

Lenmarker condemns murder of Anna Politkovskaya

Expressing his shock about the recent murder of Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya, OSCE PA President Göran Lenmarker stated that “The OSCE PA honoured Ms. Politkovskaya for her bravery in reporting events in face of all odds. It is a tragedy that this bravery and strength have now been silenced”.

In February 2003, Anna Politkovskaya was given the OSCE Prize for Journalism and Democracy by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. A distinguished journalist with the independent newspaper *Novaya Gazeta*, Ms. Politkovskaya gained international recognition for her extensive and balanced reporting in Chechnya.

“I’m a journalist,” said Politkovskaya, accepting the Prize three years ago. “I’m neither a politician nor a diplomat. And so I’m not polite – I say what I think. And what I think about is what I see with my own eyes. My job is simple: to look around and to write what I see.” Addressing the OSCE PA, Anna Politkovskaya spoke about her personal experiences as a reporter in Chechnya, and drew attention to human rights abuses in the region.



“Everybody wants to live. Everybody wants to be free. To take a walk in the street. To wander around the in the forest. To teach. And to learn. There is still nothing of this in Chechnya.”

Anna Politkovskaya, February 2003

On behalf of the Assembly, Secretary General Spencer Oliver attended the funeral held for Ms. Politkovskaya in Moscow on 10 October. He noted that the memorial service had been a “moving ceremony and testimony to her courageous life.”

President Lenmarker called for a full and open investigation into the killing. “I utterly condemn the brutal murder of Anna Politkovskaya. As one of Russia’s most distinguished investigative journalists, she was a strong force for democracy. Her loss is felt deeply by the Parliamentary Assembly, which was honoured by her presence just a few years ago,” said Lenmarker.

In presenting the Prize in 2003, Freimut Duve, then OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, noted that the Prize was started “not only as a symbol, but as

an alarm clock for freedom of the media, which is one of the fundamental principles of a democracy.”

Politkovskaya was the eighth recipient of the OSCE Prize for Journalism and Democracy, first awarded in 1996.

Vice-President Haering: Latvian election transparent and professional but issue of ‘non-citizens’ remains

On Sunday 8 October OSCE PA Vice-President Barbara Haering announced that the parliamentary elections held in Latvia, 7 October, met most OSCE election-related commitments. However, the observers noted that little action had been taken with respect to previous recommendations regarding important issues affecting the election process, in particular the presence of a significant number of ‘non-citizens’ who do not have voting rights.

“I hope that cultural diversity will be increasingly valued as an asset to which the entire population can contribute,” said Haering. Vice-President Haering headed the limited election observation mission deployed by the OSCE PA, which worked in close co-operation with the ODIHR limited election observation mission, headed by Ambassador Boris Frlec.

The joint conclusions of the observation missions noted that the electoral process enjoyed broad public confidence in Latvia, and that the political campaign was pluralistic and allowed all parties to communicate their messages to voters. No major problems were evident on election day. However, it was noted that the fact that a significant percentage of the adult population

does not enjoy voting rights represents a continuing democratic deficit. The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly has previously recommended that consideration be given to permitting ‘non-citizens’ to vote in municipal elections.

Deputy Secretary General Tina Schön and Press Officer Andreas Baker accompanied the OSCE PA mission.



Vice-President Haering examined polling in Riga and in rural areas