



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Albania - Protest Violence

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
January 27, 2011

We deeply regret that last Friday's demonstration in Tirana was not peaceful and that earlier calls for calm were not heeded. We are saddened by the loss of life of three demonstrators as well as by the numerous people injured. We remain concerned by the inflamed accusations and assignment of blame traded back and forth following the demonstrations. The use of provocative rhetoric and the suggestion or tolerance of any form of violence is a deep disservice to the people of Albania. We call on all sides and their leaders to engage in a considered dialogue to manage political differences and avoid further bloodshed and suffering.

In the past twenty years, since it joined the OSCE, Albania has grown into a thriving and successful participating State, constantly working towards forming the democratic institutions necessary for moving forward as a nation. However, there remains considerable scope for continued progress. We urge the political leadership of Albania to set aside political agendas and work together for a better Albania. We encourage the immediate commencement of a substantive and constructive dialogue among all parties in order to prevent a further loss of life and increased political destabilization. With municipal elections set for May, it is imperative that a real and meaningful conversation get underway immediately so that elections at a level closest to the daily concerns of the population can result in a clear and decisive expression of their will.

Despite the confusion surrounding the violence, we were impressed with the speed and unity of purpose with which the OSCE Presence and others cooperated to put out a joint statement of condemnation. Although we regret the circumstances, we think this stands as an outstanding example of coordination between OSCE field presences and our diplomatic missions in the field. We pledge our support to Ambassador Wollfarth and the OSCE Presence in Albania and thank them for continuing to be a source of stability in the region at this difficult time.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.