



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe  
The Representative on Freedom of the Media  
Freimut Duve**

**Vienna, 12 July 2001**

**Statement to the Permanent Council  
(under current issues)**

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to draw your attention to three cases that my Office is currently monitoring very closely.

In **Ukraine** last week Ihor Olexandrov, the director of a private television company *TOR* in Slavyansk, was beaten by four men wielding baseball bats. Four days later he died in the hospital. *TOR* was known for investigating corruption. I understand that this week President Kuchma ordered a “a full and transparent investigation” into this case. I very much hope that the Ukrainian authorities will be able to swiftly and professionally bring those responsible for this “censorship by killing” to justice. I would also like to remind the Permanent Council that those responsible for the murder of Ukrainian editor Georgiy Gongadze are still at large. Last week he was co-awarded the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Prize for Journalism and Democracy. I had the privilege to be present at a very moving ceremony held in Paris where the widow of Mr. Gongadze and the mother of Spanish journalist Jose Luis Lopez de Lacalle received the OSCE prize.

On **Tajikistan**. Thankfully the plight of Tajik journalist Dododjon Atovulloyev, detained at a Moscow airport on 5 July in response to an extradition request to Russia from Tajik authorities, had a happy-ending. Yesterday morning, the Russian State Prosecutor publicly stated that their were “no reasons to extradite” Atovulloyev. Mr. Atovulloyev, who was on his way from Hamburg to Tashkent to attend a meeting, was wanted in Tajikistan for “publicly defaming the President,” and for “advocating the overthrow of the government” in an article published in the Russian newspaper *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*. I had raised this case on 6 July in Paris at the Plenary Session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. I had also discussed the situation around Atovulloyev with the Tajik authorities and had made several public statements. Yesterday afternoon, Mr. Atovulloyev was released from custody and left Russia for Germany. One of my advisers spoke with him on the phone: Atovulloyev thanked my Office and all the other organizations who supported him during this difficult week. I was pleased to hear that my statement on his case that I read out in Paris was passed on to him while he was still detained. I would like to use this opportunity to thank the Russian authorities for refusing to extradite to Tajikistan a journalist who was critical of the Tajik government.

Another case is that of Olga Kitova in **Russia**, some of you may know about it. Just to reiterate, Olga Kitova is a correspondent for the regional newspaper *Belgorodskaya Pravda*. After publishing a number of stories on the miscarriage of justice in Belgorod and on some questionable privatisation activities, she has been actively harassed, both physically and mentally,

by the local police and prosecutor. On two occasions she was arrested, she suffered breakdowns and just recently left the hospital. She is currently charged under five articles of the Russian criminal code.

My Office has contacted Kitova on several occasions and she believed that without local and international support her situation would have been much graver. I would also like to note with satisfaction the prompt reaction of the Kremlin to this case. The harassment of Olga Kitova is one of the most egregious cases I have come across in my now more than three years as the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media. It clearly underlines the need for my office and for the NGO community to pay more attention to the media situation in the Russian provinces especially when the media are investigating local corruption. This will be one of my priorities for the future.

Thank you.