



United States Mission to the OSCE

Violation of the Rights of Residents of Georgia's Occupied Regions

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

The United States strongly supports Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty within its internationally recognized borders. We take this occasion to remind the Russian Federation that in signing the Helsinki Final Act, it committed itself to the principles of respect for the rights inherent in sovereignty, the inviolability of frontiers, and the territorial integrity of States.

Russian military forces continue their occupation of Georgia's Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions. Russian security services, in coordination with the de facto authorities, are committed to a policy of "borderization" along the Administrative Boundary Lines, restricting freedom of movement and preventing international and humanitarian organizations from fully assisting those affected by the ongoing conflict. We are particularly concerned about the recent policy of "passportization" that threatens to marginalize ethnic Georgians living in the occupied territories. Recent laws that attempt to define the status of so-called "foreign citizens" in the occupied territories create risks for the ethnic Georgian population as well. We hope participants at the Geneva International Discussions will be able to address these issues at the upcoming round in March to ensure that the rights of all Georgian citizens are guaranteed.

The United States reaffirms its strong support for Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration, which even the ongoing Russian occupation cannot reverse.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.