



## HELSINKI COMMISSION HEARING

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UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON  
SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

# Testimony :: Statement of Hon. Ben Nighthorse Campbell

Co-Chairman - Helsinki Commission

Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe  
"The Deteriorating Freedom of Media and Speech in OSCE Countries"

Statement of Co-Chairman Ben Nighthorse Campbell

April 4, 2000

Today's hearing is about a topic that should cause everyone that lives in freedom to sit up and take notice. Over the last several years the situation of the independent media in the 55 countries of the OSCE has become evermore fragile--and in some of the participating States has virtually ceased to exist.

The participating States have recognized the fundamental nature of freedom of expression as a basic component of a democratic society: "independent and pluralistic media are essential for a free and open society and accountable systems of government." The issue of freedom of expression and the media has featured prominently in many of the Commission's recent hearings. From the Balkans and the Caucasus to Central Asia, journalists face harassment, imprisonment, and even death in the pursuit of their professional duties with alarming frequency in the OSCE region.

I think it is a corollary to the systems of crime and corruption that we have heard about in testimony before the Commission just recently. Corrupt regimes run or manhandled by criminal elements can not tolerate the light of truth that journalism provides a free people. The systematic evolution of crime and corruption, allowed to run unchecked, will surely result in the death of the free media along with other freedoms.

This Commission has taken the initiative both here at home through a series of hearings, and abroad through the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, to address the problems of crime and corruption in the participating States. Freedom of expression and independent media are essential elements of the process of democratization.

I look forward to reviewing the testimony of today's witnesses and learning more about the relationship between the deteriorating media and the proliferation of organized crime and corruption in the OSCE region.