



United States Mission to the OSCE
**Statement on Violence Against and
Improper Detention of Journalists
in Belarus**

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
September 20, 2012

The United States expresses serious concerns regarding government-orchestrated violence and detention of civil society members and at least seven journalists including a photographer from the Associated Press who suffered serious facial injuries. The journalists were covering a protest in Minsk on September 18 in support of an election boycott.

We urge the government of Belarus to cease its campaign of intimidation and to hold responsible government officials accountable, particularly for acts of violence.

We renew our call on the Government of Belarus to honor its OSCE commitments, release all prisoners of conscience immediately and unconditionally, ensure their full rehabilitation, and stop the ongoing harassment of political activists, civil society representatives, and independent journalists.

Finally, we call upon Belarus to hold free and fair elections on September 23 and allow the journalists and observers who witness these elections to freely report on what they observe. In particular, we urge the government to permit full access, including the prompt issuance of visas to OSCE observers from ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.