



## Regional Central Asia Safety of Journalists Event

Beyond the Headlines: Protecting Journalists to Advance Media Freedom

26-27 June 2024  
Almaty, Kazakhstan

### Welcoming remarks

Dear Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to our Regional Central Asian Safety of Journalists Event.

Let me start by expressing my gratitude to His Excellency the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Roman Vassilenko and to His Excellency the Vice Minister of Culture and Information of the Republic of Kazakhstan Kanat Iskakov, for joining me on this panel. A big thank you also goes to you, the experts, journalists, representatives from civil society and academia that have joined us at this event. And last but not least, thank you to all colleagues from OSCE Field Missions in the Central Asia region.

We are gathered here today with steadfast dedication: to discuss the journalistic profession's most pressing challenges on how best to safeguard the physical and psychological well-being of journalists, in an increasingly complex and sometimes hostile environment. We do this in order to better protect all the courageous women and men who go out daily to bring us the accurate information and knowledge we need to base our decisions upon. Thus, we are here today for the future of democracy, human rights, and the unfettered expression of ideas—a vital component underpinning our shared security.



In recent years, we have witnessed troubling assaults on, harassment of, and intimidation directed against journalists across the OSCE region. The array of challenges and threats confronting media professionals is growing increasingly intricate and interconnected. The threats are real and concerning in their own right, and they have a significant impact on the state of democracy and our common security. These assaults not only jeopardize the safety and professional livelihoods of individual journalists but also erode the indispensable function of a free and autonomous press in upholding accountability, nurturing transparency, and enlightening the public on issues that matter to them.

Today's gathering, themed "Beyond the Headlines: Protecting Journalists to Advance Media Freedom" offers an opportunity to forge connections, cultivate networks, and engage in substantive dialogues and exchanges. Together, we aim to discuss prevailing challenges, celebrate constructive endeavours, and pioneer innovative approaches, all with the overarching objective of bolstering the safety of journalists across Central Asia.

As outlined in the agenda before you, you will have the opportunity to engage in two interactive sessions.

One is a workshop on digital safety, where you will be equipped with practical tools, techniques, and knowledge to protect yourself from digital security risks, alongside our experts: Moldir Utegenova from MediaNet, Anastasiya Zhyrmont from Access Now, and Artem Tarasov from Internews. Importantly, we'll also address the nuanced considerations of gender-based, psycho-social, and physical dimensions in this comprehensive exploration.

After the lunch break, during the World Café session, you'll be invited to participate in dynamic group discussions, to share insights and experiences. We will explore effective initiatives and good practices for safeguarding journalists' digital and psychological well-being. Additionally, we will introduce two new resources: the Safety of Journalists Toolbox and the "Guidelines for monitoring online violence against female journalists". Following that, you'll gain insight into



## Safety of Female Journalists Online



three regional endeavours: one on the Campaign on Cybersecurity, another one that highlights the outcomes of the Summer Media Master School on media literacy and artificial intelligence, and lastly, one on the Regional Coalition of National Associations of Women Journalists in Tajikistan.

I will not keep you longer as I am certain that this will be a productive and enlightening event that will inspire innovative ideas for positive change and will hopefully spark renewed determination to safeguard journalists' safety.

Thank you once again for your presence and your participation.