



**PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

**STATEMENT ON THE ARREST
OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER OYUB TITIEV**

Delivered by Minister Counsellor Henning Hjortland Johansen
at the Permanent Council, Vienna, 18 January 2018

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. Chair,

Norway is deeply concerned about the arrest of human rights defender Oyub Titiev, head of Memorial's office in Grozny.

Mr. Titiev was arrested in Chechnya on 9 February, after marijuana was supposedly found in his car. Chechnya has a track record of serious human rights violations. The killing in 2009 of Natalia Estemirova, his predecessor in the position as head of Memorial's office in Grozny, is but one tragic example. There is therefore good reason to doubt the veracity of the charges made against Mr. Titiev. Chairman of Russia's Presidential Council for Human Rights Mikhail Fedotov has already called for an investigation of the charges made against Mr. Titiev by the Chechen authorities.

There is also reason to fear for the safety and wellbeing of Mr. Titiev and his family. In a letter addressed to the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin, the head of Russia's Investigative Committee Alexander Bastrykin and the Director of Russia's Federal Security Service Alexander Bortnikov, Mr. Titiev denies all charges made against him. He also informs the addressees that if he should in future admit any guilt in this fabricated case against him, this would be the result of physical duress or threats. Yesterday's arson attack on Memorial's

offices in the Republic of Ingushetia and the information that threats have been made against Mr. Titiev's family further underlines that there is every reason to take this seriously.

Mr. Chair

Human rights defenders are at risk in many places. Chechnya is most definitely one such place. The brave people who despite personal risk continue to fight to protect the rights of other people who suffer human rights abuses deserve our deepest respect. They also deserve that we do our utmost to protect them when they themselves are subjected to such abuses.

All countries, not least Participating States of the OSCE, have an obligation to protect human rights defenders so that they can fulfil their important task.

We now call on the Russian federal authorities to investigate the veracity of the charges made against Mr. Titiev promptly and thoroughly, and to ensure the safety and wellbeing of Mr. Titiev and his family.

Thank you.