



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

10 April 2003

Statement under Current Issues

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to draw your attention to some questions of concern to me related to the media coverage of the war in Iraq. Although this conflict is taking place outside the OSCE region, it involves some OSCE participating States as well as our Mediterranean partners. We, as an organisation dedicated to security and co-operation in Europe, have to observe and comment on a crisis that concerns our regions and their future as well.

First of all my condolences go to the families and friends of those reporters who have been killed or died in Iraq. 8 April 2003 will remain a historic date for war reporting. The Baghdad office of the pan-Arab television Al-Jazeera was bombed. Cameraman Tarek Ayoub died in the attack. The Al-Jazeera management claims that they had informed the coalition forces at the start of the war of the exact location of its premises. The Palestine Hotel, where most international non-embedded journalists were based, was hit by a shell fired by a US tank. The Ukrainian camera man Taras Protsyuk, who worked for Reuters, and José Couso, a Spanish camera man for the Spanish TV station Telecinco, were killed. Three other journalists were wounded. According to the Pentagon the attack happened in self-defense after guns were fired from the premises of the hotel at a US tank crew. An investigation has been launched, and I urge it to be speedy, thorough and transparent.

As any conflict of such magnitude, this war draws thousands of journalists to the area. The *International Federation of Journalists (IFJ)* estimates that around 3,000 journalists are working in the region. Their security is of paramount concern. We should now double our efforts to try to ensure the most secure environment possible under the circumstances for all reporters, not only those that are embedded.