



## **Warsaw Human Dimension Conference 2025**

Warsaw Poland, 6 - 17 October 2025

### **SCHEDULE AND OVERVIEW**

#### **OF SIDE EVENTS**

*as submitted by the organizers*

*The Helsinki Document of 1992 (Chapter IV) called for increasing the openness of OSCE activities and expanding the role of NGOs. In particular, in paragraph (15) of Chapter IV the participating States decided to facilitate during CSCE meetings informal discussion meetings between representatives of participating States and of NGOs, and to provide encouragement to NGOs organizing seminars on CSCE-related issues. In line with this decision, governments, civil society and other participants are encouraged to organize side meetings at the Review Conference on relevant issues of their choice.*

*The side events below have been exclusively organized and scheduled at the request of participants of the Warsaw Human Dimension Conference. The below descriptions have been provided by the side event organizers. They have been lightly edited by ODIHR for language but not for content. Responsibility for the content remains with the organizers. Neither the text below nor the events themselves necessarily reflect the views of the OSCE or the organisers of the conference.*

#### **Tuesday, 7 October**

|                   |                                                                                  |
|-------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Time:             | <b>08:30-09:30</b>                                                               |
| Venue:            | <b>Meeting Room 2 - Saski</b>                                                    |
| Title:            | <b>“Taking land without souls: Dictators’ Wars Against Civilian Populations”</b> |
| Convenor:         | <b>Union of Informed Citizens</b>                                                |
| Working language: | <b>English</b>                                                                   |

Summary: While the pro-government propaganda machines in Russia and Azerbaijan continue to claim that their wars are not directed against Ukrainians and Armenians, the reality is just the opposite. By their very nature, authoritarian regimes have little respect for human rights, and in times of armed conflict, this disregard is amplified, often manifesting itself in deliberate violence against civilians. The Side Event will examine crimes committed by Russia against Ukrainians and by Azerbaijan against Armenians, highlighting both the differences and the striking similarities in the behaviour of the two regimes. These include arbitrary executions of civilians, the mass displacement of millions of people as a result of aggression, detention, mutilation and torture of innocent civilians, and other gross violations

of international humanitarian law. We will focus specifically on the suffering and urgent needs of civilians impacted by this authoritarian aggression, including refugees, displaced people, abducted children, and civilian captives. Ultimately, this event seeks to illuminate the profound human cost of these conflicts and emphasize the critical need for robust accountability and protection for those most vulnerable.

**Speakers:**

- Swjatoslawa Nykorowycz-Mendel, Country Director, Right to Protection
- Vardine Grigoryan, Project Manager, Helsinki Citizens' Assembly-Vanadzor

Time: **08:30-09:30**

Venue: **Meeting Room 3 - Krolewski**

Title: Targeting Truth: Media Freedom Under Russia's Aggression in Ukraine

Convenor: Human Rights Information Center; Human Rights Centre ZMINA; Media Initiative for Human Rights; Institute of Mass Information; Human Rights House Foundation

Working language: English, Ukrainian

Summary: Since the beginning of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, media freedom has faced unprecedented threats: media infrastructure has become a direct target and journalists have been killed. According to the Institute of Mass Information, 15 media workers have been killed while reporting in Ukraine since 2014. The situation is particularly dire in occupied territories, where the media face systematic persecution. At least 26 Ukrainian media workers are in Russian detention, according to ZMINA and the Institute of Mass Information. Occupying authorities block access to independent information, prevent media outlets from operating, and target those who dare to report the truth through harassment, imprisonment, or even murder. The deliberate isolation of these territories allows the aggressor to spread disinformation and conceal atrocities committed against the local population. This side event will shed light on these abuses, share firsthand stories from journalists who endured persecution in the Russian captivity, and discuss the broader impact on human rights and freedom of expression.

**Key topics:**

- Systematic attacks on media freedom across Ukraine as a direct consequence of Russia's military aggression.
- Efforts of the Russian Federation to silence independent reporting since the occupation of Crimea in 2014.
- Escalation of media repression following the full-scale invasion of Russia in Ukraine starting from 2022.
- Personal testimonies from journalists who have endured Russian captivity. - National and international mechanisms to defend journalists, protect media freedom, and pursue accountability for violations.

**Speakers:**

- Ms. Viktoria Nesterenko, Project Manager at the Human Rights Centre ZMINA (Ukraine)
- Ms. Lyubov Smachylo, Head of Analytical Department, Media Initiative for Human Rights (Ukraine)
- Ms. Valentyna Troian, Representative of the Institute of Mass Information (Ukraine)
- Mr. Vladyslav Yesypenko, Freelance Correspondent of Radio Liberty and political prisoner who served the full illegal term of detention in occupied Crimea
- Mr. Dmytro Khyliuk, UNIAN Journalist and civilian detainee from the Kyiv region, who spent 3.5 years in Russian captivity

Time: **08:30-09:30**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 4 - Opera**  
Title: **Weaponizing the Law: Political Prosecutions Trends During Russia's Aggression**  
Convenor: **SOLIDARUS e.V.; Free Russia Foundation**  
Working language: **English**

Summary: This side event will spotlight the latest trends of war-related political repression in Russia and Belarus against their own citizens and Ukrainians. In Russia, we are observing harsher sentences being handed down, and the Russian authorities are escalating the use of accusations tied to “state security” — espionage, alleged foreign collaboration, and especially treason — as well as expanding the scope of terrorism-related charges. In Belarus, despite several recent political prisoner releases, new people are being detained and jailed every day. A major development has been large-scale prosecutions of prisoners of war, often under fabricated terrorism claims. Repression has also intensified against those accused of financing organizations designated as extremist, as well as against LGBTQ+ communities under the pretext of combating an “extremist movement.” Political repression today functions not only as a tool of domestic control over Russian and Belarusian societies and occupied Ukrainian territories, but also as a weapon of war — both against Ukraine directly and as part of the Kremlin’s propaganda war against the West.

**Speakers:**

- Ilya Yashin, a former Russian political prisoner
- Andrei Chapiuk, a former Belarusian political prisoner, Vyasna 96 Human Rights Center
- Sergei Davidis, head of the Political Prisoners Support. Memorial Project and a Co-Chair of Memorial Human Rights Defence Center
- Vladimir Zhabankov, Coordinator of the “Poshuk.Polon” project

**Moderator:**

- Grigory Frolov, Vice President of Free Russia Foundation

Time: **08:30-09:30**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 5 - Plenary**  
Title: **Path to Accountability for Belarus**  
Convenor: **Permanent Mission of Germany to the OSCE; Permanent Mission of the Republic of Lithuania to the International Organizations in Vienna; Permanent Mission of the Republic of Poland to the OSCE in Vienna; DIGNITY - Danish Institute against Torture; Human Rights Center Viasna**  
Working language: **English, Russian**

Summary: Since the disputed presidential elections of August 2020, Belarus has faced one of the gravest human rights crises in Europe in recent decades. Peaceful protests were met with a relentless campaign of repression, including mass arbitrary arrests, torture and ill-treatment, sham trials, the dismantling of independent media and civil society, and the imprisonment of more than 1,100 political opponents and human rights defenders. These violations of civil rights form part of a deliberate state policy to silence dissent, with UN experts noting that their widespread and systematic nature may amount to crimes against humanity. The side event underscores the urgent need for international accountability efforts to combat impunity for human rights violations in Belarus. It aims to facilitate a discussion on accountability mechanisms for violations against international human rights and criminal law allegedly committed in the country and against its exiled population. To this end, a new report of the International Accountability Platform for Belarus (IAPB) titled “Paths to Accountability in Belarus: Mechanisms to Address Human Rights and International Criminal Law Violations” will be presented, comprehensively

detailing accountability mechanisms, their possible outcomes, added value and involvement of victims and civil society organizations.

**Speakers:**

- Ms. Ingrida Bačiulienė, Director of the International Law Directorate, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania
- Ms. Joanna Jackowska, prosecutor at the Office of National Prosecutor, Republic of Poland
- Ms. Andrea Huber, Head of the International Accountability Platform for Belarus

**Moderator:**

- Ambassador H.E Susanne Schütz, Permanent Mission of the Federal Republic of Germany to the OSCE in Vienna

Time: **13:30-14:30**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 1 - Belweder**  
Title: 25 years of ODIHR's election legal assistance as part of its follow-up work  
Convenor: OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights Election Department  
Working language: English

Summary: ODIHR's assistance to participating States includes advice on laws that touch upon human rights issues integral to the conduct of genuine elections, such as the freedoms of assembly, association and expression, as well as legislation on political parties and their financing. These reviews help countries ensure their laws comply with OSCE commitments and international standards and support the conduct of transparent and genuine elections. This side event will showcase how ODIHR conducts systematic reviews and contributes to inclusive and consultative electoral reform processes. Through recent examples, ODIHR will demonstrate how the review process has contributed to improved legal frameworks in participating States. Participants will be able to discuss the main challenges in the legislative process, how civil society involvement can improve the quality of legislation, and the crucial role of early, inclusive legal reviews of draft laws. The event will discuss the benefits of integrating ODIHR's legal assistance into national electoral reform processes and share best practices, raising awareness of how participating States can benefit from follow-up work, particularly legal reviews of legislation, to enhance the quality and integrity of electoral processes around the OSCE region.

**Speakers:**

- Nikola Mugoša, Chairperson, State Election Commission of Montenegro
- Bojan Klačar, Executive Director, CeSID
- Levan Natroshvili, Chairperson, ISFED
- Maria Telalian, Director, ODIHR
- Meghan Fitzgerald, Head of Election Department, ODIHR
- Kseniya Dashutsina, Senior Election Advisor, ODIHR

Time: **13:30-14:30**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 2 - Saski**  
Title: Countering Dictatorships: The Putinization of the Region and Its Threat to Security and Democracy  
Convenor: For Equal Rights Educational Center Non-Governmental Organization  
Working language: English

Summary: The side event will examine how authoritarian governance in the Eastern Partnership countries, increasingly modelled on Putinization, threatens not only domestic freedoms but also regional

and European security. The discussion will also focus on possible strategies to resist dictatorships, consolidate democratic forces, and strengthen cooperation in the defence of democracy. Dictators—especially under Putin’s guidance—act in a coordinated and consolidated way, frequently replicating one another’s most “successful” methods. This creates the need for democratic actors to find ways of overcoming fragmentation and working together across borders. The main issues will be examined through the lenses of regional security. Evidence will be presented to demonstrate why there are grounds to assert that Eastern Partnership countries—perceived as vital areas of Russian interest—face growing threats, with authoritarian regimes not only mirroring each other’s practices but also directly supporting one another. The repressive policies of these regimes are no longer purely internal matters. They have become regional threats, manifested in: Violation of territorial integrity; Ethnic cleansing; Hybrid attacks, Information warfare and propaganda; Suppression of democratic institutions; Grave human rights violations both domestically and during external conflicts. The overarching aim of these strategies is to undermine security, democracy, and development in Eastern Europe, while fuelling migration and refugee flows—thus creating a wider threat to the European Union as a whole. Speakers: Ilya Yashin, Russian opposition politician in exile (Russia) o Will highlight internal repressions in Russia, as well as how external conflicts are deliberately manufactured by Putin to extend his regime. This method is common among dictatorships: creating external enemies, using war as a tool for domestic consolidation, and manipulating society through state propaganda. Thus, confronting Putin is not only essential in the Russia–Ukraine context, but also vital for the democratization of the entire region, as other dictators replicate the same strategy.

**Speakers:**

- Alexander Shlyk, Special Representative on Elections, Office of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya (Belarus)
- Gayane Abrahamyan, President, For Equal Rights (FER), NGO (Armenia)

Time: **13:30-14:30**

Venue: **Meeting Room 3 - Krolewski**

Title: Democracy at a crossroads: Discussions on responding to democratic governance challenges.

Convenor: OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

Working language: English

Summary: Organized within the framework of Stronger Democratic Institutions in Eastern Partnership Countries: an ODIHR project supported and funded by the EU, will offer a forward-looking conversation on democratic developments across the participating States covered by the project. While each context presents unique circumstances, many institutions across the region are navigating common challenges such as political polarization, stalled reforms, and declining public trust. Panellists will explore how integrity, inclusion, and accountability in democratic processes can be reinforced, particularly in settings marked by instability, reform fatigue, and limited dialogue between public institutions and society. Civic participation and institutional legitimacy will serve as core themes, with a focus on how democratic institutions can remain open, participatory, and responsive to all citizens, especially those historically underrepresented in public life. The discussion will also reflect on how national developments are shaped by broader regional dynamics, including the impact of war, shifting geopolitical conditions, and evolving policy priorities. Finally, this side event will highlight how the project initiative contributes to reinforcing democratic governance through targeted tools, expert guidance, and context-specific support. Drawing on diverse experiences from the participating States covered by the project, the event will explore practical approaches to strengthening democratic resilience and ensuring that governance reforms are not only enacted, but also trusted and sustained.

