

**HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH**

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**HRW.org**

Mr. Didier Burkhalter  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Chairman in Office of the OSCE

Federal Department of Foreign Affairs  
Bundeshaus West  
3003 Bern  
Switzerland

Brussels, February 20, 2014

Dear Mr. Burkhalter,

We are writing to urge that you use your position as OSCE Chairman-in-Office to immediately appoint a special envoy to Ukraine to investigate human rights abuses by all parties to the confrontation.

We welcome your February 19 statement regarding a package of potential measures to defuse the Ukraine crisis, including the “dispatching of an international expert team to establish facts on violent incidents and human rights violations.” Like the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Human Rights Watch believes the deployment of a team to establish the facts about human rights abuses is critically important and urgently needed.

We hope that you, without delay, will appoint a special envoy who would be supported by a team of experts in human rights investigations to document abuses – including beatings of protesters and activists, torture and ill-treatment, arbitrary arrests, kidnappings, enforced disappearances, instances of excessive use of force, looting, and killings – by all parties to the confrontations. Supported by an expert team, the envoy should be asked to report publicly and provide recommendations on the way forward to ensure accountability for serious human rights abuses.

Deploying such an OSCE CiO team is of the utmost urgency and, while the Ukrainian government’s cooperation should be actively pursued, the appointment of an envoy and expert team should not be dependent on Ukraine’s consent. In December, Council of Europe Secretary General Thorbjorn Jagland proposed the establishment of an advisory panel to probe violent incidents. This is a positive initiative, but the panel has not been fully formed because the Ukrainian government has not proposed its panel member.

Meanwhile, the gathering of facts cannot wait. Many among international policy makers have called for justice for human rights abuses; however, these calls will carry little weight if not backed by an international commitment to gather the facts. To date, the Ukrainian government has promised, but not delivered, credible investigations into police abuses. Facts gathered by independent OSCE experts could help prod the Ukrainian authorities to undertake credible investigations and could possibly help deter further abuses too.

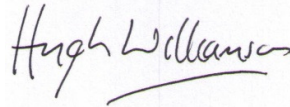
Moreover, the OSCE has broad experience in on-the-ground human rights documentation. There are important precedents for special human rights investigative initiatives by, or in consultation with, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, including the Andijan massacre in Uzbekistan and Kosovo.

The OSCE is well placed to advance justice and reconciliation in Ukraine by dispatching a high quality human rights investigation team. Your leadership is urgently needed to make it happen.

Sincerely yours,



Lotte Leicht  
EU Director  
Human Rights Watch



Hugh Williamson  
Europe and Central Asia Director  
Human Rights Watch

Cc:

Ambassador Thomas Greminger, Swiss Delegation to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)

Ambassador Dr. Roberto Balzaretto, Mission of Switzerland to the European Union