

OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2019
Working Session 4 – Statement by the Delegation of Canada, delivered by Ambassador
Natasha Cayer, Permanent Representative of Canada to the OSCE, Wednesday, September
18, 2019

Moderator,

In many participating States, a free media is viewed as an enemy and as a threat, and political leaders inflame instead of restrain animus towards the media. At the Global Media Freedom Conference, Canada's Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland stated that "it would be a terrible mistake for any politician...to conclude that journalists are the enemy; quite the contrary... By holding us – their governments – accountable, journalists make us better than we would otherwise be." Minister Freeland noted that the objective of the world's rising authoritarianism is to undermine the very idea of objective facts, of objective truth, that the free media provides.

It is in this climate that fifty-four journalists were killed in 2018 according to the Committee for the Protection of Journalists. Countless others were physically attacked, threatened, harassed, or intimidated due to their work, whether online or off. Threats to the safety of journalists and other media workers remain one of the key obstacles to the full implementation of the right to freedom of opinion and expression.

As it was pointed out, in Milan last year, the fifty-seven OSCE participating States came to consensus on a decision on the Safety of Journalists. The decision includes some important new commitments, including calling on participating States to urge political leaders, public officials and/or authorities to refrain from intimidating, threatening, or condoning violence against journalists. What truly matters is the implementation of that decision, however, and of its provisions. Lamentably, our words are currently much stronger than our actions, given the multitude of RFOM statements and press releases to remind of the commitments they undertook in Milan. We can also see this in the high numbers of arbitrarily arrested or detained journalists, with the situation in Turkey representing a particularly serious contravention of Turkish OSCE commitments. Participating States have also failed to take effective measures to end impunity for crimes committed against journalists, both online and off, as called for in the Milan decision. The most prominent example is Russia, one of the most dangerous places in the world for journalists to work today, where the overwhelming majority of journalists that have been killed in recent years have seen their murders remain unsolved.

In light of this, moderator, we offer the following three recommendations:

- 1) That participating States take immediate actions to protect journalists and media workers, both online and offline, providing tangible support to those being targeted, working directly with those at risk.
- 2) That the OSCE, ODIHR, and the RFOM work with participating States to develop concrete measures, including through legislation, law enforcement practices, and other means in order to facilitate full implementation of the Milan decision.
- 3) That the RFOM take all possible actions to promote the Milan decision and reaffirm the importance of all participating States implementing these commitments, and to continue to draw attention to those participating States who fail to uphold their commitments.

Thank you.