



United States Mission to the OSCE

Right of Reply to the Russian Federation on Freedom of Assembly in the OSCE Area

As delivered by Chargé d’Affaires Courtney Austrian
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
February 4, 2021

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will be brief. As my esteemed Russian colleague has raised the United States, I’d like to exercise my right of reply. Let me start by saying that the United States is not perfect, nor does it claim to be. However, as we have said on previous occasions, we are committed to promoting the highest standards of freedom of expression and media freedom around the world, and we will continue to work with partners throughout the OSCE to uphold these values.

As I’ve also previously noted, some social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, have begun more clearly labeling when a source is government-controlled, removing content or closing accounts when government actors have been posing as something other than what they are and when account holders violate the site’s terms of service.

These commercial platforms made these moves completely independent of the U.S. government and not as a result of any U.S. law or regulation. We note governments do not have rights to *Freedom of Expression*, which is an individual right. Removal of material from **social media platforms** by a private company in no way impacts the ability of individuals to express themselves in other fora or through a variety of media.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.