

Spanish Presidency of the European Union

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EU statement on Media Freedom in Uzbekistan

The EU is deeply concerned about ongoing harassment of journalists and other recent incidents concerning human rights and fundamental freedoms in Uzbekistan, particularly in the area of freedom of the media.

These cases include, inter alia, the arrest of Mr Khairullo Khamidov, the deputy editor-in-chief of the “Champion” sports newspaper, who was charged with violating legislation on religious associations, and the accusations against Ms Umida Akhmedova for defaming the Uzbek people and their traditions in a book of photographs and a documentary film. Separately we would like to mention the continuing worrisome practice by the Office of the Prosecutor-General of using interrogation procedures against journalists who have participated in media conferences abroad or who are working for foreign media outlets.

Already last year at the HDIM, the EU had expressed concern about extensive limitations to media freedom in Uzbekistan. Since then, we have not seen substantial improvement. In addition to recent cases, eight other journalists are still imprisoned. In particular, we

would like to emphasize the cases of journalists like Mr Salidzhon Abdurakhmanov and Mr Dilmurod Saiid, to whom we have referred to in previous EU statements and who, convicted on dubious charges in closed trials, remain imprisoned. In this regard, we would also like to refer to the statement issued by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Mr Miklos Haraszti, on 2 February.

Against this background, we take note that President Karimov, in a speech given on 27 January at the joint session of the Legislative Chamber and the Senate Oliy Majlis, claimed that further liberalization of the mass media and increased activity of non-state press outlets were necessary for glasnost, openness and the consistent establishment of a strong civil society in Uzbekistan.

In this regard, we reiterate our urgent call to the Uzbek authorities to seriously address the above-mentioned shortcomings and to meet OSCE commitments and other international standards on human rights and fundamental freedoms. The cases of imprisoned journalists should be reviewed thoroughly and impartially.

We encourage the Uzbek Government to address this matter in close co-operation with OSCE institutions, in particular the Representative on Freedom of the Media, and offer to continue our support within the framework of the ongoing human rights dialogue between the EU and Uzbekistan.

Los países candidatos CROACIA* y la ANTIGUA REPÚBLICA YUGOSLAVA DE MACEDONIA*, los países del Proceso de Estabilización y Asociación y los países candidatos potenciales, ALBANIA, BOSNIA Y HERZEGOVINA,

MONTENEGRO y SERBIA, los países de la Asociación Europea de Libre Comercio y los miembros del Espacio Económico Europeo, ISLANDIA y NORUEGA se alinean con esta declaración.

*Croacia y la Antigua República Yugoslava de Macedonia siguen perteneciendo al proceso de Estabilización y Asociación.