some may not agree with the opinions expressed by those academics, we are nevertheless concerned about this pressure having a chilling effect on the exercise of freedom of expression in political discourse throughout Turkish society regarding the sources of and solutions to the ongoing violence.

In democratic societies it is imperative that citizens have the opportunity to express their views, even controversial or unpopular ones. Expressions of concern about violence do not equal support for terrorism. Criticism of government does not equal treason. Turkish democracy is strong enough and resilient enough to embrace free expression of uncomfortable ideas.

Freedom of expression is a fundamental freedom enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and several OSCE commitments. It is guaranteed to all in Turkey under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. As Turkey's friend and NATO ally, the United States urges Turkish authorities to ensure their actions uphold the international obligations and the universal democratic values that are enshrined in OSCE commitments and Turkey's own constitution, including freedom of expression.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.