



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

Statement at the Permanent Council
(Review of Current Issues)

Vienna, 24.05.2001

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today I would like to focus on intimidation of journalists based on ethnic radicalism. We have seen cases like this throughout the OSCE region. Most recently such violence has plagued Spain. A number of non-governmental organisations, including the World Association of Newspapers (WAN), have brought to my attention the grave situation in which many Spanish journalists have found themselves in because of the threat of intimidation from the terrorist Basque organisation ETA and its supporters. WAN and the World Editors Forum (WEF) recently conducted a mission to Spain and published an extensive report on the current media situation.

Here is just one quote: "When journalists have to begin their day on their hands and knees looking for bombs under their cars, when steel doors and refined arms and bomb detectors have to be installed in newspaper offices and printing plants, when journalists cannot fetch their children after school or eat in the same restaurant two nights in a row, there is no freedom of expression."

Prior to the Basque regional elections held on 13 May, Spain has seen an upsurge of violence against journalists. Jose Luis Lopez de Lacalle, a columnist for El Mundo, was killed last year. We will honour him as well as Georgiy Gongadze, a Ukrainian editor also killed last year, with the 2001 OSCE Prize for Journalism and Democracy. Several other journalists were targeted barely escaping with their lives. After the elections the violence continued. On 15 May Gorka Landaburu, a correspondent for Cambio 16 and Radio France, was wounded by a package bomb he received at his home in Zarauz in the north of Basque country.

The campaign against those reporters who are trying to report the truth has often turned ugly. In November 2000, the editor of a radical Basque magazine Ardi Beltza circulated a video tape portraying 40 journalists as being close to the Spanish Home Affairs Ministry. A similar tactic we have seen used in Kosovo. Two reporters appearing in this video were later attacked-this can only be described as "hate speech" leading to outright violence.

In today's Basque region newspaper offices are protected no less than international airports, journalists have security guards and avoid public transportation. Using e-mails, letters and phone calls, ETA is intimidating dozens of journalists making sure that they understand-they are being watched. Such blatant harassment can often lead to self-censorship. In a bizarre reversal of "structural censorship" practised by some governments against non-governmental media, ETA has threatened advertisers demanding that they boycott the non-nationalist media.

One of the editors at El Pais pointed out to the WAN/WEF team that the current media situation in the region represented a major threat to freedom of expression within the European Union. This issue should be of major concern to the OSCE, especially when two very respected international media organisations describe the situation in the Basque region as a "perversion of civil conditions for the media, when printing plants and newsrooms have to be fortified and staff and visitors have to undergo security checks again and again. It is poisoning the professional standards of journalism when fear for your life or that of your relatives is influencing your reporting and editorial decisions."

The misuse of media for violent ethnic propaganda that can kill democratic civility is of major concern to my Office. As you know, Paragraph 6 of my mandate covers the dangers of ethnic "hate speech." That is why I have initiated a number of projects that deal with reconciliation and the future of the young generation that is living in a post conflict society. First were two books titled in Defence of the Future-one brought together in a publication writers and journalists from south-eastern Europe, and the other-from the Caucasus. This month the mobile.culture.container, a project for the young generation that many of you know about and have generously contributed too, is starting its journey through the town of south-eastern Europe. Its first stop is Tuzla in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Today I talked about Spain. The problem of ethnic violence is present in many other OSCE participating States. The OSCE needs to work very closely with member governments to eradicate this threat to our common future.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I would like to seize this opportunity to briefly address the planning of our Office for the second half of 2001 and for 2002:

We are planning to focus already in the second half of this year on minority and media issues as well as on access to new technologies. Our Office was asked to address these issues during the Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting in March. A first round-table on minority and media issues will be organised by our Office together with Helle Degn, Commissioner of the Council of the Baltic Sea States, and the European Centre on Minority Issues in the course of this autumn.

As to the resources of our Office for this year, we intend to remain within our budget. The Mid-Term Budget Review for 2001 is currently being done. However, to take up the issues mentioned above we shall certainly need additional human and financial resources which could be made available to our Office on a voluntary basis.

As to the requirements for 2002, we have submitted them in the budget outline which you have received. Our office is currently reviewing its strategy on how to deal with requests for more assistance, more projects and we shall get back to you about this in the course of the summer.