**Speakers:**

- Dr. Tea Jaliashvili, ODIHR’s First Deputy Director

- Dr. Marcin Walecki, Russian and East European Studies, University of Oxford/ Former NDI Senior Resident Director in Ukraine
- Ms. Olga Aivazovska - Head of the Board of the Civil Network OPORA, an international expert on electoral issues and legislative drafting, co-founder of the International Center for Ukrainian Victory and the Center for War Crimes Documentation (online)
- Dr. Hamazasp Danielyan – former MP of the National Assembly of Armenia

Time: **13:30-14:30**  
 Venue: **Meeting Room 4 - Opera**  
 Title: Patterns of repression in occupied territories of Ukraine: Human Rights and Humanitarian Perspectives  
 Convenor: Public Organization Crimea SOS; Human rights centre ZMINA; Regional Center of Human Rights; Crimean Human Rights Group; CCE Almenda; Human Rights House Crimea  
 Working language: English

Summary: For more than eleven years, the civilian population in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine has faced systematic repression under policies imposed by the Russian Federation. With the escalation of the armed conflict, these practices have deepened and now encompass nearly every sphere of public and private life. The situation raises serious concerns under international human rights law and international humanitarian law, including obligations to respect the rights to life, liberty, health, and non-discrimination, as well as the duty to protect civilians during armed conflict. These violations have created a legal and humanitarian vacuum in which residents of the occupied territories lack effective remedies and remain vulnerable to ongoing persecution. The cumulative impact of such measures is the erosion of basic rights and freedoms, alongside growing humanitarian challenges, particularly for vulnerable groups such as political prisoners, women, human rights defenders, minorities, and children. During the side event, speakers will provide: Concrete examples of ongoing violations and their impact on the civilian population; An assessment of the humanitarian consequences of prolonged occupation; Recommendations to the OSCE and participating States on strengthening the protection of civilians, promoting accountability, and ensuring compliance with international human rights and humanitarian law.

**Speakers:**

- Kateryna Rashevskaya, PhD in international law and a legal expert at the Regional Center for Human Rights
- Viktoriia Nesterenko, a human rights activist and project manager at the Human Rights Centre ZMINA
- Mariia Sulialina, head of Centre of Civil Education “Almenda”
- Iryna Baran El Ghali, an international advocacy manager at the Crimean Human Rights Group
- Artem Oliinyk, an advocacy expert at the Crimea SOS

**Moderator:**

- Dave Elseroad, Human Rights House Foundation

Time: **13:30-14:30**  
 Venue: **Meeting Room 5 - Plenary**  
 Title: The Moscow Mechanism Report on possible violations and abuses of IHL and IHRL, war crimes and crimes against humanity, related to the treatment of Ukrainian prisoners of war by the Russian Federation

Convenor: Delegation of Canada to the OSCE; Permanent Mission of the Czech Republic to the OSCE; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark; Permanent Mission of Finland to the OSCE; Permanent Representation of France to the OSCE; Permanent Mission of Germany to the OSCE; Permanent Mission of the Republic of Latvia to OSCE; Permanent Representation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the OSCE; Permanent Mission of the Republic of Poland to the OSCE in Vienna; Permanent Delegation of Sweden to the OSCE; Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organizations in Vienna; United Kingdom Delegation to the OSCE

Working language: English, Russian, Ukrainian

Summary: On 25 September, the OSCE Permanent Council discussed the findings and observations from the Moscow Mechanism report on violations and abuses of human rights and violations of IHL, including cases of war crimes and crimes against humanity, related to the treatment of Ukrainian POWs by the Russian Federation. Against the backdrop of Russia's full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine, and in this context gravely concerned by credible allegations of the torture, ill-treatment and executions of Ukrainian POWs, and soldiers hors de combat, 41 participating States invoked the Moscow Mechanism on 24 July 2025 to establish the facts and circumstances around these concerns; to collect, consolidate, and analyse this information including to determine if there is a pattern of widespread and systematic torture, ill-treatment and execution of Ukrainian POWs and soldiers hors de combat and/or at detention facilities by the Russian Federation in the temporarily occupied territories and in Russia; and to offer recommendations on relevant accountability mechanisms. Following a presentation of the main findings of the report as well as a testimony by a former POW, this side-event gives an opportunity for representatives of civil society and participating States for further discussion and exchange on the findings and observations from the report.

**Introductory remarks:**

- Viktoria Kuvshynnykova, Deputy Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the OSCE

**Speakers:**

- prof. Hervé Ascensio, members of the Mission of experts
- prof. Veronika Bílková, members of the Mission of experts
- prof. Mark Klamberg, members of the Mission of experts
- Maksym Butkevych, Human rights activists and former POW

**Closing remarks:**

- Ambassador Neil Holland, Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the OSCE

**Co-sponsors:** The Delegations of Albania, Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Georgia, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland.

**Moderator:**

- Ambassador Neil Holland, Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the OSCE

Time: **18:30-19:30**

Venue: **Meeting Room 1 - Belweder**

Title: Citizen Observation under Pressure: Safeguarding the Space to Monitor Elections

Convenor: Europäischer Austausch GmbH / European Platform for Democratic Elections (EPDE)

Working language: English

Summary: Foreign interference, disinformation, and opaque political financing are reshaping elections across the OSCE region, creating new demands on citizen observers. As these risks grow, domestic monitoring organizations must refine their methodologies while contending with limited access to key stages of the electoral process and a steadily narrowing space for independent observation in a political climate that increasingly questions their neutrality. Hosted by the European Platform for Democratic Elections (EDPE), with contributions from citizen observer organizations from Central and Eastern Europe and OSCE/ODIHR, this side event will explore how citizen monitoring can adapt to these pressures, strengthen cooperation with international observation, and remain a trusted safeguard of electoral integrity.

**Speakers:**

- Vardine Grigoryan, Program Manager at Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Vanadzor, Armenia
- Levan Natroshvili, Executive Director at the International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED), Georgia
- Mihaela Duca-Anghelici, Chief of Analysis and Research team at Promo-LEX, Moldova
- Ulvi Akhundlu, Deputy Head of the Election Department, OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)

**Moderator:**

- Zofia Lutkiewicz, Director of the Political Accountability Foundation (Poland), Board Member of the European Platform for Democratic Elections (EPDE) and Board Member of the Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors (GNDEM)

Time: **18:30-19:30**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 2 - Saski**  
Title: Rule of Law Backsliding: Is There a Chance to Reverse?  
Convenor: Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights; Hungarian Helsinki Committee; Civil Society Foundation  
Working language: English

Summary: Rule of law backsliding is a worrisome trend that leads to erosion of effectiveness of the democratic institutions, undermining the independence of judiciary, and limiting the exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms. During the side-event the challenges to the rule of law and justice sector will be discussed reflecting on the developments in Georgia, Hungary and Poland. The speakers will touch on how the installation of the systems undermining judicial independence through political control over judicial self-governance bodies, constraining the freedom of expression, and undermining security of judicial tenure led to a broader rule of law and democratic backsliding as well as chilling effect on the civil society. The speakers will present case-studies from their countries and discuss the importance of alliances between the civil society and judicial actors to withstand the backsliding, as well as well the important role of the international institutions in this respect.

**Speakers:**

- Maciej Nowicki, President of the Board, Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights
- András Léderer, Head of Advocacy, Hungarian Helsinki Committee
- Saba Brachveli, Human Rights Program Manager, Civil Society Foundation

**Moderator:**

- Iryna Ivankiv, Rule of Law Adviser, ODIHR

Time: **18:30-19:30**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 3 - Krolewski**  
Title: Civil society vision on the future of the Helsinki process: Recommendations of the Helsinki+50 Reflection Project and the Civil Society Manifesto



Convenor: Center for Civil Liberties; Freedom Files Foundation; DRA e.V.  
Working language: English

Summary: The Civic Solidarity Platform, an OSCE-wide NGO coalition built on the achievements and traditions of the international Helsinki movement, presents recommendations of its Helsinki+50 Reflection Project and the Civil Society Manifesto resulting from it. This vision of the future of the Helsinki process was developed by dozens of civil society representatives in the course of seminars, expert discussions and production of papers in the run up to the commemorative conference in Helsinki on 31 July 2025, organised by the Finnish OSCE Chairpersonship, and combines civil society's perspective on key principles for the implementation of the Helsinki concept in the current challenging security situation and recommendations on further steps. In a follow-up to the marking of the 50th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act, the panellists will discuss concrete steps that civil society recommends to be taken by OSCE bodies, institutions, and participating States, as well as civil society itself.

**Speakers:**

- Yuri Dzhibladze, International Strategic Action Network for Security - iSANS (Poland)
- Sasha Romantsova, Center for Civil Liberties, Executive Director, 10 years of experience in documenting war crimes on the territory of Ukraine, #People1st (Ukraine)
- Kate Watters, Co-founder & Executive Director at Crude Accountability (United States)
- Harry Hummel, Libereco, Human Rights Expert, Campaigner (Netherlands)

Time: **18:30-19:30**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 4 - Opera**  
Title: Human Rights Violations, Militarization of Public Spaces, Arbitrary Detention, and Enforced Disappearances in the US in 2025  
Convenor: Crude Accountability  
Working language: English

Summary: Since January 2025, the United States has been in a state of flux, with significant threats to human rights, the rule of law, and civic participation posed by the current administration, which has increasingly militarized public spaces throughout the country. With possible violations of the OSCE Decalogue as the focus of discussion, this side event will raise awareness about current violations, including mass arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, torture, and deportation by Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Department of Homeland Security, and cooperating law enforcement bodies in the United States. We will focus specifically on arbitrary detention and enforced disappearances, often in harsh, unsanitary, and torturous prison conditions, describing the unprecedented and widespread scope of these violations. Our speakers will highlight specific cases that illustrate the seriousness of the issue and how it informs and influences the overall human rights environment in the US.

**Speakers:**

- Kate Watters, Executive Director, Crude Accountability
- Douglas Wake, Independent Analyst
- Adelein (Lina) Olberding, Research Intern, Crude Accountability
- Jeffrey Dunn, Research Director, Crude Accountability (online)

Time: **18:30-19:30**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 5 - Plenary**

Title: Security environment and HR violations on the Russian-occupied territories of Georgia  
Convenor: State Security Service of Georgia  
Working language: English

Summary: The presentation provided by the representatives of the State Security Service of Georgia will analyze the architecture of the Russia–Georgia conflict, and the Russian occupation. It will provide information on the militarization of the occupied regions and related hybrid threats such as illegal detentions, illegal so-called borderization, and disinformation, a combination used by Moscow to pressure Tbilisi. It will also focus on Russia’s annexation-oriented policies, including isolation of these occupied regions, seizure of strategic assets, and the Russification of local populations, particularly Georgians. Special attention will be given to systematic discrimination (restrictions on movement, education in the native language, etc), impunity for crimes against Georgians, and recent measures that target local Georgians that may contribute to new wave of targeted expulsion/displacement.

## **Wednesday, 8 October**

Time: **08:30-09:30**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 1 - Belweder**  
Title: Information Under Attack: Information Integrity and the Fight Against Disinformation  
Convenor: Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media; Permanent Delegation of Norway to the OSCE  
Working language: English

Summary: We need reliable information to make informed decisions, which in turn are critical to well-functioning democracies. We must uphold a public discourse that is free and open, protected from misleading and harmful influence. The spread of disinformation not only threatens public debate, but also the trust we have in each other and in our democracy. Disinformation, information manipulation and propaganda are designed and implemented to mislead public opinion, as well as to interfere with the public’s right to know and the right of individuals to seek, receive and impart information. The Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM) has consistently underlined that disinformation and propaganda pose threats to democracy, societal cohesion and security across the OSCE region and beyond, and that free, pluralistic and independent media are essential in countering these threats. We need to combat the multidimensional phenomenon of disinformation together: States, international organisations, the private sector, social platforms, civil society organisations, media and other stakeholders all have a role and responsibility in countering disinformation. At the side-event we will hear about the RFoM’s work in addressing information disorders and promoting information integrity, from the Norwegian Ministry of Culture and Equality that earlier this year adopted a strategy to strengthen resilience against disinformation, as well as civil society and journalist perspectives on combatting disinformation. The objective of the side-event is to contribute to the advancement of measures to secure information integrity, combat disinformation and build public resilience while upholding OSCE and other international freedom of the media standards and commitments and fostering collaboration across sectors.

### **Opening Remarks:**

- Ambassador Ellen Svendsen, Permanent Representative of Norway to the OSCE
- Ambassador Jan Braathu, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM)

**Speakers:**

- Siw Ellefsen, Policy Director, Department of Media and the Arts at the Norwegian Ministry of Culture and Equality
- Tamar Kintsurashvili, Executive Director, Georgian Media Development Foundation, Chief-Editor of the fact-finding portal mythdetector.com
- Galyna Petrenko, Director, “Detector Media”, Ukraine

**Moderator:**

- Bettina Ruigies, Senior Advisor, Office of the RFoM

Time: **08:30-09:30**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 2 - Saski**  
Title: Anatomy of Crackdown: The Case of Kyrgyzstan's Kloop  
Convenor: Kloop Media  
Working language: English

Summary: Imagine you are an authoritarian regime and your goal is to destroy an investigative media outlet. How would you do it? Part of the outlet’s team works from abroad, so you cannot simply lock everyone up. You can manufacture charges and arrest reporters inside the country — but that alone won’t stop the journalists who continue their work from exile. To be effective, you must get inventive: intimidate those outside the borders, fray the bonds between current and former staff, and turn a closely knit professional community into a web of suspicion. At this side event we will do a post-mortem of how the Kyrgyz authorities tried to dismantle a leading investigative outlet, Kloop Media. We will look beyond courts and takedown orders to the quieter instruments of repression: legal harassment (old and newly enacted laws), psychological pressure on journalists and their families, prolonged detention without access to lawyers, bot attacks and online harassment, and other measures designed to isolate, demoralize, and discredit. We are the team behind Kloop and are still fresh from this experience, and we believe we will survive. But understanding how these crackdowns operate — legally, psychologically, and professionally — matters. Our reflections aim to help other outlets and civil-society groups withstand similar pressure.

