

Working Session 5: **"Worst Practice" against independent media in Britain**

Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen. I am Henrik Clausen, Danish, representing Wiener Akademikerbund.

What I will say here is actually applicable to yesterday's sessions on Freedom of the Media, as this is an issue about security of journalists.

First, let us recommend that:

- That OSCE pS' reduce or abolish all restrictions on reporting, to minimize misuse.
- That jailed journalists be held in safe conditions, protected from dangerous inmates.
- And that prisoner personnel be granted immunity when reporting on unjust treatment.

In Britain on May 25th of this year, a journalist was arrested outside of Leeds Crown Court, for reporting on a high-profile court case about forced prostitution of minors.

In the course of just five hours, and without access to legal support, he was sentenced to 13 months of prison for "Contempt for Court", and jailed immediately. Independent legal experts have called this an "Assault on Freedom of Expression".

The conditions of imprisonment were unlike anything one would expect in a modern society: Exposed to hostile inmates, the journalists lived in fear of beating, poisoning, and at times under grossly unhygienic circumstances.

One should think that prison officers observing such situations would speak up against them. Indeed, one prison officer spoke up – unfortunately, this led only to the dismissal of the officer, not to fixing the problems. This stresses the need for immunity for whistleblowers protesting jail conditions.

We have an old Danish saying: "Freedom for Loke as well as for Thor". This means that also those whom we may suspect of less than noble intentions are to be treated equally. Critical voices are to be heeded, not silenced under torturous jail conditions.

Fortunately, in this specific case, public outrage caught on, and the imprisonment was brought to an end. We have confidence that the final verdict will favour freedom of the media, and that this was a singular event that will not repeat in the future.