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**Access to Justice: Human Rights in the Armed Forces  
Activities of the “Public Association of Soldiers Mothers” (PASM)  
in the field of Human Rights in the Armed Forces in Kyrgyzstan**

Speech by Ms. Galina Afonina, Chairperson of PASM, at the  
Side Event of the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting,  
Warsaw, 5 October 2006

Dear Friends,

Introduction

First of all, we are very much grateful to the European Commission for organizing this event. Thank you very much for inviting the Public Association of Soldiers' Mothers of Kyrgyzstan, having become an independent state fifteen years ago.

Who are we?

I am the Chairwoman of the Public Association of Soldiers' Mothers of Kyrgyzstan, which has been working very actively in the fields of protecting the rights and upgrading the civil education of the military personnel of Kyrgyzstan. The establishment of our Association was imposed by life itself. During the first years of Independence our country experienced the collapse both in economy and social-political life and the constraints of the transition period were critically become apparent in the closed army environment. Subjugation of new junior recruits by soldiers of the last year of service as well as permanent military staff known as “dedovshchina,” extortion, desertion, corruption corroded the army inside in a literal sense.

The Committee of the Soldiers' mothers had been established under the Congress of women of Kyrgyzstan in 1994. The organization became the independent Association on 3 June 1998, when it was registered with the Ministry of Justice of the Kyrgyz Republic. Then it also got its new name: *“The Public Association of the Soldiers' Mothers” (OOCM – PASM)*.

Our objectives

Quite frankly, Public Association of Soldier's Mothers is the first and unique not only in our republic, but also in Central Asia.

***PASM has two stages of the implementation of its Project:***

1. Keeping the human rights among the military personnel and their active participation in elections- to the stable state
2. Forming the culture of observing the human rights in the Disciplinary military unit and in the guard-houses of the National Army of the Kyrgyz Republic

*The main mission of PASM is to protect the human rights among the recruits and young soldiers and to facilitate decreasing the none-code military relations and violation over the soldiers, to protect the soldiers and servicemen from violation of their dignity and any harassment.*

**PASM** constantly attends the military units and organizes trainings on soldiers' juridical rights and electoral technologies. Please be aware that our army mainly consists of conscripts. PASM decided to study the army inside and find out its problems, giving them publicity and fighting against every case of violation. It maintains "Trust Telephone", supported by soldiers and their relatives. Series of the Radio-TV transmissions on Army problems being also prepared by PASM's activists, as well as the magazine of PASM "Army Pedagogical Council", having no any analogue in the world.

**PASM** started its activities with monitoring the military units, hospitals, guardhouses. It was difficult at the beginning as we were prevented to do anything, even we were threatened not to poke our nose into military affairs. But we were persistent and used all the possibilities of a dialogue with military officials, looking for the ways to provide the humanitarian aid to the army, provided free legal and psychological assistance to service men with a fixed period who got into trouble, lobbying the laws, strengthening the guarantees of civil and political rights of the officers and service men with a fixed period of service.

Army of Kyrgyzstan comprises both professional and non professional servicemen. And it is the non-professional part, recruits, are the most vulnerable one, which has to be paid a special attention. But at the same time we paid our attention to the officers. We arrange the "round tables", meetings, where they could exchange their experiences and views. We have established Army Pedagogical Council. It includes the troop, platoon and divisional leaders, high command officials, which finally are collaborating closely with us.

***We have identified our priorities:***

- Civil control over the military service and everyday life of the servicemen;
- Assistance if there are cases of violation of their rights;
- Protect them from violence and cruelty;
- Elimination of legal illiteracy;
- Creation of tolerant relations in the Army

***Our main activities include:***

1. monitoring visits of military units;
2. explanatory activities via "Trust telephone", meetings, debates, trainings on soldiers' rights and electoral technologies.
3. amplify the electoral-legislative culture of the soldiers, their literacy and information about the principles of the electoral right and the electoral technology,
4. arranging the contests "The best military unit by the eyes of the soldiers' mothers", "Military valour, honour and dignity", "My Soldiers Republic", the winners were awarded by valuable presents, TV-sets, musical centres, sport equipment.
5. visiting the disciplinary units, psychoneurologic dispensary, military hospitals and distribution of the humanitarian aid to soldiers including food stuff, books, medicines, clothes.
6. Publishing of the brochure "Your rights, soldier!"
7. Creating the data base: helping in legislation, to government authorities and international organizations to have an idea about the cases of violation in the Army.

8. Increasing public awareness via mass media by publishing the outputs of the round tables, and Army Pedagogical Council meetings.

### Results

*During 12 years of its existence PASM* has realized such small projects as "Protection of democratic rights and freedoms of the recruits and military men in the Kyrgyz Republic»; «The civil control over observance of human rights among military men in the army of the Kyrgyz Republic»; «From observance of human rights among military men and their active participation in elections to the stable state»; «Strengthening of guarantees of the civil and political rights of military men of the Kyrgyz Republic», etc.

*Activity of PASM* is extremely demanded by both military men and their parents, by representatives of mass-media, by NGO on protection of human rights, and also by the Command of Internal Force, the Ministry of Defense, National Guard, and Department of correctional facilities of the Ministry of Justice of the Kyrgyz Republic.

### *PASM activities and actions resulted in for:*

- *soldiers* - in case of infringements of their rights, they could apply to us, or other military authorities, representatives of civil society as now they know about their rights and freedoms;
- *military authorities and civil society* - open dialogue, which help to resolve many issues on a legal basis and strengthening the relation with civil society being involved into the main activities in protecting the rights of military personnel. It was not easy to solve all issues; it worked through discords and consensus, mutual understanding and mutual assistance.

### *PASM has learnt a lot of lessons and the most important are:*

- *for Kyrgyzstan* – we need reforms in the Army to eradicate the “subjugation of new junior recruits” upgrade moral education of young military men, increase the level of the civil self-consciousness, democracy, mutual understanding, tolerance, respect for all nations and the nationalities living in the country, knowledge of their own history, a wide spiritual outlook. Protect Human Rights in the Armed Forces. Army needs special training for officer-tutors, responsible for bringing up the junior recruits, their knowledge and intellectual and mental horizons, establishment of the Higher School for the officers-tutors.

- *for CA/NIS* - Recent history proves the validity of the concept of human dimension that a free society allows everyone to fully participate in public life, where military men are part of the society, and it is a safeguard against conflict and instability. For example, the exclusion of individuals or certain groups from society, sometimes on ethnic grounds, has led to tensions and sometimes even armed conflict is one example. The impact of refugee crises on security, often as a result of massive human-rights abuses, is another example. The democracy based on the rule of law is the only system of governments of both CA and NIS countries suitable to guarantee human rights effectively. We understand that issues relating to human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law are of international concern, as respect for these rights and freedoms constitutes one of the foundations of the international order and the Army is not an exclusion.

We hope that our work would serve as an example and still lots needs to be done to have a military with a human face. OSCE and EC should give support for these efforts also in the future.

Thank you very much for your attention and would be glad to answer any of your questions.