



United States Mission to the OSCE

**Right to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly
in Kazakhstan**

As delivered by Deputy Chief of Mission Kate Byrnes
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
May 26, 2016

The United States is concerned about restrictions on the right of freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of expression of the media in Kazakhstan, including the recent detention of journalists and protestors in connection with anticipated demonstrations over land reform.

In Copenhagen in 1990, OSCE participating States agreed that “everyone will have the right of peaceful assembly and demonstration. Any restrictions which may be placed on the exercise of these rights will be prescribed by law and consistent with international standards.”

This means that laws requiring government approval of demonstrations should not be misused to prevent peaceful protesters from expressing views that are critical of the government. Neither should overly-restrictive laws be used to preemptively detain activists and journalists in advance of a planned demonstration, as was the case in Kazakhstan. We join in the concern expressed by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media about the detention of journalists in Kazakhstan.

The United States calls on Kazakhstan to uphold its OSCE commitments to the right of freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of expression, including by the media. We call for those still held in detention for exercising their rights to be released.

Thank you, Madam Chair.