



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1343 Vienna, 4 November 2021

EU Statement on the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists

1. The International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists, marked on 2 November, is dedicated to all journalists and other media actors who have been threatened, suffered attacks, or lost their lives in the exercise of their right to freedom of opinion and expression, online and offline.
2. Independent and free media is the basis of a participatory and pluralist democracy, and a tool to hold governments accountable for their actions. Violence against journalists or media actors is not only an attack against the individual journalists, but also against the very foundations of our open, free and democratic societies. The EU stands by all those who have the courage to speak up for us all, and in defence of our democratic values.
3. According to the UNESCO observatory, 44 journalists have so far been killed in 2021 and many more were attacked, harassed or unlawfully imprisoned. Journalists continue to face physical attacks, torture, arbitrary detention and imprisonment, judicial persecution, harassment and intimidation. It is also deeply concerning that female journalists as well as journalists reporting on equality issues are disproportionately targeted.
4. The perpetrators remain at liberty in nine of every ten killings of journalists. The high rate of impunity perpetuates the cycle of violence against journalists and the media.
5. We are particularly concerned about the worsening situation of media freedom, as well as the unprecedented pressure, intimidation and repressions faced by

journalists, media actors and independent media outlets in the OSCE region. This trend is all the more worrying in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has been quite often instrumentalized to exercise politically motivated pressure on them.

6. The recent blockage of several news websites in Belarus, including the German public international broadcaster Deutsche Welle, and the detention of Iryna Slavnikova, a representative of the Belsat TV channel, is yet another example of the dire situation that independent media and journalists are facing. As on previous occasions, we echo the OSCE Media Freedom Representative Ms. Teresa Ribeiro call on Russian authorities to abandon the practice of designating journalists and media outlets as 'foreign agents' and its related administrative and criminal sanctions. We also condemn the unacceptable practice of including journalists and media representatives in so-called "black lists" or otherwise publishing their personal data, exposing them to serious threats to their safety and security.
7. The EU fully supports the important work on safety of journalists performed by the RFOM. We welcome the recently issued Joint Declaration of International Rapporteurs on Politicians and Public Officials and Freedom of Expression, highlighting the urgent need to end the culture of impunity for attacks on journalists and others in retaliation for exercising their right to freedom of expression, including where this involves political speech.
8. Madam Chair, we acknowledge that work needs to start at home. The first-ever European Commission Recommendation to Member States on safety of journalists is a concrete step to improve the situation for journalists and media actors within the European Union. This includes increasing protection of journalists during demonstrations, greater online safety and support to female journalists.
9. Throughout 2021, the EU has continued to raise its voice when journalists are under threat across the world. Hundreds of journalists received support through the EU Human Rights defenders tools and many media actors benefited from opportunities for professional training. Increased resources are being

earmarked to support independent media, and to develop professional skills of journalists working in difficult situations.

10. We urge all participating States to ensure a safe and secure working environment for all journalists and media actors, enabling them to carry out their professional activities independently, both online and offline, without undue interference and without fear of violence and persecution. There is no democracy without media freedom and pluralism. An attack on media is an attack on democracy. Be it at home or around the globe, impunity for crimes against journalists must end.

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

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