**Speakers:**

- Rinat Tuhvatshin, Kloop co-founder
- Anna Kapushenko, Editor-in-chief at Kloop.kg

Time: **08:30-09:30**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 3 - Krolewski**  
Title: The Human Rights Crisis in Georgia  
Convenor: World Organisation Against Torture / Organisation Mondiale Contre la Torture (OMCT); International Federation for Human Rights; Human Rights House Foundation Araminta  
Working language: English

Summary: Georgia is experiencing its most severe crackdown on civic space since independence. Civil society organizations, independent media, and their beneficiaries face suffocating restrictions under the 2024 “Foreign Influence” Law, the 2025 FARA Act, and amendments to the Law on Grants. These laws force groups receiving foreign support to register as “foreign agents,” grant authorities access to private data and donor information, and criminalize non-compliance with prison sentences. Repressive legislation is reinforced by physical assaults, threats, smear campaigns, surveillance, and pressure on relatives of human rights defenders and journalists. NGO funding has become heavily restricted, leading to closures, staff losses, cancelled services, and the imprisonment and ill-treatment of defenders.

Vulnerable populations, including children and survivors of abuse, are left without essential support. In December 2024, OSCE States invoked the Vienna Mechanism to seek clarification from Georgia, but the response was inadequate, and the situation has since worsened. In this context, it is critical to consider further OSCE tools, including activation of the Moscow Mechanism, to ensure an independent, expert-led assessment and concrete recommendations. This side-event amplifies the voices of those on the frontlines. Together, we will:

- Expose how repressive laws are dismantling civil society.
- Share first-hand accounts of persecution, threats, and attacks.
- Highlight the devastating impact on NGOs across Georgia.
- Explore the role and avenues available to the OSCE in responding to the crisis.
- Call for urgent international action to protect defenders and safeguard civic space.

**Speakers:**

- Baia Patariaia, Sapari & Human Rights House Tbilisi
- Tamar Oniani, Georgian Young Lawyers' Association
- Lela Tsiskarishvili, Georgian Centre for Psychosocial and Medical Rehabilitation of Torture Victims & Human Rights House Tbilisi
- Mariana Antunes Garrido, World Organisation Against Torture

**Moderator:**

- Dave Elseroad, Human Rights House Foundation

Time: **08:30-09:30**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 4 - Opera**  
Title: "The Crime of Crimes?" Confronting Russia's War Against the Ukrainian People  
Convenor: International Partnership for Human Rights  
Working language: English

Summary: Three and a half years into the full-scale invasion, the evidence of mass Russian atrocities in Ukraine is overwhelming. Signs of intent to destroy the entire Ukrainian people are also becoming increasingly clear. With peace negotiations stalled and Russian offensive and aerial attacks all-over Ukraine intensifying, it is urgent for the international community to assess the security, policy, humanitarian and legal implications of Russia's actions in Ukraine. This side event will examine Russia's rhetoric and conduct in a comprehensive manner, with a focus on identifying concrete legal, political, and diplomatic measures that OSCE participating States can take to prevent further atrocities against the Ukrainian people and respond to the growing Russian threat in the region.

**Speakers:**

- Tamar Ruseishvili, Legal officer, International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR)
- Oleksandra Dvoretzka, Head of policy, Bring Kids Back UA
- Maria Tomak, Ukrainian researcher, human rights expert
- Michael Cecire, Defence and security policy researcher at RAND

**Moderator:**

- Svitlana Valko, Ukraine Program Manager, International Partnership for Human Rights

Time: **08:30-09:30**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 5 - Plenary**  
Title: "Rights of the Displaced: Jurisdiction, Justice, and Constitutional Commitments"  
Convenor: The Agency on State Support to NGOs of the Republic of Azerbaijan  
Working language: English, Russian

Summary: Forced displacement is not only a legal and humanitarian challenge - it is a human tragedy that continues to shape the lives of millions. Families are uprooted by conflict, instability, natural disasters, and the growing effects of climate change. Azerbaijan knows this reality firsthand. For decades, hundreds of thousands of its citizens were forced to leave their homes. Behind each number was a story - children growing up without the comfort of their ancestral homes, parents struggling to provide stability, and communities learning to rebuild from loss. Out of this painful experience, however, emerged a commitment to create solutions that went beyond survival and focused on restoring hope. Step by step, policies on housing, social welfare, and integration helped families meet their most urgent needs and slowly regain a sense of normal life. These efforts showed that displacement is not only about providing shelter but also about giving people the chance to rebuild their lives with dignity. They demonstrate how a nation's own journey - can inspire others facing similar challenges. Azerbaijan's path shows that resilience, legal order, and sovereignty can go hand in hand with humanitarian responsibility. Every displacement crisis is unique, but the lesson is universal: when countries turn painful experiences into frameworks for dignity and justice, they also contribute to a stronger global response. By listening to and learning from such examples, the international community can move closer to ensuring that all displaced people - wherever they may be - live with security, protection, and hope for the future.

**Speakers:**

- Ms. Nazrin Aliyeva, Representative, Human Rights Promotion Center
- Mr. Viktor Sebek (TBC), Founding Chairman of the South-South Cooperation Council (SSCC), Co-President at the Colombian Centre of the International Theatre Institute (UNESCO)

***Special Event***

Time: **13:00 -14:00**  
 Venue: **NGO Lounge**  
 Title: Presentation of priorities of the incoming Swiss OSCE Chairpersonship – followed by informal networking  
 Convenor: Federal Department of Foreign Affairs  
 Working language: English

Summary: The incoming Swiss OSCE Chairpersonship will present its priorities in the Human Dimension for 2026. The event will offer a platform for dialogue and an exchange of views on these priorities, as well as on the role of civil society within the OSCE. Following the discussion, participants are invited to continue the exchange in an informal setting. Refreshments will be provided.

Time: **14:30-15:30**  
 Venue: **Meeting Room 1 - Belweder**  
 Title: "Police-media relationship in shaping the narratives on violence against women and girls and its prevention"  
 Convenor: OSCE Secretariat/Transnational Threats Department in co-operation with the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Albania to the International Organisations in Vienna; Permanent Mission of Italy to the OSCE; Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media  
 Working language: English

Summary: Violence against women and girls is a pervasive and deeply concerning phenomenon that affects individuals and communities across the OSCE area and worldwide. Law enforcement agencies and the media play both distinct yet pivotal roles in addressing this societal challenge.

Responsible media reporting on violence against women and girls is essential to raise awareness of its seriousness and complexity, and encourage prevention. In contrast, unethical or biased reporting can inflict further harm on survivors, perpetuate gender stereotypes and reinforce gender inequality. Moreover, it can interfere with the effective criminal investigation of these offenses. The rise of social media adds further complexity, especially among younger generations.

The side event will highlight gender-sensitive and victim-centered approaches to reporting on violence against women and girls. Building on the OSCE's experience in South-Eastern Europe, it will explore challenges as well as showcase good practices in police-media co-operation. A panel discussion among law enforcement, media representative and psychology experts will address the importance of language and framing in reporting on violence against women and girls, and the impact of word choice, stereotypes and biases in shaping public perceptions of victims and perpetrators.

**Opening:**

- H.E. Eglantina GJERMENI, Permanent Representative of Albania to International Organizations in Vienna
- H.E. Andrea CASCONE, Permanent Representative of Italy to the OSCE

**Speakers:**

- Ms. Barbara TRIONFI, Principal Advisor, Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media
- Ms. Kristina JOZIC, President of the Policewomen's Network Association, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Mr. Ognen JANESKI, Journalist, North Macedonia
- Ms. Dragica RAJKOVIC, Psychologist specialized in gender-based violence, Montenegro

**Moderation & Closing:**

- Ms. Helen HAAKONSHOLM, Police Affairs Officer, Adviser on Police Reform, Transnational Threats Department/Strategic Police Matters Unit, OSCE Secretariat

Time: **14:30-15:30**

Venue: **Meeting Room 2 - Saski**

Title: Safeguarding Democratic Processes in the Digital Age: Emerging Risks and Strategic Responses

Convenor: Permanent Mission of the Republic of Poland to the OSCE in Vienna; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland; Permanent Mission of the Republic of Estonia to the OSCE; Permanent Representation of France to the OSCE; Permanent Mission of Germany to the OSCE; Permanent Mission of Iceland to the OSCE; Permanent Mission of the Republic of Latvia to OSCE; Permanent Mission of the Republic of Lithuania to the International Organizations in Vienna; Embassy of the Republic of Moldova to the Republic of Poland; Permanent Delegation of Norway to the OSCE; Permanent Mission of Romania to the International Organizations; Permanent Delegation of Sweden to the OSCE; United Kingdom Delegation to the OSCE; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark

Working language: English, Russian

Summary: In an era of rapid digital transformation, democratic elections face unprecedented challenges. The misuse of data-driven microtargeting, covert influencer campaigns, and unregulated online advertisements pose serious risks to electoral transparency and fairness. A growing concern is the use of deepfake technology to spread misleading content, impersonate candidates, and manipulate public perception. These tactics can distort public discourse, manipulate voter behaviour, and undermine

democratic institutions. The OSCE and its participating States must remain vigilant and proactive in addressing these evolving threats. Recent reports and expert analyses highlight the urgent need for coordinated responses, regulatory frameworks, and public awareness. This panel will explore the implications of these practices, share insights from field experts, and discuss potential safeguards to protect electoral processes. The event will also emphasize the importance of cross-sector collaboration in countering digital disinformation and ensuring accountability for violations. The discussion aims to contribute to the broader efforts of defending democratic values and promoting secure, transparent elections across the OSCE region. Guiding questions: 1. What are the most pressing digital threats to electoral integrity today, and how do they manifest across different OSCE participating States? 2. How can regulatory frameworks and cross-sector collaboration effectively counteract digital disinformation and ensure accountability? 2. What practical safeguards and technological solutions can be implemented to protect voters from manipulation and uphold democratic values? Light lunch will be served.

**Opening remarks:**

- Ambassador Marek Szczygieł, Permanent Representative of Poland to the United Nations Office and international Organizations at Vienna

**Speakers:**

- Mr. Ulvi Akhundlu, Deputy Head of the Election Department, ODIHR
- Ms. Beatriz Marín García, Team Leader of the Data Knowledge and Analysis Team, EEAS Strategic Communication and Foresight
- Mr. Givi Gigitashvili, Research Associate for Caucasus and Eastern Europe, Digital Forensic Research Lab, Atlantic Council (online)
- Mr. Jakub Kubś, PhD, Researcher/Data Analyst, GLOBSEC
- Mr. Wojciech Solak, Director of GLOBSEC's Centre for Democracy and Resilience

**Moderator:**

- Ambassador Tomasz Chłóń, Poland's Foreign Minister's plenipotentiary for countering international disinformation

Time: **14:30-15:30**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 3 - Krolewski**  
Title: The Proliferation of Russia-inspired “Foreign Agents” Laws in Eastern Europe and Central Asia  
Convenor: International Federation for Human Rights  
Working language: English

Summary: In Russia, since 1 September 2025, books by authors designated as “foreign agents” have been withdrawn from sale, their lectures have disappeared from streaming platforms, and they face criminal prosecution for improper labelling of their materials—whether an article, a social media post, or just a comment. This is just the latest iteration of the numerous amendments to the first “foreign agents” law adopted in Russia in 2012. While human rights defenders immediately warned that this law was aimed at silencing civil society, the authorities claimed that it was intended solely to ensure the transparency of CSO activities. As a result, in the thirteen years since the adoption of the law, virtually all significant human rights organizations in Russia have been liquidated, and many human rights defenders have been forced to leave the country under the threat of criminal prosecution. The “foreign agent” label has become a tool for the authorities to suppress dissent in any sphere—whether in academia, education, human rights work, or oppositional political activity. However, the reach of the “foreign agents” legislation extends far beyond Russia. Since 2023, Kazakhstan has maintained a public register of “persons financed from foreign sources”. In February 2025, parliamentarians in Kazakhstan proposed adopting a “foreign agents” law and creating a register of NGOs labelled as “foreign agents”. While the authorities have so far rejected this proposal, the existing register—already listing 290

NGOs—provides a solid foundation for such a law. In 2024, Kyrgyzstan enacted a law on “foreign representatives”, modelled directly on the Russian one. In Georgia, a law “on the transparency of foreign influence” was passed in 2024, and on 31 May 2025, yet another “foreign agents” law—the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA)—entered into force. At this side-event, the speakers will discuss recent trends in the persecution of human rights defenders and, drawing on the tragic experience of Russian civil society, explore possible forms of resistance to the repressive “foreign agents” legislation, and the steps that European civil society and institutions can take to support activists in these countries in countering Russian influence.

