

OSCE Human Dimension Implementation meeting 2009

**Canadian Statement for the Working Session 16: 12:
Fundamental Freedoms: Freedom of expression, free media and information**

Tuesday, 6 October 2009

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Thank you Madame Chairperson,

Canada would like to thank the Special Representative, Mr. Haraszti for his continued work in promoting and protecting freedom of the media and for bringing attention to cases of concern.

In recent years, we have been particularly preoccupied by the disturbing number of journalists and media professionals that are being killed in the OSCE region, not to mention those that are arbitrarily assaulted, imprisoned, harassed, victims of abusive legal processes, prevented from carrying out their role, threatened and made to disappear in all parts of the world.

Canada hails journalists around the globe whose work exposes injustice and holds to account those responsible and will continue to call regimes to account for failures to respect the right to freedom of expression, including free speech and a free media, as one of the pillars of democracy and rule of law.

The right to freedom of opinion and expression is at the core of human individuality and dignity and Canada has reflected this by enshrining these freedoms within the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Furthermore, it is an important indicator of the level of protection of other human rights and freedoms. Several OSCE commitments have been made to ensure the individual's freedom of expression, freedom of information, and the freedom of the media. This right is inter-linked and interdependent with the exercise of all human rights and is one of the essential foundations of a free and democratic society. It is enabled by a democratic environment which offers guarantees for its protection.

Regrettably, violations of the right to freedom of opinion and expression continue to occur, often with impunity. These violations conceal and can support the abrogation of other human rights. Therefore it is important to have in place the mechanisms to allow citizens to bring their concerns to the attention of their government, and to seek justice when their rights have been violated.

We urge all OSCE member States to effectively investigate threats and acts of violence against those seeking to exercise their rights to freedom of opinion and expression, and ensure that there is an effective remedy for infringements of these rights.

Merci Madame La Présidente