



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Arrest of Journalist in Kazakhstan

As delivered by Chargé d' Affaires Kyle Scott
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
January 22, 2009

Madam Chairwoman,

The United States notes the concern expressed by the Representative on Freedom of the Media Miklos Haraszti and by the European Union on the case of Ramazan Yesergepov, the editor of the weekly Alma-Ata Info. Mr. Yesergepov is under arrest for allegedly disclosing state secrets while publishing internal documents of the Kazakh National Security Committee on November 21.

The Representative on Freedom of the Media has long campaigned for shield laws for journalists, including in my own country. We agree with the Representative that conflicts around unauthorized disclosures of national security documents are a sign of the growing maturation of freedom of the media in any society. This does not mean that any national security document can be disclosed, but clearly it is appropriate that there be discussions on which types of documents might justifiably be covered by such restrictions. For instance, documents related to tax evasion or those whose revelation would simply be embarrassing to a government or to persons in positions of power would not be expected to meet that threshold in modern democracies.

We hope this incident and the international scrutiny surrounding it will further stimulate debate in Kazakhstan on these very issues.

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.