**Speakers:**

- Tamilla Imanova, Memorial Human Rights Defence Center
- Aina Shormanbaeva, ILI Foundation, Kazakhstan
- Murat Karypov, Bir Duino-Kyrgyzstan, Kyrgyzstan
- Nino Tlashadze, Human Rights Center, Georgia

**Moderator:**

- Alexandra Leibova, FIDH

Time: **14:30-15:30**

Venue: **Meeting Room 4 - Opera**

Title: Russia’s Politically Driven Hostility towards Ukraine and Incitement to Genocide of Ukrainians

Convenor: Center of the Belarussian Solidarity

Working language: English

Summary: The event is co-organised by the Centre for Belarusian Solidarity, the International Strategic Action Network for Security (iSANS) and the Centre for Democratic Integrity. This event presents two studies, both analysing ideological foundations, manifestations and goals of Russia’s aggressive policy towards Ukraine. The first is the multi-author study “Russia against Ukraine”, commissioned by the Centre for Democratic Integrity (Austria), which investigates Russia’s politically driven hostility towards Ukraine, rooted in longstanding geopolitical chauvinism. Structured in ten chapters, the volume traces the socio-cultural foundations and political expressions of this hostility, showing how anti-Ukrainian sentiment has fuelled both the initiation and the continuation of the war. It directly challenges Moscow’s claim that NATO expansion justified its aggression, demonstrating instead that Ukraine was attacked as a neutral state in violation of international law. By exposing Ukrainophobia as a central force behind Russia’s revisionist aims, the book sheds light on the ideological drivers of Europe’s gravest war since the Second World War. The second study is a research report by iSANS, “The crime of incitement to genocide of Ukrainians in Russian and Belarusian propaganda”. It is based on comprehensive documentation of statements by Russian and Belarusian propagandists and politicians in respect of Ukraine and Ukrainians, including incitement to genocide of Ukrainians as a national group – an international crime prohibited by the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the Rome Statute, and national legislation of many states. The report includes analysis and classification of various hostile statements and recommendations on bringing the perpetrators to responsibility at both individual and state level. Copies of the report will be available.

**Speakers:**

- Olga Kever, iSANS Strategic Director
- Dr. Anton Shekhovtsov, director of the Centre for Democratic Integrity (Austria)
- Andrey Kalikh, iSANS analyst
- Yuri Dzhibladze, iSANS Head of Human Rights and Rule of Law Unit



Time: **14:30-15:30**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 5 - Plenary**  
Title: Safeguarding Women Journalists to Enhance Media Freedom, Security, and Democracy  
Convenor: Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland; German Federal Foreign Office; Media Freedom Coalition Secretariat  
Working language: English

Summary: This panel discussion, organized jointly by the Media Freedom Coalition's two co-chairs Finland and Germany and the Coalition's Secretariat, will explore three interconnected themes that highlight the critical role of women journalists in promoting media freedom and democratic resilience. First, the session will examine how ensuring the freedom of women journalists to report without interference is essential to upholding media freedom itself. Second, the panel will address the wide-ranging threats faced by women journalists—both online and offline, in newsrooms and in the field. Particular attention will be given to journalists reporting on gender-related issues, such as gender-based violence, who often face intensified risks. Finally, the discussion will focus on concrete actions that governments and institutions can take to enhance the safety of women journalists. The discussion will emphasize the deep links between press freedom, democratic governance, and comprehensive security, with a focus on the particular challenges facing women journalists.

**Opening remarks:**

- Ambassador Susanne Schütz, Permanent Representative of Germany to the OSCE,

**Speakers:**

- Ambassador Jan Braathu, OSCE Representative on the Freedom of the Media
- Toma Istomina, Deputy Chief Editor of the Kyiv Independent
- Scott Griffen, Executive Director of the International Press Institute

**Moderator:**

- Katja Pehrman, Ambassador for Human Rights of Finland.

Time: **16:00-17:00**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 1 - Belweder**  
Title: What states need to know: How exiled media ecosystems contribute to democratic resilience in Europe.  
Convenor: Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media; Free Press Unlimited; Press Club Belarus  
Working language: English

Summary: Across Europe and beyond, exile has become the new reality for independent journalism in several countries in the OSCE region amid growing authoritarianism. Despite censorship, forced relocation, and financial precarity, these outlets continue to inform their audiences, counter disinformation, and support democratic discourse in their home countries. In this context, host states play a critical role in enabling the ability of exiled media to survive, thrive, and contribute to democratic resilience. The side event, which takes Belarus as a case study of an emerging and coordinated exile media ecosystem, aims to discuss the plight of exiled journalists in the OSCE region and showcase practical examples of and recommendations for resilience, cooperation, and strategic foresight.

**Speakers:**

- Ambassador Jan Braathu, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media
- Ambassador Vesa Häkkinen, Permanent Representative of Finland to the OSCE
- Ambassador Wim Geerts, Human Rights Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands –

- Mariya Sadouskaya-Komlach, Global Engagement Strategist, Free Press Unlimited, Netherlands
- Katya Gorchinskaya, Media and Strategy Consultant, Ukraine
- Cinthia Membreño, Coordinator, Network of Exiled Media Outlets (NEMO)
- Dina Khaskelberg, Project Coordinator, Russia & Belarus Program, JX Fund, Germany

Moderator:

- Elena Vereschagina, Open Lectures Coordinator, Press Club Belarus

Time: **16:00-17:00**  
 Venue: **Meeting Room 2 - Saski**  
 Title: The Press Freedom Crisis in Georgia  
 Convenor: Committee to Protect Journalists  
 Working language: English

Summary: Long regarded as a democratic forerunner in post-Soviet Eurasia, press freedom in Georgia has declined sharply in recent years amid a well-documented authoritarian and anti-Western turn by the ruling Georgian Dream party. The party's moves to suppress Georgia's vibrant independent media sector, which began in earnest with the passage of a Russian-style "foreign agent" law in early 2024, have accelerated amid the mass protests that followed alleged fraud in the October 2024 elections and the party's suspension of EU accession talks. A raft of repressive laws has been introduced targeting the press, including a new, harsher Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA), with penalties of up to five years in prison. Authorities have demonstratively jailed respected media manager Mzia Amaglobeli on clearly excessive charges while granting police full impunity for dozens of sometimes brutal attacks on reporters covering the protests. As Georgian Dream seeks to stifle the donor funding on which many independent media rely and intimidate journalists into silence, Georgia's free press and civil society increasingly face a battle for survival. This side event, co-hosted by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) and the Media Advocacy Coalition (MAC) of Georgia, will examine the growing assault on press freedom in Georgia. Local and international experts will discuss the key issues and challenges facing independent media and civil society, and local partners will share their experiences of being targeted by the repressive new laws. Recommendations will be provided for OSCE members and civil society on supporting independent media and press freedom groups in the current crisis. Coffee/tea will be provided.

**Speakers:**

- Mamuka Andguladze, Chair of the Media Advocacy Coalition, Georgia
- Tamar Kintsurashvili, Executive Director of Media Development Foundation, Georgia, and Editor-in-chief of fact-checking platform Myth Detector
- Mariam Nikuradze, Co-founder and Executive Director of Open Caucasus Media, journalist

**Moderator:**

- Nick Lewis, Central Asia and Caucasus Correspondent, Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)

Time: **16:00-17:00**  
 Venue: **Meeting Room 3 - Krolewski**  
 Title: Hate Speech and Human Rights: International Perspectives and Comparative Approaches  
 Convenor: Solidarity With Others  
 Working language: English

**Summary:** The side event jointly organised by Solidarity with Others and No Hate Speech Network will explore the complex intersection of freedom of expression and the protection of individuals and communities from harm. It will examine how hate speech manifests across international contexts, from systematic persecution to everyday discrimination, and consider the social, political, and digital mechanisms that amplify harmful rhetoric. Participants will explore the multiple ways in which hate speech undermines human rights, fosters exclusion, and threatens social cohesion, while also highlighting opportunities for effective intervention. The discussion will emphasise the need for multi-level, interdisciplinary responses that combine legal frameworks, educational programmes, technological tools, and civil society engagement. It will analyse how policy, community initiatives, and digital interventions can work together to prevent, mitigate, and respond to hate speech, balancing ethical considerations such as transparency, bias, accountability, and the preservation of freedom of expression. By linking extreme examples of dehumanisation with everyday prejudice, the session will offer a comparative framework to understand the mechanisms, causes, and consequences of harmful speech. It will highlight practical approaches to strengthen social inclusion, enhance public awareness, and foster resilience within communities. The session will provide a space to consider how global and local contexts interact in shaping both the expression of hate speech and responses to it. It will explore ethical, legal, educational, and technological dimensions of intervention, emphasising collaboration across sectors and disciplines. Attendees will leave with actionable knowledge to protect human rights, promote inclusive societies, and support communities in responding effectively to harmful rhetoric while fostering environments of respect, tolerance, and dignity.

**Speakers:**

- Anna Tatar, Anti-Migrant Sentiments and Hate Crimes, ‘NEVER AGAIN’ Association
- Noor Azizah, Dehumanized by Design: Hate Speech as a Tool of Rohingya Persecution
- Rohingya Maïyafuñor, Collaborative Network
- Jan Dąbkowski, Using AI Tools in Education to Prevent and Counter Hate Speech, Center for Citizenship Education (CCE)
- Alketa Cipi, Communication and training officer, No Hate Speech Network

**Moderator:**

- Coşkun Yorulmaz, Human Rights Lawyer, Solidarity with Others

**Time:** 16:00-17:00

**Venue:** Meeting Room 4 - Opera

**Title:** Destruction of Ukrainian Identity as State Policy: Soviet Practices and Modern Russian Aggression

**Convenor:** Media Initiative for Human Rights, Regional Center for Human Rights

**Working language:** English

**Summary:** For decades, the Soviet Union pursued a systemic policy of eradicating Ukrainian identity through repression, coercion, and fabricated criminal cases. Today, the Russian Federation continues these practices, targeting civilians, children, and prisoners of war with ideological indoctrination, torture, and judicial persecution. From “re-education camps” for children to criminal cases against adults labelled as “terrorists,” Russia uses methods to destroy Ukrainian identity and reshape future generations. This event will focus on two main dimensions of identity destruction: repressive practices used by the Russian Federation against Ukrainian citizens held in places of detention and instrumentalization of children, reshaping them to serve Russia’s imperial ambitions by preparing human resources for waging new wars. The event will feature personal testimonies from a former Ukrainian prisoner of war who endured torture and repression in Russian captivity. Key issues: - Eradication of Ukrainian identity: Soviet-era policies and their modern continuation, presented through MIHR’s research. - Repressive practices against Ukrainians in Russian detention, including torture, ideological coercion, and fabricated charges. - Russia’s deliberate policy to destroy the Ukrainian nation

in the occupied territories through the “re-education” of children. - Systematic, large-scale, and politically motivated persecution of Ukrainians amounting to crimes against humanity committed by Russia.

**Speakers:**

- Mariia Klymyk, Head of the Department for the Protection of the Rights of Servicemen and Their Families, Media Initiative for Human Rights
- Kateryna Rashevskaya, Legal Expert, Regional Center for Human Rights
- Hennadii Kharchenko, Historian, Serviceman of the Azov Brigade, Former POW

**Moderator:**

- Christopher D. Russell, ODIHR Rule of Law Officer

Time: **16:00-17:00**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 5 - Plenary**  
Title: Acceleration of civil society institutions in New Uzbekistan  
Convenor: Center for Analysis of Democratic Processes  
Working language: Russian

Summary: During the event, a presentation and discussion of the dynamics and trends in the development of civil society institutions in New Uzbekistan is expected.

## **Thursday, 9 October**

Time: **08:30-09:30**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 1 - Belweder**  
Title: Think Again: Freedom of Thought in the Age of AI — publication launch  
Convenor: OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights  
Working language: English

Summary: As governments navigate fast-moving developments in artificial intelligence, a core but often overlooked right demands urgent attention: freedom of thought. Freedom of thought safeguards individuals’ ability to think independently, form their own beliefs, make autonomous decisions and contribute with new perspectives, fostering creativity, innovation and resilient pluralistic societies. The right also encompasses the freedom to not reveal one’s thoughts, as well as freedom from coercion, from punishment for one’s thoughts, and from the impermissible modification of those thoughts through brain alteration or manipulation. States have a duty to create an enabling environment for the full realization of freedom of thought. To support states in this, ODIHR has developed a policy brief on the implications of artificial intelligence for freedom of thought, outlining recommendations for states to uphold this fundamental freedom today. The event will discuss the major implications of AI for our individual autonomy, how we live together, and our democracies.

