



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Killing of Russian Journalist Khadzhimurad Kamalov in Dagestan, Russia

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
December 22, 2011

The United States wishes to express its condolences to the family and friends of journalist Khadzhimurad Kamalov who was murdered on December 15. Kamalov was a well-known journalist with the independent weekly newspaper Chernovik—which Kamalov founded and where he worked for many years. Both he and the newspaper covered a host of sensitive issues, including police abuse, corruption and Islamic extremism in the southern Russian Republic of Dagestan. As pointed out by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media in her statement following Kamalov’s murder, this was not the first time Kamalov faced danger as a journalist in Russia. Two years ago, Kamalov and several other media professionals associated with Chernovik were threatened with death by the authors of anonymous leaflets.

On December 16, Kamalov was shot repeatedly as he was leaving the Chernovik office. The brutal crime was witnessed by Biyakai Magomedov, Chernovik’s editor in chief, who later said he believed there to be clear message in the killing and in its location. Unfortunately, we are forced to agree with this assessment.

The Committee to Protect Journalists called the killing of Kamalov “a lethal blow to press freedom” and the organizations’ Central Asian representative called it “a massive loss for independent journalism in the North Caucasus, Russia’s most dangerous place for reporters.”

In Vilnius, OSCE participating States failed to reach consensus on a Ministerial Decision aimed at enhancing the safety of journalists. The murder of Khadzhimurad Kamalov serves as a tragic reminder to all of us that this issue remains at the very center of the work of the OSCE and of the Representative on Freedom of the Media.

As the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media has said previously, such attacks are proof that impunity only leads to further violence. We urge Russian authorities to carry out a complete, thorough, and professional investigation and bring those responsible for this heinous crime to justice with all deliberate speed.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.