



United States Mission to the OSCE

Reply to the Russian Federation on Statement on International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists

As delivered by U.S. Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
November 3, 2016

I'd like to reserve my right to reply more fully to the list of cases raised by our distinguished Russian colleague, but I would like to say today that my delegation is happy to follow-up on any cases that our distinguished Russian colleague or others want to raise in good faith with us.

And we will do our best effort to provide an update and information. I would ask that colleagues who avail themselves of that offer do so in good faith, though, and -- you know, I think -- when you are talking about journalists who are killed for their work when violence is deployed as a political tool to silence people, you do disrespect to those who have suffered that consequence by raising spurious or gratuitous cases. And not only that, you retrace the trauma of families who have lost loved ones not because of what they've written, but through tragedy.

The distinguished Russian colleague raised the case of Andrew Breitbart, who died of heart failure, and who did not have drugs in his system or anything like that. He collapsed. And that heart attack is a very sad event for his family, and I think it's impolite and not particularly humane to use that as a political prop in this forum.

I'd like to make two other points in general. One is that the distinguished Russian Ambassador raised a number of journalists who he said were covering a variety of sensitive topics -- and I just want to underscore that in the United States it is common for journalists to cover sensitive topics because we do have a free and vibrant press, and so, that doesn't make those journalists unusual, it makes them typical. And I understand that journalists who cover sensitive topics are unusual in some other countries, but they are really the norm in the United States.

And the second point I'd make is that I think the United States -- while certainly we also have room for improvement in terms of a number of commitments -- our track record in terms of investigation of crimes against journalists is a strong one.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.