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United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Murder of Ingushetian Opposition/Human Rights Activist, Maksharip Aushev

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Carol Fuller
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
October 29, 2009

The United States was shocked and profoundly saddened by the brutal murder of Ingushetian opposition and member of a government human rights council Maksharip Aushev, who was killed and whose companion was wounded when they were shot with automatic weapons fire from a passing vehicle in the neighboring republic of Kabardino-Balkaria October 25. We extend our deepest sympathies to his family.

This murder comes just more than a year after Mr. Aushev's friend and colleague, reporter Majomed Yevloyev, was killed while in police custody in Ingushetia and is the latest in an escalation of violence and intimidation directed at human rights and opposition activists and others in Russia. Mr. Aushev is at least the fourth human rights figure killed in the North Caucasus within the last four months. In July, Natalya Estemirova, who documented abductions and killings in Chechnya, was forced into a car and found dead on the roadside hours later. In August, Zarema Sadulayeva, and her husband, who together ran a children's charity, were found dead in the truck of their car after being seized in her office. Also in August, journalist Abdulmalik Akhmedilov, a journalist at the Dagestani publication Khakikat, "The Truth" was killed in his car.

We urge the Russian government to conduct immediate, thorough, and transparent investigations in order to find, prosecute, and bring to justice all those responsible for these heinous murders. We note that both Ingush President Yevkurov and Russia's Prosecutor General Yuri Chaika have proclaimed that they would personally oversee the investigation. We hope to hear more from them as this investigation continues. We likewise call on the Russian Federation to publicly condemn all violence perpetrated against human rights defenders and journalists. As Secretary Clinton said in Moscow this month, "a society cannot be truly open when those who stand up and speak out are murdered and people cannot trust the rule of law when killers act with impunity."

Thank you, Madam Chair.