



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on LGBT Rights in the Russian Federation

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
April 19, 2012

We note our continued concern about new laws in Russia which restrict freedoms of expression and assembly for all Russians, but especially lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals. St. Petersburg's legislature recently passed such a law, which has led to the arrest of several people for "homosexual propaganda." A similar law has been proposed at the federal level. Previously, the Duma has four times rejected proposed legislation banning "homosexual propaganda," noting that homosexuality is not a criminal offence, and that therefore promoting it cannot be illegal. We hope the Duma will view the recent proposed legislation in the same light.

We call on Russia to meet its obligations to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. We welcomed the recent statement of the G8 Foreign Ministers Meeting Chair which said: "The ministers reaffirmed that human rights and fundamental freedoms are the birthright of all individuals, male and female, including lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender individuals. These individuals often face death, violence, harassment and discrimination because of their sexual orientation in many countries around the world." The statement was endorsed by all those present, with the exception of the Russian Federation.

The United States places great importance on the protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all people, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons around the world.

As Secretary Clinton has said, gay rights are human rights, and human rights are gay rights. Government protection of the rights to assemble peacefully and to exercise freedom of expression should apply to all individuals without distinction.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.