



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Permanent Council No. 1448 Vienna, 2 November 2023

#### **EU statement on the occasion of the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists**

1. Today, 2<sup>nd</sup> November, marks the *International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists*, a day dedicated to journalists and other media actors who have been threatened, harassed, attacked, or even lost their lives in pursuing their work and exercising their right to freedom of opinion and expression.
2. This year's focus is on the main challenges faced by journalists and other media actors in the exercise of their profession, warning of the escalation of violence and repression against them. Ten years after the establishment of this International Day, the challenges are numerous, with violence and repression increasing worldwide, including within the OSCE region.
3. The OSCE is founded on the concept of comprehensive security, with respect for human rights, including media freedom and the safety of journalists, being an essential component. The negative trend in recent years of intimidation and harassment of journalists and media actors poses a threat to democracy. We remain deeply concerned about the number of killings and the alarmingly high rate of impunity for crimes committed against journalists and media actors.
4. Women journalists and media workers face an increasing number of attacks, online and offline, and are subjected to disproportionate and specific threats on a global scale. This is a matter of fact globally, including in the EU, where online threats are on the rise with women journalists and journalists of minority background particularly at risk. This, in turn, affects women's and girls' participation in public debate, which is a serious threat to democracy.

5. Against this background, we welcome the recent launch of the RFoM guidelines for monitoring online violence against female journalists as a practical tool to help address this issue. We reiterate our unwavering support for the crucial work and mandate of the RFoM, including holding all OSCE participating States accountable, and taking effective measures to end impunity for crimes committed against journalists and other media actors.
6. We recall that the Moscow Mechanism report concluded that journalists and media actors have been deliberately targeted, killed, abducted, injured and tortured by the Russian Armed Forces in Ukraine in the context of Russia's unjustified, unprovoked and illegal war of aggression. We commend the journalists and other media actors reporting from Ukraine, working under extremely dangerous conditions.
7. We also recall the findings of the Moscow Mechanism report on the situation in Russia, concluding that many of the repressive laws force journalists and other media actors, human rights defenders and other critical voices to reduce or abandon their activities or leave the country. The report further found that physical violence is one of many means used to silence journalists and media actors, especially after 24 February 2022 in the context of anti-war protests. Since the publication of the said report over a year ago, the systematic crackdown has continued unabated, with trials, sentences or detentions against journalists and media actors, including Alsu Kurmasheva, Marina Ovsyannikova, Ruslan Leviev, Michael Nacke, Dmitry Ivanov, Andrey Novashov and Evan Gershkovich among too many others. We call on Russia to stop labelling journalists and media actors as foreign agents and to release journalists and media actors detained or imprisoned on politically motivated charges.
8. The already extremely dire human rights situation in Belarus continues to deteriorate. The EU strongly condemns the continuous repression and intimidation campaigns against all segments of civil society, including journalists and other media actors. We urge the Belarusian authorities to end

the ongoing persecution of independent media actors, including Maryna Zolatava, Ludmila Chekina, Valeryia Kastsiuhova, Andrzej Poczobut, Darya Losik, Ihar Losik, Dzmitryy Luksha, Larysa Shchyrakova, Siarhei Stankevich, Aleh Rubchenia, Ksenia Lutskina, Viaceslau Lazarau and others. All those arbitrarily detained or imprisoned on politically motivated charges, including of so-called “extremism” or “terrorism”, must be released immediately and unconditionally.

9. We recall that all States have a responsibility under international law to take effective measures to protect the right to freedom of expression, including by upholding the rule of law and ensuring accountability. In Milan in 2018, participating States reached a landmark decision concerning the safety of journalists, and strongly reaffirmed that independent media are essential to a free and open society and accountable systems of government.
10. We call on all participating States to fulfil their international obligations concerning freedom of opinion and expression and the safety of journalists.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\*, ALBANIA\*, UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, and BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA\*, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

\* North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.