



U.S. Mission to the OSCE

Right of Reply to the Russian Federation on Press Freedom Day

As delivered by Ambassador James S. Gilmore III
To the Permanent Council, Vienna
April 30, 2020

Just a few words, if I could, since the Russian representative decided to speak out on America. Let's be very clear that the United States enshrines its press freedom and its freedom of expression in the First Amendment and it is upheld by the courts in the United States each and every day.

There is no issue with respect to RT and Sputnik. They can continue to broadcast freely in the United States. I think the point that we may wish to make here is that this broad ranging discussion perhaps is a diversion. The truth is that the Final Act and the Helsinki Accords opened up freedom of expression, that is so common in the West and so enshrined in the West, to the people in Russia. And that is what we aspire to again. We would like the people of Russia to have a fair look at everything and let them decide for themselves what is right, what is wrong, just as we do in the United States.

There is no issue here with respect to the U.S. Foreign Agents Registration Act. We have addressed this issue in the past. Anyone who has to register, it is just simply is in the interest of transparency to show who they really represent, but they are not prohibited from publication.

Then in addition to that, let me point out that the most recent use of the Registration Act in Russia has a tendency to try to prevent people from publishing and speaking to the Russian people. The main point here is that the United States does not impede this type of expression, but it is being impeded in Russia. Our goal here is to do everything that we can do to make sure that the people of Russia get a full and complete piece of information of everything that is going on.

It may be a distraction this whole discussion here, which I will now stop, by just pointing out that we will have another discussion in a little while about the attacks that were made on the Russian journalist Elena Milashina and we are going to have a conversation about that and make sure that this behavior does not continue against Russian journalists, so that they can in fact speak out and inform the people of Russia. And that would be the American goal.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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