**Opening remarks:**

- Dr. Tea Jaliashvili, First Deputy Director, OSCE/ODIHR

**Speakers:**

- Prof. Ahmed Shaheed, University of Essex, Former UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief
- Dr. Milena Costas Trascasas, Member of the UN Human Rights Council Advisory Committee, Rapporteur on neurotechnology and human rights

**Moderator:**

- Dr. Susan Kerr, Senior Adviser on Freedom of Religion or Belief, OSCE/ODIHR

**Presenter:**

- Ms. Delia Nita, Associate Officer on Freedom of Religion or Belief, OSCE/ODIHR

Time: **08:30-09:30**

Venue: **Meeting Room 2 - Saski**

Title: War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity in the Course of Russia's Aggression Against Ukraine

Convenor: Human Rights Center Memorial; Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group (KhPG)

Working language: English, Russian

Summary: Ukrainian human rights defenders from the Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group have collected testimonies of torture endured by Ukrainian prisoners held on the territory of the Russian Federation. These testimonies formed the basis of a submission under Article 15 of the Rome Statute to the International Criminal Court, alleging Russia's commission of crimes against humanity and war crimes. Russian human rights defenders from the Memorial Human Rights Defence Centre, during a monitoring mission to de-occupied territories of Ukraine, gathered evidence of Russia's violations of international humanitarian law. According to the defenders, Russia's perpetration of war crimes and crimes against humanity represents a continuation of policies and practices pursued by the Russian authorities for more than thirty years, beginning at least with the Chechen wars. For all these years, the impunity for past crimes has fuelled the commission of new ones. Both organizations – Ukrainian and Russian – have worked in close cooperation for many years. They are also active participants in the People First! campaign, which advocates for the release and return of Ukrainian civilian detainees, the exchange of prisoners of war, and the liberation of Russian political prisoners prosecuted for their anti-war position. The objective of this side-event is to draw attention to Russia's war crimes, which this time must not go unpunished, since Russia's impunity has been the root cause of the current war. The event also aims to highlight the plight of Ukrainians deprived of liberty – both prisoners of war and civilian hostages – who remain on Russian territory or in the temporarily occupied areas, held in cruel and inhuman conditions and subjected to constant torture.

**Speakers:**

- Yevgen Zakharov, Executive Director, Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group
- Natalia Morozova, Co-Chairperson, Memorial Human Rights Defence Centre

**Moderator:**

- Ana Farifonova, Coordinator of the International Justice Programme, Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights

Time: **08:30-09:30**

Venue: **Meeting Room 3 - Krolewski**

Title: Extremism in the OSCE area. Russian-Ukrainian Conflict. Human rights and the level of Hatred (2024-2025).

Convenor: European Center for Democracy Development

Working language: English

Summary: The ECDD's new biennial report focuses on the dynamics of hatred and radicalization in the OSCE region and analyses the measures taken by governments to combat extremism. How effective are these measures and are the rights of minorities respected, especially in the context of armed conflicts in Europe? We discuss emerging trends in this area and look at how counter-extremism policies will be shaped in the coming years, including in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. We will do this

presentation together with the International Council for Diplomacy and Dialogue - USA, specializing in the conflict's resolution.

**Speakers:**

- Dr. Valery Engel, Consultant of the U.N. Security Council Counterterrorism Office, ECDD President
- Dr. Stephen Bronner, Director of the International Council for Diplomacy and Dialogue-USA (ICDD-USA), Board of Governors Distinguished, Professor Emeritus of Political Science at Rutgers University, USA, Chair of Independent Experts Peace Initiatives (IEPI)

Time: **08:30-09:30**

Venue: **Meeting Room 4 - Opera**

Title: Protection of journalists and HRDs' digital rights while countering surveillance in the South Caucasus and Central Asia

Convenor: Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety

Working language: English

Summary: This side event will examine the increasing digital threats faced by journalists, media actors and HRDs in the South Caucasus and Central Asia, where online harassment, unlawful surveillance, and cyberattacks are frequently used to silence independent voices. Panellists will highlight specific challenges in the regions, including the misuse of spyware and data breaches, and assess their impact on press freedom, safety of journalists and HRDs, and democratic oversight. The discussion will also focus on concrete measures to enhance digital security, strengthen accountability mechanisms, and build international solidarity to safeguard journalists' digital rights against surveillance and repression.

**Speakers:**

- Emin Huseynov, IRFS, Azerbaijan
- Hovsep Khurshudyan, "Free Citizen" Civic Initiatives Support Center, Armenia
- Muhamadjon Kabirov, journalist and human rights defender, editor in chief of Azda TV, Tajikistan
- Diana Serebryannik, Rights and Freedoms of Turkmenistan's Citizens, Turkmenistan

Time: **08:30-09:30**

Venue: **Meeting Room 5 - Plenary**

Title: Political prisoners in Russia

Convenor: Permanent Delegation of Norway to the OSCE; Permanent Delegation of Sweden to the OSCE; Permanent Mission of Finland to the OSCE; Permanent Mission of Iceland to the OSCE; Permanent Mission of the Republic of Estonia to the OSCE; Permanent Mission of the Republic of Latvia to OSCE; Permanent Mission of the Republic of Lithuania to the International Organizations in Vienna; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark

Working language: English

Summary: The Vienna Mechanism on reports of arbitrary and unjust detentions in Russia was invoked in March 2024. Russia has still not responded substantially to the questions therein and continues its repression, targeting inter alia political opponents, media actors, human rights defenders, and other civil society actors through detention both domestically and transnationally. Russia's repression is systematic and continues to intensify, including by way of weaponizing legislation to silence dissent and target various segments of society. New legislation expanding the so-called foreign agents' law, liquidations of human rights organizations and politically motivated prosecutions of civil society representatives, and intimidation campaigns are all clear signs of a negative trend. In addition, the lack of effective

investigations and judicial remedies has denied victims justice and shielded perpetrators from accountability. Instead of protecting rights, the legal system is increasingly used to criminalize human rights defenders and silence anyone perceived as a threat to the regime. This event will focus on the increasing repression of political prisoners in Russia, how the groups mentioned above targeted by such repression are growing wider, and the deliberate use of legislation to target human rights defenders.

**Opening remarks:**

- Ambassador Ellen Svendsen, Permanent Delegation of Norway to the OSCE

**Speakers:**

- Sergei Davidis, Head of Political Prisoners Support Programme, HRC Memorial
- Pavel Chikov, Chair, Agora International Human Rights Group
- Polina Kurakina, International Litigation Lawyer, OVD-Info.

**Moderator:**

- Dave Elseroad, Head of Advocacy & Geneva Office, Human Rights House Foundation

Co-sponsors: Albania, Andorra, Belgium, Canada, Croatia, Czechia, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Switzerland, Ukraine and the United Kingdom

|                   |                                                                                                                                                      |
|-------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Time:             | <b>14:30-15:30</b>                                                                                                                                   |
| Venue:            | <b>Meeting Room 1 - Belweder</b>                                                                                                                     |
| Title:            | Securitization under scrutiny: The role of National Human Rights Institutions in strengthening human rights compliance of counter-terrorism measures |
| Convenor:         | OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights                                                                                             |
| Working language: | English                                                                                                                                              |

Summary: Counter-terrorism measures have expanded across the OSCE region and beyond, too often at the expense of human rights. The COVID-19 pandemic, ongoing migration flows and public protests have also all prompted governments to introduce restrictive measures in the name of security. This intensifying ‘securitization’ trend seriously undermines established human rights standards, the rule of law and democracy. As independent human rights bodies, national human rights institutions (NHRIs) are vital to safeguard human rights in the context of national security and counter-terrorism measures. Through independent oversight of laws, policies and actions, they help to strengthen the transparency, accountability and human rights-compliance of counter-terrorism efforts. Depending on their mandate, NHRIs can deal with individual cases, engage in litigation, monitor and assess proposed legislation, make recommendations, conduct research and raise awareness. However, NHRIs from the OSCE region need more capacity, knowledge and resources to address the burgeoning securitization issues affecting human rights and democracy. This event aims to raise awareness of the role of NHRIs in protecting human rights in the context of national security and securitization, with a focus on counter-terrorism. It will highlight the important role of NHRIs in independent oversight and as bridges between society and the state. It will consider experiences, challenges and solutions for addressing human rights concerns, also when authorities and public opinion support securitization rhetoric.

**Opening remarks:**

- Mr. Johannes Heiler, Senior Human Rights Adviser, ODIHR

**Speakers:**

- Ms. Alyson Kilpatrick, Chief Commissioner of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC), Member of the Board of the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI)
- Mr. Eric Töpfer, Senior Researcher and Policy Adviser, German Institute for Human Rights
- Mr. Thomas Dumortier, Legal Advisor, National Consultative Commission on Human Rights (CNCDH)

**Moderator:**

Ms. Priska A. Babuin, Human Rights Adviser, ODIHR

Time: **14:30-15:30**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 2 - Saski**  
Title: Media Freedom in Crises: Protecting Journalists and Bloggers in Central Asia  
Convenor: American Bar Association; Clooney Foundation for Justice; Committee to Protect Journalists  
Working language: English, Russian

Summary: Across many countries in Eurasia, press freedom and media independence face increasing challenges. In Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, governments have steadily relied on criminal prosecutions, harassment, and restrictive legislation to silence journalists and dismantle media outlets covering corruption, protests, or sensitive political issues. These measures not only violate fundamental rights enshrined in international instruments and OSCE commitments but also create a profound chilling effect on independent reporting and restrict the public's access to reliable information. This side event is co-organized by the American Bar Association's Center for Human Rights (ABA/CHR), Clooney Foundation for Justice's Trial Watch Initiative (CFJ), the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) and will examine the escalating threats to media freedom in these countries. Leading international and national experts will highlight emblematic cases of persecution, analyze regional patterns of repression, and offer concrete recommendations for OSCE members and civil society to strengthen protections for journalists and promote free, independent media as an essential pillar of democracy.

Time: **14:30-15:30**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 3 - Krolewski**  
Title: Human Rights in the Russian Federation  
Convenor: Human Rights House Foundation  
Working language: English

Summary: Over the past 12 months, the government of the Russian Federation has further consolidated its system of repression, systematically eliminating space for independent civil society, free expression, and dissent. In his March 2025 update to the UN Human Rights Council, the High Commissioner for Human Rights noted that "stringent laws have been adopted to stifle free expression, labelling critical voices as foreign agents or undesirable organisations. Many journalists and activists, including anti-war protestors, have faced harassment, arrest, or exile, resulting in the severe shrinking of dissent within the country." This repression has become increasingly codified through new legislation, making it not only pervasive but institutionalised and entrenched, too. Within this context, traditionally marginalised groups, and rights defenders from these communities, are particularly vulnerable and face systematic targeting by the authorities. The Supreme Court's 2023 labelled so-called "international LGBT movement" as extremist, it has led to raids on bookstores, removal of publications, and prosecution and arrest of individuals for years-old online posts and retroactive prosecution of individuals for years-old posts. In 2024, the Supreme Court banned a so-called "anti-Russian separatist movement" — which doesn't exist — followed by the inclusion on the "extremist" list of 55 organizations of Indigenous Peoples and ethnic minorities. In November 2024, 172 organisations, including Indigenous groups, were declared "terrorists", further targeting marginalised communities. Repression is intensified if you are Indigenous and queer, because people face double discrimination. This side event will examine the human rights situation facing two groups that have been historically marginalised in the Russian Federation: members of the LGBT+ community and Indigenous communities.



The panel will focus on the following key questions: - What is the landscape of repression facing the LGBT+ and indigenous communities in the Russian Federation? - How are traditionally marginalised communities targeted by the Russian authorities? - What steps can participating States take to support rights defenders from these communities?

**Speakers:**

- Victoria Maladaeva, Indigenous of Russia Foundation
- Yana Tanagasheva, International Committee of Indigenous Peoples of Russia
- Yekaterina Dikovskaya, Sphere Foundation
- Denis Oleinik, Coming Out LGBTQ+ group

**Moderator:**

- Dave Elseroad, HRHF

Time: **14:30-15:30**

Venue: **Meeting Room 4 - Opera**

Title: Guantánamo and the Forever Prisoners

Convenor: Institutet för Samhällsanalys (INSAN); Witness Against Torture

Working language: English

Summary: For more than two decades, the US has detained around 800 Muslim men and boys at the notorious Guantánamo military prison without trial, without charges, and stripped of their basic rights. Labelled “the worst of the worst, illegal enemy combatants,” they became invisible, stripped of rights, subjected to isolation, torture, and humiliation. Some remain imprisoned to this day, victims of a system built to bypass justice and evade accountability. Families were left in limbo, lives destroyed, voices silenced, while the world looked away. This event brings their stories to Poland, giving voice to those silenced for decades. Survivor Mansoor Adayfi will share firsthand experiences of life inside Guantánamo: the relentless monotony, the physical and psychological abuse, the hunger, the sleep deprivation, and the constant threat of violence. They will describe the struggle to maintain dignity in a place designed to break the human spirit, and the long shadows these years cast over their lives after release. We will examine the political and legal mechanisms that made Guantánamo possible, including the role of governments in bypassing law, using fear to justify cruelty, and creating a model of detention that defies international norms. The discussion will explore the ongoing fight for justice, rehabilitation, and recognition, highlighting how Guantánamo’s legacy continues to shape human rights debates worldwide, influencing other detention systems, and chilling freedoms everywhere. Through testimony, analysis, and dialogue, participants will confront uncomfortable truths about power, complicity, and the cost of silence. This is a rare opportunity to witness the human consequences of a “forever prison,” reflect on accountability, and engage with the broader struggle to defend human dignity in the face of systemic abuse. The event invites scholars, journalists, students, human rights advocates, and concerned citizens to bear witness, ask hard questions, and confront the structures that allowed Guantánamo to exist. It is a call to recognize injustice, resist silence, and remember that the fight for human rights requires courage, persistence, and the willingness to listen to the stories those in power would prefer remain untold.

