



EUROPEAN UNION

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EU Statement on the International Week of the Disappeared

Every last week of May, the world commemorates the International Week of the Disappeared. The European Union wishes to reaffirm its commitment to the prevention and eradication of enforced disappearances, a phenomenon that is unfortunately all too wide-spread also in the OSCE region and which constitutes a serious violation of human rights that guarantee, inter alia, the right not to be subjected to torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

We pay tribute to the disappeared and their families and are reminded that the crime of enforced disappearance is not only directed against the disappeared, but also against their families, friends, and the society they live in.

Torture is an abhorrent violation of human rights, human integrity and human dignity. It is completely counter to the principle of ensuring human security that the OSCE concept of comprehensive security is founded on. Our OSCE and other international commitments are abundantly clear. The prohibition of torture is absolute and unconditional. There are no exceptions permitted under international law.

While the practice of enforced disappearance clearly runs counter to existing OSCE commitments and international human rights law, there is as yet no explicit OSCE commitment on enforced disappearance. Similarly, our commitments against torture are outdated. These significant gaps are startling and require immediate action.

Last year in Basel, we were close to agreeing on a text that would strengthen our OSCE commitments against torture and enforced disappearances. We welcome the indication of the Serbian Chairmanship that they will continue to keep the

issue high on our OSCE agenda and will continue discussions on a torture decision this year. We hope consensus can be found in Belgrade on strengthened OSCE commitments in this area. The EU will remain firmly committed to this.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA Countries NORWAY and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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