



## EUROPEAN UNION

### **OSCE Permanent Council No. 1239 Vienna, 5 September 2019**

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

On the occasion of the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances, the European Union and its Member States would like to reaffirm its strong commitment to the prevention and investigation of enforced disappearances, as well as to combatting impunity for those responsible for, or complicit in such crimes.

Enforced disappearances are 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. Our OSCE and international commitments are abundantly clear: Any forms of torture and ill-treatment are unequivocally prohibited, under all circumstances, and without exceptions.

We continue to receive new, concerning reports of enforced disappearances from several parts of the OSCE region, many in the context of the fight against organised crime and terrorism, according to the UN Committee and the Working Group on Enforced Disappearances. In addition, many previous cases remain unresolved, causing impunity and denying justice and effective remedy and assistance to the victims.

Enforced disappearances have frequently been used as a strategy to spread terror within society. The fear generated by this practice is not limited to the close relatives of the victims, but also affects their communities and society as a whole. Coupled

with a culture of impunity and the lack of safeguards in the criminal justice system, these crimes are more likely to persist.

We remain seriously concerned about the fate of people subject to enforced disappearance in Turkmenistan's prisons. Credible reports, such as that from "Prove They Are Alive!", have documented more than 120 cases of people kept in full isolation in Turkmenistan's prisons over the past six years, and more than 27 people have died in custody. We follow very closely the situation of the disappeared persons whose prison terms have ended or are scheduled to end in 2019-2020. Although information on some individual cases has been provided, the fate of many other disappeared persons in Turkmenistan's prisons remains unknown.

The EU reiterates its strong call on Turkmenistan to immediately and effectively acknowledge this scourge, take action on the outstanding cases and to eradicate the problem of enforced disappearances.

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 and its optional protocols, to cooperate fully with the UN Committee and the Working Group on Enforced Disappearances and to take practical steps to combat enforced disappearances. This includes effectively investigating allegations of enforced disappearances, bringing perpetrators to justice and providing proper redress to the victims and their families.

Thank you.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\*, SERBIA\* and ALBANIA\*, and the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, align themselves with this statement.

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