



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Permanent Council No. 1487 Vienna, 5 September 2024

#### **EU Statement on the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances**

1. On 30 August, we marked the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances. The European Union reaffirms its strong commitment to the prevention and eradication of involuntary or enforced disappearances, as well as to combatting impunity for those responsible for, or complicit in, such crimes.
2. Russia's unprovoked, unjustified and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine remains a stark reminder of the continued use of this brutal practice and the devastating impact it leaves not only on the victims and survivors, but also on their families, communities and societies as a whole.
3. This has been documented on multiple occasions, most recently in the 2024 OSCE Moscow Mechanism report on the arbitrary deprivation of liberty of Ukrainian civilians by the Russian Federation. The report documented concrete cases of individuals that were taken by Russian forces or their proxies and subsequently went missing. In some instances, these individuals were later found to have been detained in undisclosed locations, often without any legal process or communication with their families. We strongly condemn such practices, including so-called 'filtration camps', and the enforced disappearances and persecution of Crimean Tatars in the illegally annexed Crimean Peninsula as grave violations of international law, including international human rights law and international humanitarian law, and stand firm in demanding that those responsible be held to account.

4. Our OSCE and international commitments and obligations are clear: any form of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment are unequivocally prohibited, under all circumstances, without exceptions. With the adoption of the 2020 Ministerial Council Decision on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, the participating States recognised enforced disappearances as a serious human rights violation in the OSCE area.
5. While Russia's brutal and illegal actions in Ukraine constitute the most recent grave example, many other cases remain unresolved, denying an effective remedy and assistance to the victims and survivors. Moreover, reports have highlighted a worrying continuity in the use of incommunicado detentions across several OSCE member states.
6. In this regard, the EU remains seriously concerned about the fate of people subjected to enforced disappearances in Turkmenistan. We reiterate our strong call on Turkmenistan to immediately acknowledge and address this scourge, and take action on the outstanding cases. The EU also reiterates its call on the Belarusian authorities for a complete and transparent investigation into all alleged violations and abuses of human rights, including the reports of enforced disappearances in the aftermath of the 2020 fraudulent presidential elections. All individuals, including civil society and opposition actors, must be protected from such criminal acts.
7. We have to ensure that all persons in vulnerable situations are protected against enforced disappearances. The lack of effective protection of economic, social and cultural rights is a contributing factor to enforced disappearances. According to the UN Committee and Working Group on Enforced Disappearances, people living in poverty are more vulnerable and exposed to higher risk of enforced disappearances.
8. In light of persisting challenges, we encourage all participating States to strongly consider ratifying the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, to cooperate fully with the UN Committee and the Working Group on Enforced Disappearances and to take concrete measures to prevent enforced disappearances. This includes investigating effectively all allegations of enforced disappearances, bringing perpetrators to justice and providing redress to the victims and their families.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\*, ALBANIA\*, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, and BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA\*, as well as MONACO align themselves with this statement.

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