

Sen. Roger F. Wicker, *Mississippi*
Chairman

Rep. Christopher H. Smith, *New Jersey*
Co-Chairman



June 15, 2018

The Honorable Mike Pompeo
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary,

We write to recommend that the United States continue its strong leadership in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) by invoking the Moscow Mechanism regarding the significant escalation of human rights abuses in Chechnya.

The human rights situation in Chechnya has long been grim, even by Russian standards. In February 2017, however, human rights abuses escalated significantly when hundreds of men were rounded up by Chechen authorities and tortured—some were even killed, while others fled the country or remain in hiding. These troubling abuses were raised at a Helsinki Commission hearing in April 2017 and documented in the most recent Department of State Country Report on Human Rights.

Unfortunately, there has been no accountability for perpetrators of these crimes, fostering a climate of impunity in Russia. If these crimes go unpunished, those committing atrocities are free to become repeat offenders, creating an increasingly unsafe and unstable environment in an area already fraught with violence, terrorism, and fear. The invocation of the Moscow Mechanism would lead to the appointment of an OSCE fact-finding mission with a mandate to report on forced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, torture, and other gross violations of human rights, including against journalists and civil society activists in Chechnya.

We appreciate the strong statements of concern made by Ambassador Nikki Haley at the UN and by the U.S. Mission to the OSCE in Vienna. The critical issues that arise in the OSCE underscore the importance of sending a confirmed U.S. Ambassador to the OSCE as soon as possible.

We urge you work with other OSCE participating States to activate the Moscow Mechanism. We believe a sufficient number of participating States would join us, paving the way for a credible and independent investigation and report. We stand ready to assist you however we can.

Sincerely,

Senator Roger F. Wicker

Senator Benjamin L. Cardin