



PERMANENT DELEGATION
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STATEMENT BY NORWAY ON VIOLENCE AGAINST JOURNALISTS AND HUMAN
RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

As delivered by the Deputy Permanent Representative Asbjørn Brandsrud to
the Permanent Council
3 September 2009

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

Like others, Norway would like to express her deep concerns about the number of serious incidents in the Russian Federation during the last weeks and months where journalists and human rights defenders have disappeared or been brutally murdered. On 15 July Ms. Natalia Estemirova, a prominent and well respected Human Rights Defender working for the Memorial Human Rights Organisation and winner of the inaugural Anna Politkovskaya Prize in 2007, was murdered. Later in the month, the body of Mr. Andrej Kulagin, who founded the civic rights group “Spravedlivost” and who was known *inter alia* for his advocacy of prisoners’ rights was found after he went missing from his home two months earlier.

On 11 August, the newspaper editor Abdulmalik Akhmedilov in Dagestan was murdered. Mr. Akhmedilov had criticized federal and local law enforcement officials for violating human rights and fundamental freedoms in the context of the fight against extremism. And he was, I regret to say, not the first media worker in Dagestan to have been killed in the last few months. We also recall the murders of Chechen NGO-activist Zarema Sadulayeva and her husband Alik Dzhabralilov on 10 August, as well as Stanislav Markelov and Anastasiya Baburova earlier this year. My delegation expresses its deepest and most sincere condolences to the victims’ families, and to their friends and colleagues.

Madam Chairperson,

Such heinous crimes are not only attacks on individuals; they are attacks on society itself and on some of the most basic values to which we all have subscribed. We agree with the call made by Mr. Haraszti, the OSCE Representative of the Freedom of the Media to the Russian government to acknowledge publicly that the campaign against journalists and human rights activists is intolerable. We urge the relevant Russian authorities to investigate all cases in a swift, transparent and effective manner in order to bring the perpetrators to justice.

Finally, let me also underline the once again demonstrated necessity of protecting Human Rights Defenders in the Russian Federation, in accordance with the universally recognised UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. We agree with the EU’s call on Russia to

receive the UN Special Rapporteurs for human rights that have requested to visit Russia in order to render their assistance to the investigations on these appalling acts of crime.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.