



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Killing of Journalist in Ingushetia

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
September 4, 2008

Mr. Chairman.

The United States is seriously disturbed by the murder of Ingush journalist Magomed Yevloyev on August 31 while in police custody. The website Yevloyev founded is an important opposition news source in the region. The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Miklos Haraszti, has spelled out what this means, and we quote from the statement he released about the killing: "Yevloyev's death is the culmination of an orchestrated campaign by the authorities of Ingushetia to silence the only critical voice in the region. Similarly to the 2006 murder of Anna Politkovskaya, this assassination represents a further deterioration of media freedom in Russia." End of quote. Indeed, according to Reporters without Borders, 23 media professionals in the Russian Federation have been murdered since the year 2000. This is combined with what human rights groups report as an increase in extrajudicial killings in Ingushetiya that have created a climate of fear and impunity. This most recent killing reminds us that, of the many murders of journalists in Russia, including those of Anna Politkovskaya and Paul Klebnikov, few have been solved.

In the current case, Reporters without Borders has noted that the explanations given by the Ingush authorities of the circumstances of Yevloyev's death make no sense. We agree. Press reports indicate that outrage caused angry mourners to demonstrate against local authorities at his funeral this past Monday and that the local authorities broke up the demonstration.

All OSCE participating States have committed themselves to upholding media freedom and freedom of expression. We were encouraged by President Medvedev's June 2008 address in Berlin in which he reaffirmed the Russian Federation's pledge to uphold such commitments when he stated, "I fully agree that media freedom needs to be protected, that this protection needs to be enshrined in the law" and cited the need to protect all media in Russia from "administrative pressures at all levels." Furthermore, he pledged "all cases of criminal attempts to kill or injure journalists" in Russia "will be fully investigated."

We urge President Medvedev to fulfill these pledges in line with Russia's OSCE media freedom and freedom of expression commitments and call upon the Russian Federation to promptly and transparently investigate this killing, to ensure that those responsible are punished.

We urge OSCE participating States to join us in expressing their shock and outrage about this murder and in calling on the Government of Russia to take immediate steps to uphold their OSCE commitments.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.