



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Juma Mosque Community in Azerbaijan

As delivered by Acting Deputy Representative James Cox
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
July 8, 2004

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman.

The United States is very troubled by Azerbaijan's action to evict the Juma Mosque's leadership from the mosque.

On numerous occasions in the Permanent Council and bilaterally, we have urged Azerbaijan to uphold principles of religious liberty.

We note that authorities have allowed worship services in the mosque to proceed, even while enforcing the eviction from the mosque's administrative offices.

However, we are disturbed by reports that the imam and several worshippers were temporarily detained and allegedly told not to return to the mosque.

We again call on the government of Azerbaijan to allow the Juma congregation to worship freely in the mosque and to choose its own spiritual leaders.

We call on both the mosque community and the government to refrain from violence and to resolve this dispute in a manner that fully respects the religious freedom of the Juma congregation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.