

Original: ENGLISH



United States Mission to the OSCE

**Reply to the Russian Federation on the
International Day for the Victims of
Enforced Disappearances**

As delivered by U.S. Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
September 8, 2016

I'd like to respond to the statement by our distinguished Russian colleague.

First, a technical point: the distinguished Russian colleague is within his rights within this forum to raise whatever issues he wants to; under the topic of enforced disappearances, I don't think that he raised anything that applies to my country. Enforced disappearances are a specific kind of human rights violation, and none of the people in Guantanamo are disappeared. There are visits. There has even been an ODIHR report. There is ongoing engagement. And so I think, just to make that technical point, that perhaps this would have been better raised under a different heading. And I share his assessment that it's not useful to politicize conversations like this.

On the issue of Guantanamo, as we've addressed many times before, it is absolutely the case that President Obama made a commitment early in his time in office to close Guantanamo. And he has repeatedly made clear his determination and the administration's determination to close Guantanamo Bay Detention Facility. That's because we assess that the continued operation of that detention facility weakens our national security. And we're taking all possible steps – and there has been progress on reducing the population of that detention facility – we're taking all possible steps to reduce the detainee population at Guantanamo, and to close the detention facility in a responsible manner that protects our national security.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.