**Speaker:**

- Mansoor Adayfi

Time: **16:00-17:00**

Venue: **Meeting Room 1 - Belweder**

Title: Ukraine Monitoring Initiative: Engaging with witnesses

Convenor: OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

Working language: English

Summary: Since the 2022 invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, ODIHR's Ukraine Monitoring Initiative (UMI) has interviewed more than 600 witnesses and survivors of violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. The UMI works with local experts on the ground in Ukraine to identify potential witnesses, verifying their suitability for interview to ensure that their testimony is relevant to the scope of the UMI and, crucially, that the interview will not harm them. Interviews are conducted by international monitors from different, often multi-disciplinary backgrounds. All are experienced in interviewing displaced people, victims of crimes or members of vulnerable groups. Operating in a two-person team, with a lead interviewer and second interviewer/note taker, together with an interpreter, they conduct two interviews per day, using a trauma-informed approach. The event intends to explain the work of UMI experts and monitors and, through their perspectives, provide insight on the experiences of witnesses. Discussion points will include the work of experts in identifying witnesses; witnesses' motivations for interview; challenges in identifying witnesses; the interview process and methodology; how we engage with witnesses before, during and after interviews; accountability; and the work of the UMI from their perspective.

**Introductory remarks:**

- Maria Telalian, Director of ODIHR

**Presentation:**

- Iurii Melnyk, UMI local expert Giacomo Cuscuna, UMI monitor

**Moderator:**

- Andrew Gardner ODIHR Acting Head of Human Rights

Time: **16:00-17:00**

Venue: **Meeting Room 2 - Saski**

Title: Inside the black box: pressure is increasing. Briefing by Russian human rights defenders

Convenor: Moscow Helsinki Group

Working language: English, Russian

Summary: For nearly four years now, Russia has been considered in international public debate exclusively in connection with the aggressive war it has unleashed in Ukraine. But just as the severe mass violations of rights within the country and their disregard by the international community in favour of economic interests led to a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, it is the development of the situation within Russia that will be decisive for the outcome of the war. The Russian authorities continue their assault on citizens' rights in order to maintain control over society and to pursue the war. Moscow Helsinki Group, Centre for Human Rights Protection "Memorial", Public Verdict Foundation, Crew against torture, Citizens' Watch, Centre de la protection Internationale Initiative invite you to a discussion on the recent developments of the situation in Russia. Although it is convenient to present the aggressor as a monolith, there are still many people in Russia who become victims of human rights violations on a daily basis, including because of their anti-war position, or their opposition to the system. These people are helped by human rights defenders who also continue to work inside the country. These human rights activists will talk: - about the current situation with political prisoners. Who and how protests against the authorities in Russia; - about new repressive legislation, ongoing degradation of legal institutions and destruction of the independent legal profession; - about restrictions on freedom of speech, expression, assembly and association; - about the use of legislation on extremism and terrorism to combat dissenters and to suppress any collective action; - about the growth of violence in society, particularly torture. In addition to bringing the audience up to date with the current developments, the panellists will discuss the prospects for using international instruments to protect human rights in Russia, which is rapidly isolating itself from the entire civilized world and turning into a black Pandora's box that can bring many more bad things to our world, ravaged by war and tragedies.

Time: **16:00-17:00**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 3 - Krolewski**  
Title: Promoting Human Rights and Civil Society through International Organizations for Development, Transparency, and Security  
Convenor: Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and the Rule of Law  
Working language: English, German, Polish, Russian

Summary: As documented by leading international human rights organizations, the situation of human rights and civil society in parts of the OSCE region has sharply deteriorated in recent years. Human rights defenders face persecution, while civil society organizations are banned, stigmatized as “foreign agents,” or subjected to politically motivated prosecutions, especially in Central Asia, the South Caucasus, and the Western Balkans. In this challenging environment, traditional international mechanisms have proven insufficient, prompting the search for new approaches. Development banks (WB, EBRD, ADB), international financial institutions, security-focused bodies (FATF, UN OCT), and initiatives promoting transparency and accountability (OECD, EITI) have increasingly integrated human rights and civil society safeguards into their standards and procedures. These shifts create new opportunities for advocacy through consultations, assessments, and engagement with civil society. At this side event, experts will present findings from an analysis of these institutions’ standards, policies, and practices, as well as their relevance to countries in the region. The discussion will highlight strategies for leveraging these mechanisms to strengthen human rights and civil society protections, with participation from OSCE states, international organizations, and civic actors.

**Speakers:**

- Aigul Kaptayeva, an independent expert in the field of non-profit law and civil society, including working on the implementation of the FATF Recommendations in Kazakhstan from 2019 (Kazakhstan)
- Maria Lobacheva, Program Director of the NGO “Echo”, member of the EITI International Board from civil society (Kazakhstan)
- Tatyana Zinovich, Acting Director of the Public Foundation “Center for Legal Policy Research” (Kazakhstan) Online
- Bhoomika Choudhury, Lawyer, Researcher and Expert on Business and Human Rights
- Tatyana Sedova, Director Transparency Accountability Consulting (Kazakhstan) Online
- Tolekan Ismailova, Director of Public association «Bir Duino Kyrgyzstan»
- Murat Karypov, Executive Director of Public association «Bir Duino Kyrgyzstan»
- Jacob Riemer, Second Executive Director Austausch e.V. (Germany)
- Mark Fodor, Defenders in Development campaign Coordinator in Coalition for Human Rights in Development
- Manana Cohlads Strategic Area Leader - Democratization and Human Rights CEE Bankwatch Network

**Moderator:**

- Yevgeniy Zhovtis, Chief Expert-Consultant of the KIBHR

Time: **16:00-17:00**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 4 - Opera**  
Title: Violations of international law: Illegal detention and captivity of Ukrainian prisoners of war and civilians  
Convenor: Free Russia Foundation  
Working language: English

**Summary:** Organizers: Free Russia Foundation “Tribunal for Putin” Initiative. This event is dedicated to examining the systematic practice of enforced disappearances carried out by Russia in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, as well as the practice of unlawful detention of Ukrainian citizens on the territory of RF. According to Article 7(1)(i) of the Rome Statute, enforced disappearances constitute a crime against humanity, and their widespread application by Russia demonstrates a deliberate policy aimed at suppressing resistance through fear and terror. The main targets: journalists, human rights defenders and civic activists, former members of the Ukrainian armed forces, civilians perceived as disloyal to the occupying regime. RF authorities continue to systematically violate international humanitarian law by subjecting Ukrainian POW and civilians to torture, isolation, and politically motivated charges. Documentation collected by the project Poshuk.Polon reveals tens of thousands of such cases, underscoring how Russia erases the line between combatants and non-combatants. Many victims have been subjected to torture, sexual violence, inhuman treatment, and denial of medical care, often leading to death or severe long-term health consequences. An additional instrument of repression has been the use of fabricated criminal cases and closed trials, systematically denying detainees the right to a fair trial and legal defence. Special attention will be devoted to the work of the “Tribunal for Putin” Initiative, which documents war crimes and crimes against humanity, including cases of unlawful deprivation of liberty of civilians and POW, and contributes to efforts aimed at locating and releasing such individuals. The panel discussion will feature: documented cases of torture and unlawful detention, analysis of fabricated legal proceedings against Ukrainian citizens, discussion of international legal mechanisms for holding Russia accountable, a mandatory Q&A session to ensure meaningful interaction with participants.

**Speakers:**

- Yuliia Bohdan, CLEAR: Centre of Law Enforcement Activities Research
- Olena Kuvaieva, Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union
- Vladlena Padun, Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union
- Vladimir Zhabankov, Head of Poshuk.Polon Project
- Christopher Hale, attorney specializing in atrocity crimes accountability

**Moderator:**

- Nataliia Yashchuk, Senior War Consequences Officer, Center for Civil Liberties

**Time:** 16:00-17:00

**Venue:** Meeting Room 5 - Plenary

**Title:** Journalists in Exile: Defending Press Freedom Beyond Borders

**Convenor:** Permanent Mission of the Republic of Lithuania to the International Organizations in Vienna; Permanent Delegation of Sweden to the OSCE; Permanent Representation of France to the OSCE; Permanent Representation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the OSCE; Delegation of Canada to the OSCE; Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media

**Working language:** English, Russian

**Summary:** Side event organised by the OSCE participating States that are members of the Informal Group of Friends on Safety of Journalists (Austria, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom) and the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media. Background: Increasing attacks on media, violence, political repressions, and prosecution of critical voices, in violation of international human rights law and OSCE commitments, have forced countless journalists and media actors into exile. In some OSCE participating States and beyond, the reality is that independent information now comes primarily from media operating in exile. However, even in exile, their safety is not guaranteed. Journalists, especially those who continue covering political developments in their home countries, often

face threats of violence, harassment, and intimidation, including cyberattacks, surveillance, and disinformation campaigns. Many remain under constant pressure due to fear of reprisals against their relatives, fear of being extradited or even kidnapped or killed. Labelling journalists as “foreign agents” and media outlets as “undesirable organization”, initiating criminal proceeding against media actors - it’s just a few tactics used by repressive states to discredit the work of exiled journalists, coerce them into silence, or punish them for their work. This side event will provide an opportunity to discuss the challenges and risks faced by journalists in exile, especially due to continued threats from the authorities of the countries they fled and seek to identify strategies and good practices to support them in continuing their work.

**Opening remarks:**

- Ambassador Jan Braathu, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (via ZOOM)

**Speakers:**

- Kirill Martynov, Editor-in-Chief, Novaya Gazeta Europe
- Anna Kapushenko, Editor-in-Chief, Kloop Media
- Sabine Sile, Founder, Media Hub Riga
- Pierre Dagard, Head of Advocacy, Reporters Without Borders

**Moderator:**

- Philippe Tremblay, Director of the Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media

## **Friday, 10 October**

|                   |                                                                                                                          |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Time:             | <b>08:30-09:30</b>                                                                                                       |
| Venue:            | <b>Meeting Room 1 - Belweder</b>                                                                                         |
| Title:            | Beyond the Hague: the OSCE and current challenges in securing justice for victims of war crimes                          |
| Convenor:         | OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina; OSCE Mission in Kosovo; OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights |
| Working language: | English, Russian                                                                                                         |

Summary: Trials beyond international tribunals are essential to ensuring accountability for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. They bring proceedings closer to victims and help rebuild the institutions necessary for lasting reconciliation and sustainable peace. The number of war crimes trials outside of international tribunals in the OSCE region has risen in the past 20 years, particularly in South Eastern Europe as cases have been transferred from international tribunals to non-international or hybrid courts. Meanwhile, in Ukraine war crimes-related trials are beginning even as the war continues. OSCE monitoring highlights that courts in jurisdictions affected by conflict face various challenges in securing accountability and redress for victims, including backlogs, limited judicial and prosecutorial capacities, difficulties in investigating and prosecuting cases where perpetrators are not present, and legal and institutional difficulties in protecting victims, including guaranteeing the rights of victims and using witness and victim testimony. These challenges have led to alternative approaches, such as in absentia trials and transitional justice mechanisms. Understanding this experience is of significant value to current and future efforts to seek accountability for international crimes outside of international justice systems. This event will discuss the OSCE’s work on war crimes cases, map obstacles to securing justice for victims, and identify how the OSCE and civil society partners can help improve the processing of war crime cases.

**Speakers:**

- Alexandra Link, Legal Advisor, OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina

- Pascale Langlais, Senior Legal Officer, OSCE Mission in Kosovo
- Arie Mora, Advocacy Manager, Ukrainian Legal Advisory Group

**Moderator:**

- Christopher Russell, Legal Officer, ODIHR

Time: **08:30-09:30**  
 Venue: **Meeting Room 2 - Saski**  
 Title: Central Asia: Kleptocracies are Systemic Human Rights Abusers and a Cause of Global Instability  
 Convenor: Freedom for Eurasia; Crude Accountability  
 Working language: English, Russian

Summary: Side event will explore how corruption and entrenched kleptocratic practices in Central Asia contribute to widespread human rights abuses, imprisonment of political opponents, suppression of civil society and pose threat to the democratic West. By highlighting the chain from corruption → kleptocracy → human rights violations, the event will show how state capture not only undermines governance but also perpetuates repression and instability across the globe. It will demonstrate how Central Asian kleptocratic regimes bolster their larger partners, such as China and Russia, laundering illicit funds, evading sanctions, cracking down on civil society, and implementing transnational campaigns to undermine the rule of law.

