



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Attack on Kyrgyzstan Civil Society Leader Edil Baisalov

As delivered by Deputy Chief of Mission Kyle Scott
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
April 27, 2006

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States is deeply disturbed by the violent attack that took place on April 12th against Edil Baisalov, head of the NGO Coalition for Democracy and Civil Society in Bishkek. Our deepest sympathy goes out to Mr. Baisalov and his family.

This cowardly act was not only an assault on an individual, but also an assault on civil society and the principle of freedom of speech. We view this attack as a serious escalation of the troubling political violence that has occurred in Kyrgyzstan during the past year. Kyrgyzstan has a strong and vibrant civil society, and it is to the government's credit that civil society has been allowed to flourish. The assault on Mr. Baisalov, however, is a stark reminder to the Kyrgyz government that in order for genuine democracy to thrive, the government must not only create space for but also protect Kyrgyzstan's vibrant yet fragile civil society.

Mr. Baisalov is outspoken in his criticism of organized crime in Kyrgyzstan. We urge the Kyrgyz government to tackle organized crime head-on and uphold the rule of law. We also appeal to the Government of Kyrgyzstan to investigate this crime vigorously and to provide security to Mr. Baisalov and others who may be at risk. Finally, we call on Kyrgyz authorities -- as well as authorities in all participating States -- to ensure that human rights defenders in their country are able to carry out their activities safely and that violence of the sort inflicted against Mr. Baisalov is prevented.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.