



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **Statement on Concerns of Increasing Attacks on Journalists in the OSCE Region**

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
September 18, 2014

The United States shares the concern raised by our EU colleagues on the continued threats to freedom of expression. We particularly note the recent case of an attack on of Ksenia Batanova, a television producer for the Dozhd Russian independent news channel. The brazen attack against Ms. Batanova underscores the need for a speedy and thorough investigation, and once again reminds us of the need for all states to condemn all attacks on and harassment of journalists. Among the most valued services journalists provide to any society are the investigation of injustice and the exposure of corruption.

Russia bears much of the responsibility for the increasingly hazardous media freedom situation in eastern Ukraine. We echo Representative on Freedom of the Media Dunja Mijatović's condemnation of the suppression of free voices in Crimea in her press release of September 9. The detention and interrogation in Crimea of Yelizaveta Bohutskaya, a blogger and contributor to various media outlets, including Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's Crimean desk, appears linked to local authorities' desire to suppress criticism of Russian officials. In the words of Secretary Kerry, "for too many, a free press is under assault, and the journalists, bloggers, photographers, satirists, and essayists who give life to the words 'free press' are in danger."

Mr. Chair, the United States calls upon the Russian Federation to abide by its OSCE commitments to freedom of expression and media freedom. The Russian government must take immediate steps to de-escalate tensions in eastern and southern Ukraine and make clear to its own troops and local militants that attacks on journalists and media outlets are completely unacceptable and must be stopped.

Mr. Chair, we would also note the reports just this morning of the attack on a BBC team in the southern Russian city of Astrakhan. According to reports, while working on a story about a Russian soldier who died in Ukraine, the team's cameraman was beaten, their camera smashed, and recorded material deleted. We once again call on Russia for a swift investigation into these attacks against accredited news journalists seeking to report legitimate news stories. We echo Ms. Mijatović's statements to the press, in which she stated: "What we are witnessing is a clear sign of harassment of free media in Russia".

Thank you, Mr. Chair.