



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council N° 1199
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**EU statement on the occasion of the International Day to
End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists**

Democracy cannot live without free, diverse and independent media. Journalists and media actors across the globe hold states, government officials, corporations and society at large accountable for their actions. The EU attaches the highest priority to the safety of journalists and other media actors. Far too many among them face threats and attacks simply for carrying out their work, while the perpetrators of these attacks often act with total impunity. Fighting impunity of crimes against journalists is indispensable for democratic societies.

On the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against journalists, we pay tribute to all those journalists around the world who lost their lives and suffered attacks, as well as to those who are taking up the work of their colleagues who can no longer pursue their investigation. We fully support UNESCO's #TruthNeverDies campaign. The assassinations of investigative journalists that we have seen in the EU demonstrate that no region of the world is immune to this. These despicable crimes need to be thoroughly investigated and prosecuted.

There is in many countries a worrying tendency to erode and shrink the space for free journalism, often by putting indiscriminately in question the credibility of media to discredit and weaken their work. Journalists need an environment where they are able to work in safety and security, both online and offline, without fear of harassment, political pressure, censorship or persecution. A robust legal system must protect media houses and journalists all around the world so that they can fulfill their

work in full independence. In a time where disinformation is on the rise, the safety of journalists must be guaranteed, to allow them to promote accurate reporting for the benefit and in the interests of all our citizens.

All participating States have a duty to fulfil their obligations and commitments, including OSCE commitments, to protect freedom of expression and the safety of journalists, by providing an enabling legal environment, by taking threats against journalists seriously and by vigorously prosecuting actual attacks. Freedom of expression, including the safety of journalists, lies at the very core of the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security. There is a clear link between democratic, open, peaceful and prosperous societies that contribute to our common and comprehensive security and stability, and free expression and free media.

The EU fully supports the important work of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media on safety of journalists, including on countering gender-based attacks against women journalists, and takes this opportunity to refer to a few recent interventions. We share the Representative's concerns about the intimidation and death threats directed at journalists with the Russian newspaper Novaya Gazeta, where the editorial office received a funeral wreath and a dead lamb's head on 17 and 18 October. These incidents must be swiftly and fully investigated and the journalists' safety ensured. We echo his call on Russian authorities, in connection with the 12th anniversary of the killing of Novaya Gazeta journalist Anna Politkovskaya, to intensify their efforts to end impunity for crimes committed against journalists. The EU also remains deeply concerned about the situation for journalists in Turkey, including the prison sentences recently handed out to the executives of the Hayatin Sesi TV channel. We call on Turkey to heed the Representative's offer of assistance in addressing all media freedom-related issues. We also join his condemnation of the physical attack against chief editor Željko Matorčević in Serbia on 9 October and welcome that an investigation has been launched. The EU remains committed to engaging with the RFOM, and calls on all participating

States to make use of his expertise in order to fully implement their OSCE and other relevant commitments.

The EU strongly welcomes the initiative by the Italian Chairperson-in-Office to table a draft decision on the safety of journalists. This is an opportunity to strengthen the joint work of all participating States to improve the situation for journalists and other media actors, not least in the field of combatting impunity. In this regard, we also welcome the resolution on the safety of journalists adopted by consensus in the UN Human Rights Council on 27 September 2018, which should serve as an inspiration for our deliberations in the OSCE.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, and the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.