



EMBASSY OF GEORGIA TO THE REPUBLIC OF AUSTRIA
PERMANENT MISSION OF GEORGIA TO THE OSCE AND OTHER
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN VIENNA

OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
Warsaw, 6 October 2009
Working Session 12: Freedom of expression, free media and information

Statement of the Georgian Delegation

Mr. Moderator,

Since Georgia has been mentioned in the EU statement concerning some, however not specified, violations of Freedom of expression, Free Media and Information, I would like to give to the distinguished audience a brief account on where Georgia stands in this regard.

No pattern or trend has been observed in respect to harassing journalists by the authorities. During the incident of May 15, 2009 in front of the police station, where the targets of the police actions were the wanted persons, a journalist was injured accidentally and the police have publicly apologized for the overreaction.

Sadly, during the opposition rallies some journalists were harassed and intimidated by the protesters due to their distinct opinion.

As for the imprisonment of journalists – there has been only one case of a talk-show anchor Mr. Ramishvili, who was sentenced for taping money and by no means for exercising his professional duties. Mr. Ramishvili claimed to be a political prisoner and his case was brought to the European Court of Human Rights. The court did not confirm his claim; however it did conclude the incompliance with regard to the conditions of imprisonment. This very issue is being addressed by Government within the criminal justice reform.

Dear Colleagues,

Indeed Georgian media offers a variety of all types of opinions without censorship, which can be easily assessed through press, radio, TV or internet. This is the achievement of the civil society and result of the reforms undertaken by the Government.

Let me share with you some of our efforts:

- Georgia has one of the most liberal legislation in this area. This includes Special safeguards for the journalists and speakers.
- There are no special registration requirements for the Written Press. It's worth mentioning that it enjoys several tax benefits.

- The licensing of satellite broadcasting is completely deregulated by the State. Any broadcaster can obtain satellite license covering whole territory of the country.
- Additional measures were adopted to safeguard the confidentiality of the sources.
- Legal amendments have been adopted that enable an opposition representative to be appointed to the Georgian National Communications Commission. This allows the opposition to become directly involved in all decision-making that pertains to media-related technical regulations.
- With the participation of the European Union and Council of Europe the Georgian Broadcasting Code of Conduct has been elaborated. This is a completely self-regulatory mechanism, without any state intervention whatsoever. This code was elaborated in accordance with the BBC model and will enter into force by the end of this year.
- The public broadcaster has been reorganized; in particular Public board of Trustees has been created to ensure public monitoring. The assessments and research studies conducted by independent experts, including the media monitoring by the OSCE/ODIHR during Presidential and Parliamentary Elections in Georgia last year, have verified that the Public Broadcaster provides the most balanced and neutral picture of the news.

The Government of Georgia understands the necessity of further improvements and undertakes every possible step to comply with international standards in this sphere.

Thank you