**Speakers:**

- Thomas Mayne, Director at Freedom for Eurasia. His research focuses on anti-money laundering legislation, grand corruption and kleptocracy. He is a Research Fellow at the University of Exeter researching linkages between Russia's foreign policy and illicit financial flows, a former Visiting Fellow at the Royal Institute of International Affairs, Chatham House. For 12 years he was a Senior Campaigner for an anti-corruption NGO Global Witness. He co-authored *Indulging Kleptocracy: Postcommunist Elites and Corruption in 2024*
- Leila Seibtbek, an exiled lawyer, anti-corruption and human rights advocate from the Kyrgyz Republic, who was granted asylum in Austria in 2021. She is a Chairwoman of Freedom for Eurasia, which documents and reports on human rights abuses and corruption in Eurasia
- Kate Watters, co-founder and executive director of Crude Accountability, an environmental and human rights nonprofit, founded in 2003. Since the early 1990s she reports on environment, oil and gas, and human rights in Azerbaijan, the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Caspian and Black Sea regions and Russia. Kate holds an MA in Russian Area Studies from Georgetown University and a BA in Russian literature from UMASS-Amherst
- Oliver Bullough, an award-winning journalist, author of *Butler to the World: How Britain Became the Servant of Tycoons, Tax Dodgers, Kleptocrats and Criminals*, and *Moneyland: Why Thieves and Crooks Now Rule the World and How to Take It Back*. His articles on issues of financial transparency and corruption appear in the Guardian, Sunday Times, GQ magazine. He also writes a weekly Oligarchy Newsletter for Coda Story.

Time: **08:30-09:30**  
 Venue: **Meeting Room 3 - Krolewski**  
 Title: Exile Is Not Safety: Countering Transnational Repression of Journalists  
 Convenor: Justice for Journalists Foundation; Norwegian Helsinki Committee  
 Working language: English

Summary: Journalists who flee persecution are often assumed to be safer abroad. Yet, across Europe and beyond, exiled and diaspora media workers are increasingly subject to transnational repression—digital surveillance, smear campaigns, extradition requests, intimidation of family members, and even physical attacks outside their home countries. These practices not only silence critical voices but also undermine international protection systems and press freedom globally. In recent years, transnational repression has emerged as a pressing global concern. Governments and powerful non-state actors are increasingly extending their coercive measures beyond borders to silence dissenting voices abroad. Journalists, particularly those who report on corruption, human rights violations, and governance failures, are among the most targeted. While much attention has been paid to the safety of journalists within national contexts, less focus has been placed on how threats transcend borders. Exiled or diaspora journalists are often presumed to be safer outside their home countries; however, they increasingly face risks such as online harassment campaigns, coordinated across jurisdictions, misuse of international legal mechanisms (Interpol red notices, extradition requests), physical intimidation, abduction, or assassination abroad, pressure on families and colleagues who remain in the home country and restrictive host-country policies that exacerbate vulnerability. This side event will bring together policymakers, journalists, international organizations, and civil society, highlight concrete cases and patterns of transnational repression targeting journalists, discuss the gaps in protection mechanisms at national and international levels, explore practical solutions to enhance the safety and resilience of journalists in exile and mobilize support for stronger, coordinated responses by states and international bodies. Panel discussion: Perspectives from exiled journalists and legal experts.

**Speakers:**

- Alesya Marokhovskaya (Russia), Journalist
- Masha Mayers (Russia), Journalist
- Defense Attorney (Russia)
- Journalist in exile (Azerbaijan)
- Barish Altintash (Türkiye), Journalist and human rights defender
- Scholar, Uyghur rights activist in exile in Europe (China)

**Moderator:**

- Vafa Fati-zada (JFJ Trustee)

Time: **08:30-09:30**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 4 - Opera**  
Title: **“100 Days after Putin”: Presentation of a Policy Roadmap for a Transition to a Free and Democratic Russia**  
Convenor: **Human Rights Center Memorial**  
Working language: **English**

Summary: A post-Putin Russia is inevitable. While that moment may provide an opening and a chance for Russia’s democratic transition, enormous effort will be required to make sure that the country does not miss the opportunity to confront the catastrophic legacy of Putinism, characterized by mass violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, many of which amount to international crimes, including in connection to the war of aggression against Ukraine. History suggests that Russia’s pathway will likely be determined in the first weeks — or even days — following the demise of the current regime. The time to think about that immediate post-Putin future is now. Among other factors, any progress towards Russia’s potential democratic transition will likely depend on whether European countries will be willing and able to use their leverage vis-à-vis the Russian authorities. How should Europe deal with a post-Putin Russia? What should it demand from Russia’s transitional government to ensure a just and lasting peace in Europe? “100 Days after Putin” is a legal policy project released in 2025 and authored by a group of Russian experts under the auspices of Memorial Human Rights Defence

Center that addresses these crucial questions. The authors offer a checklist of essential policy recommendations needed to achieve just and lasting peace, democracy-building, and accountability. At the event, they will discuss the project's key takeaways and how those might inform European policy towards Russia.

**Speakers:**

- Nikolai Bobrinsky, expert in transitional justice, co-author of "100 Days after Putin"
- Grigory Vaypan, expert in constitutional law, international law, and human rights; co-author of "100 Days after Putin"

**Moderator:**

- Tamilla Imanova, Lawyer, Memorial Human Rights Defence Center.

Time: **08:30-09:30**

Venue: **Meeting Room 5 - Plenary**

Title: Two Years of Rule of Law Restoration in Poland: Between Paralysis and Transition

Convenor: Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights

Working language: English

Summary: One of the key promises of the governing majority elected in Poland in 2023 was to restore the rule of law and reintroduce democratic standards. This process, however, has been marked by institutional paralysis and political polarisation. Without the possibility of adopting legislative reforms to reverse some of the most drastic changes introduced by the previous government—such as strengthening guarantees of judicial independence—the governing majority has been forced to rely on temporary measures and policy-based solutions. The Polish experience illustrates the limits of democratic transition when confronted with obstacles deeply rooted in the laws adopted with violation of the Constitution and political capture of the independent institutions as well as the risks posed by sharp political divides. During the discussion, invited experts will provide a brief update on the current state of play in the rule of law restoration process and reflect on the role of international standards in guiding democratic transitions.

**Speakers:**

- Maciej Nowicki, President of the Board of the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights
- Marcin Szwed, Ph. D., Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, University of Warsaw
- Krzysztof Izdebski, Director for Advocacy and Development at the Stefan Batory Foundation
- Patryk Wachowiec, Member of the Board of the Civil Development Forum Foundation (FOR)

**Moderator:**

- Zuzanna Nowicka, Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, University of Warsaw

Time: **14:30-15:30**

Venue: **Meeting Room 1 - Belweder**

Title: Trial monitoring - an effective tool for supporting justice reform and judicial accountability.

Convenor: OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

Working language: English

Summary: Trial monitoring is an effective tool for supporting justice reform, safeguarding fair trial rights and promoting transparency and accountability within the judicial system. This event will discuss experiences of trial monitoring conducted by ODIHR, some OSCE Field Offices and civil society organizations, raising awareness of ODIHR's trial monitoring methodology and promoting trial monitoring as a tool for building public trust in the judiciary, enhancing respect for fair trial rights, and



strengthening accountability mechanisms. The event will provide a short introduction to ODIHR's trial monitoring methodology and an overview of ODIHR's work in this area, with examples from ODIHR's most recent trial monitoring initiatives, alongside ongoing monitoring by CSOs in Ukraine. The event will consider how trial monitoring can be effective in extraordinary situations or high-profile cases, identifying both strengths and systemic weaknesses within the criminal justice system. It will also highlight the OSCE's extensive experience in monitoring war crime cases and how trial monitoring can contribute to promoting accountability, upholding the rule of law and ensuring respect for fair trial rights in conflict-related cases, recognizing the crucial role of CSOs in this field, including their efforts in monitoring war crime cases.

**Speakers:**

- Mr Alberto Pasquero, Lawyer, Trial Monitoring Expert
- Judge Katica Artuković, President of Cantonal Court Siroki Brijeg, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Ms Oksana Rasulova, Coordinator of trial monitoring activities, Media Initiative for Human Rights in Ukraine (MIHR)

**Moderator:**

- Karine Simonsen, Rule of Law Officer, ODIHR

Time: **14:30-15:30**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 2 - Saski**  
Title: Bialiatiski, Kalesnikava and Hundreds More: How to free Belarus Political Prisoners?  
Convenor: Human Rights Center Viasna  
Working language: English, Russian

Summary: Five years after the 2020 crackdown, the picture is grim: nearly 3,000 political prisoners have already served prison terms, while over 1,200 remain behind bars — among them Nobel laureate Ales Bialiatiski and opposition leader Maria Kalesnikava. The key question today is not only why they are in prison — but how they can be released. What options do political prisoners in Belarus have to regain their freedom? Evidence shows that pressure and isolation have not worked; instead, the regime has consolidated, but created a field for diplomacy. What has worked, are diplomatic efforts, humanitarian negotiations and targeted concessions. The United States has already engaged in this process — but what role will Europe play? This side-event will bring together testimonies from human rights defenders from HRC “Viasna”, former political prisoners and relatives of those still jailed and the Coalition for release of political prisoners launched last year to push for humanitarian track. Together, we will discuss why vulnerable groups cannot wait, and how international actors — including the OSCE — can build a path to release.

Time: **14:30-15:30**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 3 - Krolewski**  
Title: Denying a Fair Trial as an Atrocity Crime during Russia's War against Ukraine  
Convenor: Human Rights Centre ZMINA  
Working language: English

Summary: In the context of Russia's ongoing war against Ukraine, the denial of a fair trial has emerged as a deliberate tool of oppression. Ukrainian civilians and prisoners of war in both occupied territories and the Russian Federation face systemic violations of their most basic legal rights, turning courts into instruments of persecution. These court proceedings do not meet the standards of the right to a fair trial and show signs of international crimes. Courts in both the Russian Federation and the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine ignore the context of the international armed conflict in cases involving

the prosecution of Ukrainian illegally detained civilians and prisoners of war. These policies are based on political or discriminatory motives, and the courts controlled by the Russian Federation in such cases do not guarantee fair justice. The media controlled by the Russian Federation authorities are effectively part of the policy of such judicial persecution. Within the framework of the Warsaw Human Dimension Conference, the Human Rights Centre ZMINA and Media Initiative for Human Rights will present the unique thematic research based on monitoring and analysis of hundreds of court sessions from several criminal proceedings. The following issues will be addressed: - The denial of the right to a fair trial in the occupied territories of Ukraine and an overview of the cases, procedural violations and sentences; - Prospect for investigating and prosecuting the denial of the right to a fair trial as a grave breach of international law – war crime and crime against humanity (the crime of persecution). This event seeks to shed light on this widespread practice, exploring its mechanisms, impact, and avenues for accountability.

**Speakers:**

- Ms. Viktoria Nesterenko, Project Manager at Human Rights Centre ZMINA (Ukraine)
- Ms. Lyubov Smachylo, Head of the Analytical Department, Media Initiative for Human Rights (MIHR) (Ukraine)
- Mr. Sergiu Ostaf, Director of the Resource Centre for Human Rights (Moldova)
- Mr. Maksym Butkevych, human rights advocate, journalist, Co-Founder of the Human Rights Centre ZMINA, and former prisoner of war who was wrongfully convicted and spent over two years in Russian captivity (Ukraine)
- Mr. Oleg Gushchyn, Representative of the Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War (Ukraine)

Time: **14:30-15:30**

Venue: **Meeting Room 4 - Opera**

Title: Trials of Conscience: How the criminal justice system is instrumentalized against dissent in Georgia

Convenor: Netherlands Helsinki Committee

Working language: English

Summary: After Georgia's 2024 parliamentary elections, the ruling Georgian Dream party suspended the country's EU accession process, triggering nationwide protests. The authorities responded with systematic human rights violations, including pervasive torture. A particularly severe dimension of the crackdown has been the instrumentalization of the criminal justice system against demonstrators. Numerous criminal cases against activists detained during the November–December 2024 and April–May 2024 waves of protest have been actively prosecuted in court. The use of criminal arrests linked to protests has sought criminalizing peaceful assembly and significantly restricting freedom of expression. As of now, around 70 individuals face criminal charges related to these protests. The charges, punitive measures, and broader criminal justice policy of the Georgian Dream government reveal a consistent pattern of political persecution against dissenting voices. The event will present the latest trial-monitoring findings by the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association, exposing how the state uses prosecutions to silence dissent. We will also examine broader human rights concerns, including restrictions on independent media coverage of court proceedings. The panel will raise a central question: What concrete steps can the OSCE, and participating States take to meaningfully challenge systematic attacks on fundamental rights and freedoms in Georgia, and ensure accountability?

