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Swedish Presidency of the European Union

**OSCE Permanent Council No. 785
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EU statement on the treatment of human rights defenders in Kyrgyzstan

The EU has learned with great concern about recent incidents in relation to the work of human rights defenders in Kyrgyzstan, as described in the Spot Reports no. 45 and 47/09 from the OSCE Centre in Bishkek.

On December 2, Nigina Bakhrieva, a well known Tajik human rights advocate, who had been invited, inter alia, by the Kyrgyz Ombudsman's office to conduct a training course for the staff of the Kyrgyz Parliament, was denied entry into Kyrgyzstan and informed about a ten year ban from visiting the country on the basis of alleged problems with authorities two months earlier. At that time, Ms. Bakhrieva had provided advice about how to file complaints with regard to the verdicts relating to the protests in Nookat in 2008.

Moreover, in mid-November Bakhrom Hamroev, a Russian human rights defender working with the NGO Memorial and conducting research into possible human rights violations by Kyrgyz law enforcement authorities in southern Kyrgyzstan, was repeatedly

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obstructed in his work and eventually detained together with his Kyrgyz colleague Izzatilla Rakhmatillaev and deported. The gathered information and his mobile phone were confiscated.

On a similar note, in February this year, the director of Memorial's Central Asia programme Vitaly Ponomarev was also deported and declared persona non grata. He had published a report about the practice of torture in Kyrgyzstan.

In October 2008, Ivar Dale from the Norwegian Helsinki Committee was banned for an extended time span, despite the fact that Kyrgyz courts had found him not guilty of any violation of Kyrgyz law. As a consequence, Mr. Dale was included in a common database for CIS countries and subsequently also refused entry into Kazakhstan and Russia. We raised this case in the Permanent Council on October 16, 2008.

In view of these four cases within the past 14 months, the EU is concerned about a worrying trend in Kyrgyzstan to obstruct the work of human rights defenders. Human rights organisations provide invaluable work for the benefit of a country's adherence to human rights standards and raise awareness where additional efforts are needed. They thereby contribute to stabilisation and sustainable security.

We therefore urge the Kyrgyz authorities to end harassment of human rights defenders, allow them to enter the country and ensure that independent engagement for human rights is possible. We invite them to take advantage of the assistance and expertise offered by the OSCE and its institutions, in particular the ODIHR, on

human rights issues. The EU continues to stand ready to cooperate closely and constructively with the Kyrgyz Republic in the framework of the EU–Kyrgyz Human Rights Dialogue.

The candidate countries CROATIA* and the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries ALBANIA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, MONTENEGRO and SERBIA, as well as the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area ICELAND and NORWAY align themselves with this statement.

*Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.