



United States Mission to the OSCE

**Statement on Kyrgyzstan
Block News Websites**

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
March 1, 2012

Like the European Union, the United States wishes to register its concern about the decision by the Government of Kyrgyzstan to block access to the independent news website Ferghana.ru. We join the OSCE's Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM) in calling for the block to be lifted and for authorities to take steps to ensure that the Internet remains free in Kyrgyzstan.

As noted by Representative Mijatovic, Kyrgyzstan has taken positive and important steps in favor of media freedom in recent months, including the decriminalization of defamation. We are concerned, therefore, that authorities seem to have taken steps to block the Ferghana.ru website as a direct result of the content appearing on Ferghana.ru – content that appears to fall within the range of normal political discourse and within the parameters of protected free speech in any democratic society. In fact, although state-owned Kyrgyztelecom complied with the government's request, other providers, noting the lack of a court order, did not.

We join the RFoM in expressing hope that all Internet users will soon be able to freely access this website again and that the Internet will remain a free forum to exchange information and ideas free from unwarranted government control or undue intervention. We also note that Ferghana.ru has been blocked in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan since 2005, while Kazakh Internet service providers selectively block access to the website.

We urge the authorities in Kyrgyzstan – and in each of these other participating States – to adhere to their OSCE commitments on freedom of expression and freedom of the media and to lift the blocking of access to the Ferghana.ru website.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.