



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Russian Delegation re: RFOM Report

As delivered by Chargé d' Affaires Kyle Scott
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
April 2, 2009

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

I had not intended to take the floor a second time, but I am very grateful to the Russian Ambassador for bringing us down to facts and incidents because I think that it helps to illustrate the overall problem, which is recognized in Mr. Haraszti's report, which is the all-too-frequent attacks on journalists and the all-too-little prosecution of people for those attacks.

He raised many cases which have a little bit more historical importance, but with regard to the case raised by the Ambassador in the United States, that is, the killing of journalist Chauncey Bailey, I'm pleased to report to the Permanent Council that immediately after that murder took place, the police launched an extensive investigation. It led to the arrest of one Mr. Broussard, who confessed to the shooting. It is true he later recanted that confession, but he still remains in custody and, in fact, was scheduled to go to trial this month. According to press reports, his lawyer requested another delay in the trial date to allow him to further prepare his case. But that's the sort of action that we believe necessary in cases of violence against journalists: an immediate and resolute investigation. Yes, it is true a case may not always be resolved, but it shows the need for full work.

Just as we saw with the attack of human rights activist Lev Ponomarev a few days ago, we were very pleased to see the immediate reaction of the authorities, with the Head of the Moscow Police in fact taking charge of the investigation into the attack. We think that's the sort of reaction that is necessary because the series of attacks on press officials and on human rights activists has a clearly chilling effect on the development of civil society in Russia.

We've heard, of course, all of the cases. The Representative from Russia seemed to think that there was some sort of focus only in one direction or another, but I think it's the trends that are so worrying, and that have been highlighted by Mr. Haraszti in his case. We hear so much about Anna Politkovskaya and the problems of *Novaya Gazeta*, and they are very serious, and ones which I think the Freedom of Media Representative has rightly highlighted. But it's very unfortunate that they are not alone. Local and regional journalists seem to be facing the similar problems of physical attacks on them and the failure -- or inability -- of the authorities to investigate thoroughly.

Just in the last few days, a journalist from a local paper in the outskirts of Moscow, Sergei Protazanov, was brutally beaten and later died. The investigation into this one seems to be of mixed results, with some saying he died as a result of his beating and others saying that he died as a result of poisoning. Clearly, this is an area which needs work. Mr. Pultazonov worked for a paper *Grazhdanskaya Soglasia*, which was investigating charges of fraud in the local elections in Khimki. Unfortunately, it's not an isolated incident.

On November 13, Mikhail Bekatov, editor of *Khimkhinskaya Pravda* was severely beaten. His lawyer, Stanislav Marakov, as we know because this issue was raised in the Permanent Council, was shot dead on the streets of Moscow alongside another journalist.

The editor of *Grazhdanskaya Soglasia*, was stabbed 10 times outside his home in February of 2008. His attackers remain at large.

On February 3, the editor in chief of *Solichkoski Forum*, a newspaper in the nearby city of Solichnogorsk, was assaulted.

On March 12, a managing editor of *Volnya Yuzhnaya Prognos Pod Moskovoi* was beaten in the Moscow oblast city of Serblukov.

I raise these issues because they reveal a very disturbing trend here. We call upon all countries to realize the importance of the contribution of journalism and especially investigative journalism to the creation of a democratic society and towards valuable checks of the power of authorities. When journalists are attacked, it's not just the person who is attacked; it is in fact the institution of freedom of expression that is under attack. It is inherent on authorities to investigate with all vigour, and we would like to encourage all countries to ensure that their authorities are taking this matter seriously and engaging seriously on it.

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.