



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement about Murders of Human Rights Defenders in Russia

As delivered by Chargé d' Affaires Kyle Scott
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
January 22, 2009

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman,

The United States was shocked and saddened by two recent and brazen murders of human rights defenders in Russia. On January 19, Stanislav Markelov, director of the Rule of Law Institute in Moscow, and Anastasia Baburova, a journalist with the Novaya Gazeta, were murdered in broad daylight in central Moscow. An attorney who spent the better part of the decade pursuing human rights and social justice cases, Markelov had represented Anna Politkovskaya prior to her death in 2006. The murders occurred minutes after Markelov announced at a press conference that he would continue to fight the early release from prison of Yuri Budanov, a former Russian tank commander who was convicted in July 2005 of strangling an 18-year-old Chechen woman. With Ms. Baburova's death, Novaya Gazeta has lost four reporters to murder or other mysterious circumstances since the year 2000.

We would welcome an initiative by Russia to report to the Permanent Council on the status of their investigations and their efforts to bring to justice the perpetrators of these crimes, which unfortunately are not isolated cases. If left without justice, the killings of journalists and human rights activists have a chilling effect on freedom and respect for the rule of law in a society.

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.