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**SECRETARIAT OF THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS**

**SECRETARIAT DU COMITE DES MINISTRES**



*Contact:*

*Tel:*

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## **Swedish Presidency of the European Union**

**Council of Europe 1064 Meeting,  
9 September 2009, Strasbourg**

### **EU statement on violence against journalists and human rights defenders in Russia**

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The EU wishes to express its deep concern at the murder in Dagestan, Russian Federation, on 11 August, of Mr Abdulmalik Akhmedilov, deputy editor of the daily newspaper Hakikat (The Truth) and chief editor of the monthly political publication Sogratl. Mr Akhmedilov was a leading investigative correspondent. His work included reports on human rights violations by federal and local law enforcement officials as well as on several unsolved assassinations. Sadly, he was the fourth media worker from Dagestan to have been killed in the last two years.

The Council of Europe defends the right of freedom of expression and media freedom as set out in the European Convention on Human Rights. The EU would like to express its strong support for the work of the Council of Europe in this field.

Mr Akhmedilov's violent death came just one day after the murders of Chechen NGO-activist Zarema Sadulayeva and her husband Alik Dzhabralilov on 10 August and follows a number of murders in Russia this year of journalists and human rights defenders including

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Stanislav Markelov and Anastasiya Baburova in January and Nataliya Estemirova in July as well as the violent attack on Lev Ponomaryov in April. We recall also the murder of Anna Politkovskaya in 2006, for which no one has been convicted so far.

It is clear that as long as these crimes remain unsolved, a climate of impunity will continue to prevail in Russia and perpetrators will feel that they can continue to carry out such acts. Assaults on journalists and human rights defenders pose a particular threat to democracy, the respect for human rights and the rule of law. We urge Russia to take swift and efficient action to protect its journalists and human rights defenders so that they may be free to carry on their important work. The EU further calls on Russia to receive the UN Special Rapporteurs for human rights that have requested to visit Russia in order to contribute to the investigations into a series of killings of human rights defenders, lawyers and journalists in recent years.

The EU expresses its deepest condolences to the family of Mr Akhmedilov on his death. We take note of the Russian authorities' stated commitment to solve such cases and bring their perpetrators to justice, and call on them to investigate his murder, and all other similar open unsolved cases, in a prompt and thorough manner so that their killers and those behind the murders may be identified and brought to justice.

The candidate countries TURKEY, CROATIA\* and FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA\*, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries ALBANIA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA and MONTENEGRO, the European Free Trade Association country and member of the European Economic Area ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN

and NORWAY, as well as UKRAINE and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

\*Croatia and Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.