



## EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council Nr 884  
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### **EU statement on media freedom in Tajikistan**

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The European Union welcomes the news on 14 October that BBC journalist Mr Uranboi Usmonov will not face a prison sentence and that he has been given an amnesty. Although pleased that Mr Usmonov is now a free man, we have serious reservations about the prior ruling against him and the decision to sentence him to three years imprisonment. We also note with deep concern the allegations that surfaced during Mr Usmonov's trial that he had been tortured and mistreated while in custody. We call on the Tajik authorities to ensure that these allegations are thoroughly and promptly investigated and, if substantiated, bring those responsible to account.

The European Union also welcomes the news about the release of the journalist Mr Mahmadyusuf Ismoilov following the decision by a court in Tajikistan taken on 14 October. While we are pleased that Mr Ismoilov is now a free man, we are, however, disappointed that the court found him guilty of criminal libel, insult, extortion and inciting to regional hatred, and subsequently barred him from journalistic work for three years and imposed a fine. This is another worrying example of a journalist being punished because of his professional activities in Tajikistan.

These latest cases paint a worrying picture about the state of media freedoms in Tajikistan. Both journalists maintain their innocence and have said that they will appeal the verdicts. We share the hope expressed by the Representative on Freedom of the Media in her statement on 17 October that the appeals will lead to the two men being cleared of the charges brought against them.

The European Union recalls that it has on several occasions over the last year raised concerns about Tajikistan's commitment to media freedom in the Permanent Council. Freedom of the Media is also raised in the EU-Tajikistan dialogue on Human Rights. Against this background, we again call on the Tajik authorities to make full use of the advice and expertise of the Representative on Freedom of the Media in ensuring compliance with its OSCE commitments on media freedom. In this respect, we hope that the Tajik authorities will use the opportunity of the Representative on Freedom of the Media's upcoming visit to Tajikistan to consider how they can reverse the recent negative trends.

The candidate countries CROATIA\*, the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\* and ICELAND\*\*, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries ALBANIA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA and SERBIA, the European Free Trade Association country NORWAY, member of the European Economic Area, as well as the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA align themselves with this statement.

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

\*\*Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and the European Economic Area.