



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Kazakhstan Permanent Representative Ambassador Abdrakhmanov on Events in Zhanaozen, Kazakhstan

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
December 22, 2011

The delegation of the United States wishes to express its thanks to Ambassador Abdrakhmanov and the delegation of Kazakhstan for briefing the Permanent Council today on the troubling events in western Kazakhstan. We also appreciate the initiative of Kazakhstan to brief participating States on December 19 in Vienna.

We are deeply concerned by this week's violence in western Kazakhstan and wish to express our heartfelt condolences to the families and friends of those killed or injured in Zhanaozen and in Shetpe. The violence left at least 15 people dead, scores of others injured and millions of dollars in property damage. We condemn any use of violence to address grievances and urge all parties to exercise restraint.

Particularly in light of deeply troubling video footage of events in Zhanaozen that appears to show well-organized Kazakh police firing upon unarmed protestors as they ran away from police and then beating wounded protestors as they lay on the ground, the United States strongly urges the Government of Kazakhstan to follow through on its pledge to conduct a full and transparent investigation of the events in Zhanaozen and elsewhere. The fact that video evidence appears to directly contradict previous official accounts of the circumstances surrounding civilian injuries underscores the need for full, transparent and completely impartial investigation into events. In order to ensure the transparency of the investigation, we look forward to the full restoration of internet and telephone communications throughout Kazakhstan's regions.

The United States also urges Kazakhstan to continue to grant media access to Zhanaozen. The United States reaffirms its commitment to the fundamental freedoms of assembly, association, and expression and believes that unfettered access by the media as well as participation by international and domestic non-governmental organizations will help ensure transparency in the investigation process.

The United States joins in the call by OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Lithuanian Foreign Minister Audronius Azubalis in urging Kazakhstan's authorities to ensure that the investigation into these events is conducted with the full respect for OSCE commitments on human rights, including the treatment of detainees.

We also welcome the Government of Kazakhstan's statements pledging to address social grievances that helped to fuel this week's unrest, and encourage inclusive dialogue with a broad range of Kazakhstani civil society and political figures to facilitate this goal.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.