**Speakers:**

- Tamar Oniani, Georgian Young Lawyers' Association
- Giorgi Burjanadze, Civil Society Foundation
- Mamuka Andghuladze, Media Advocacy Coalition

**Moderator:**

- Dinara Gagoshidze, Netherlands Helsinki Committee

Time: **14:30-15:30**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 5 - Plenary**  
Title: The Rule of Law in Poland (2018-2025): From Crisis to Reconstruction – Lessons learned for the OSCE region  
Convenor: Ministry of Justice of Poland  
Working language: English

Summary: This event analyses the dynamic evolution of the rule of law crisis in Poland between 2018 and 2025 and the subsequent process of overcoming it. During this period, systemic changes to the judiciary, affecting the National Council of the Judiciary and the Supreme Court, undermined the fundamental right of citizens to an independent court. A key tool of pressure on judges was the activity of the Disciplinary Commissioners, who initiated hundreds of disciplinary proceedings against judges defending judicial independence, applying European law, and questioning the legality of changes to the justice system. This created a significant “chilling effect” and led to a profound dispute with EU institutions, reflected in rulings by the Court of Justice of the EU and the European Court of Human Rights. The presentation will outline the stages of rebuilding the standards of a democratic state governed by the rule of law. It will cover actions taken by Poland after 2023 to restore constitutional order, such as a package of legislative reforms and joining the European Public Prosecutor's Office. The analysis will focus on the role played by international institutions, including the European Commission, the Council of Europe, and the OSCE, whose recommendations became a reference point for reforms. The meeting will serve as a platform for discussing the lessons learned from the Polish crisis. We will consider what mechanisms can more effectively protect the rule of law and human rights in the future. The lecture is addressed to diplomats and civil society representatives, offering insight into the complexity of defending and rebuilding democracy.

**Speakers:**

- Judge Dariusz Mazur, the Undersecretary of State at the Ministry of Justice
- Judge Marta Kożuchowska-Warywoda, the Director of the Department of Personnel and Organization of Common and Military Courts at the Ministry of Justice
- Judge Dominik Czeszkiewicz, the Director of the Department of Administrative Supervision at the Ministry of Justice

Time: **16:00-17:00**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 1 - Belweder**  
Title: Human rights infrastructure as a foundational element in countering backsliding on gender equality  
Convenor: OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights  
Working language: English

Summary: This event will raise awareness about the importance of collaboration and networking for effective responses to backsliding on gender equality, particularly with human rights defenders (HRDs) and civil society organizations (CSOs). The event will explore how the systems, institution and legal frameworks that support and protect human rights contribute to addressing and reversing backsliding on gender equality. There will be contributions from HRDs, CSOs, national human rights institutions and representatives of international organizations. Participants will be invited to complete a short survey on suggestions for collaboration on the topic. The results will be discussed during the session alongside other ideas and examples of using human rights infrastructure in this context.

**Speakers:**

- Dr Tea Jaliashvili, First Deputy Director, ODIHR
- Representative of UN Women Europe and Central Asia Regional Office
- Igor Jadrovski, Member of the Commission for prevention and protection against discrimination
- Mariam Gavatdze, Human Rights Lawyer 5. Claudia Zygmunt, International Human Rights Lawyer

**Moderators:**

- Sanja Nikolin and Aleksandar Sekulic, ODIHR

Time: **16:00-17:00**

Venue: **Meeting Room 2 - Saski**

Title: **Voices Behind Bars: Political Imprisonment Across the OSCE Participating States**

Convenor: **Norwegian Helsinki Committee; Justice for Journalists Foundation**

Working language: **English, Russian**

Summary: Politically motivated prosecutions strike at the core of OSCE commitments to human rights, rule of law, and democratic pluralism. Repressions against dissent, suppression of freedom of the press, persecution of outspoken journalists and lawyers, and the existence of many political prisoners are a sad reality for several OSCE participating states. International monitoring, legal aid, medical attention for prisoners, and coordinated diplomatic pressure remain essential tools to protect those unjustly detained. Political prisoners highlight the gap between OSCE human rights commitments and practice, making their plight a pressing concern for democracy and human rights. In Russia, thousands are jailed for peaceful expression under “extremism,” “high treason,” and “foreign agent” laws. In Belarus, hundreds of opposition members and civic activists, including Nobel laureate Ales Bialiatski, remain imprisoned in harsh conditions. Georgia has seen selective prosecutions of opposition leaders and critics, while Azerbaijan routinely jails journalists, activists, and human-rights defenders on fabricated charges. Across Central Asia—especially in Tajikistan and Turkmenistan—repression leaves almost no space for dissent, and Türkiye continues to imprison journalists and opposition politicians on dubious charges. Many governments have also driven out independent lawyers, denying political prisoners access to defense. This event will feature experts, human rights defenders, lawyers, colleagues, and family members of those who have been imprisoned for speaking the truth. It will explore how the OSCE and its member states can respond and help break this cycle of persecution. Refreshments will be provided.

**Speakers:**

- Ruslan Myatiev, Turkmen journalist and human rights defender
- Barish Altintas, Human Rights Lawyer, Türkiye
- Nino Tlashadze, Human Rights Center, Georgia
- Samad Rahimli, Defence lawyer, Azerbaijan
- Marius Fossum, NHC Regional Representative in Central Asia
- Bakhytzhana Toregozhina, Human Rights Defender, Kazakhstan

**Moderator:**

- Anna Zamejc, political analyst

Time: **16:00-17:00**

Venue: **Meeting Room 3 - Krolewski**

Title: **Key trends in security threats in the Central Asian region, including barriers to SDG development in the case of systematic violations by the authorities of Article 19 of ICCPR**

Convenor: **Human Rights Movement Bir Duino-Kyrgyzstan**

Working language: **English, Russian**

Summary: Format: Panel discussion with moderated dialogue and Q&A. The side event, organized by the human rights organization Bir Duino Kyrgyzstan will provide a platform to examine the evolving security landscape in Central Asia through the lens of human rights and sustainable development. While the region faces traditional security risks such as violent extremism, border tensions, and climate-induced disasters an equally significant but less acknowledged threat emerges from the systematic violations of fundamental freedoms, particularly the right to freedom of expression as enshrined in Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Speakers will include human rights defenders, civil society representatives, and international experts who will analyze the consequences of shrinking civic space for regional security and SDG advancement.

Director of Bir Duino Kyrgyzstan Tolekan Ismailova will present assessment of the current human rights situation in Kyrgyzstan and the wider Central Asian region. Investigative journalist Adil Turdukulov will raise the impact of propaganda on secure development in Central Asia and outcomes of the monitoring mission in Ukraine and Moldova. Director of Centrul de Investigatii Jurnalistice Cornelia Cozonac will present the report on “Parliamentary elections in the Republic of Moldova, under siege: how Russian propaganda and new electoral corruption schemes work and how human rights are affected”. Coordinator of Defenders in Development Mark Fodor will speak on the topic “The Role of Civic Space and Freedom of Expression in Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals: A Global Perspective”. Second Executive Director of Austausch e.V. Jacob Riemer will share the global assessments of shrinking civic space in Central Asia. Regional Coordinator for Asia, Coalition for Human Rights and Development Medea Turashvili will speak about the role of Civil Society in Advancing Human Rights and Sustainable Development in Asia. Expert on promotion of gender equality Mika Okinova from Qun Jelesi feminist queer collective will present the report on the topic “From traditional values to restricted voices: freedom of expression and SDG challenges in Kyrgyzstan for LGBT+ rights.” Executive Director of Bir Duino Kyrgyzstan Murat Karypov will speak about the consequences of the law ‘On foreign representatives in the Kyrgyz Republic and implications for civic space.

**Speakers:**

- Tolekan Ismailova, Director of Bir Duino Kyrgyzstan
- Adil Turdukulov, Investigative journalist
- Cornelia Cozonac, Director of Centrul de Investigatii Jurnalistice
- Mark Fodor, Coordinator of Defenders in Development
- Jacob Riemer, Second Executive Director of Austausch e.V.
- Medea Turashvili, Regional Coordinator for Asia, Coalition for Human Rights and Development
- Mika Okinova, Expert on promotion of gender equality from Qun Jelesi feminist queer collective
- Murat Karypov, Executive Director of Bir Duino Kyrgyzstan

**Moderator:**

- Kirill Koroteev, international lawyer

Time: **16:00-17:00**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 4 - Opera**  
Title: Children at the centre: advancing democracy throughout childhood  
Convenor: International Community: Internationale Politik für junge Profis  
Working language: English

Summary: The aim of the event is to explore how OSCE can advance the quality of modern democracies through children’s protection. In order to create an inclusive side event, the panel will be preceded by a

series of preparatory activities such as online surveys designed to provide contextual insights. Questions for the panellists will be gathered through the International Community NGO's social media channel, ensuring that voices from civil society and young people are incorporated in the discussion. The panel will unfold through a dynamic format, alternating between interviews with speakers and moments of public engagement. The first session will focus on questions submitted during the pre-phase, allowing the audience to connect with the speakers directly. A short interlude will follow, offering participants insights into OSCE's achievements in protecting children as a way of contextualizing its role in safeguarding democracy and human rights. The discussion will then turn to the importance of putting children at the centre of modern democracies and politics, followed by a break highlighting public awareness of the situation of children in Ukraine. The final part of the debate will address the obstacles to children's protection in the OSCE area and possible contributions from civil society and international organizations. The event will conclude with an interactive break involving gadgets, photos, and an open Q&A session, giving space for participants to voice their concerns and reflections. This side event seeks not only to shed light on the ongoing humanitarian crisis affecting children in the OSCE area, particularly in Ukraine, but also to propose constructive avenues for advancing the role of children in the democratic development of our societies. By emphasizing the connection between child protection and the resilience of democratic systems, the event will contribute to the OSCE's mission of ensuring comprehensive security, respect for human rights, and the promotion of peace across the region.

**Speakers:**

- Anna Vashchuk, UA Mental Help Foundation
- Valeria Sereda, ZDOROVİ
- Nataliia Tulinova, ZDOROVİ
- Anna Popczyńska, Europa Experience in Warsaw
- Emma Marinkevich, President, NGO International Parliament of mothers

**Moderator:**

- Costanza Allegri

**Support:**

- Natalia Todoruk

Time: **16:00-17:00**

Venue: **Meeting Room 5 - Plenary**

Title: Transnational Repression in Belarus: A Brutal Tool of the Persecution of Dissent by the Lukashenka Regime'

Convenor: Embassy of Belgium - Delegation of Flanders

Working language: English

Summary: Presentation of a new research report by iSANS on the political repression by Lukashenka regime co-organised by the Embassy of Belgium - Delegation of Flanders.

**Speakers:**

- Vlad Kobets, iSANS executive director
- Dr Natasza Krawczuk, iSANS senior researcher
- Yuri Dzhibladze, iSANS Head of human rights and rule of law unit
- Leanid Marozau, Advisor on legal affairs to Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, head of legal department of Svitlana's office

## **Monday, 13 October**

Time: **08:30-09:30**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 1 - Belweder**  
Title: Launch of ODIHR's updated hate crime training for police and prosecutors – building on 20 years of practice across the OSCE region  
Convenor: OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights  
Working language: English

Summary: OSCE participating States have recognized that hate crimes pose a threat to security, which, if not properly addressed, may give rise to conflict and violence on a wider scale. To address this threat, they have committed to strengthen the criminal justice response, including professional training and capacity-building for police, prosecutors and the judiciary. To support these efforts, ODIHR developed its flagship Training Against Hate Crimes for Law Enforcement (TAHCLE) and Prosecutors and Hate Crimes Training (PAHCT), which are designed to improve responses to hate crimes by law enforcement and prosecutors to identify, investigate and prosecute hate crimes. Since launching in 2012 the TAHCLE Programme has been delivered in almost 20 countries, while PAHCT, introduced in 2014, has been delivered in full or in part in 15 countries. Drawing on 20 years of work with practitioners in the field, ODIHR has now updated the trainer's manuals for both programmes, and will make them available. This will enable broader access and encourage the development of national training programmes on hate crime, while ODIHR continues to provide direct assistance and support to participating States. This side event will highlight ODIHR's updated programmes and showcase national experiences from across the OSCE region, offering lessons learned.

### **Speakers:**

- Simona Jordanov, National Rule of Law Officer, OSCE Mission to Skopje
- Aleksandar Markoski, Public Prosecutor, Public Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of North Macedonia
- Marta Krasuska, Human Rights Expert, Polish Police HQ

### **Moderator:**

- Marharyta Zhesko, Hate Crime Officer, ODIHR

Time: **08:30-09:30**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 2 - Saski**  
Title: Racism and xenophobia in Russia: Pro-democracy resistance of ethnic minorities in a militarized country  
Convenor: Indigenous of Russia Foundation  
Working language: English, Russian

Summary: National minorities in Russia have long lived under pressure from policies of russification, forced assimilation and economic subjugation of Indigenous lands waged by the Russian Empire, inherited in the USSR, and now Vladimir Putin's regime. Today, minority communities face continued forced militarization, disproportionately used as expendable troops in Russia's aggression against Ukraine. While the government claims to uphold cultural diversity in a multi-ethnic state, its policies over the past two decades have consistently suppressed minority rights. This trajectory, which began with Putin's rise to power, culminated in the amended constitution that designates ethnic Russians as the "state-forming people" and Russian as the dominant language. Despite the existence of 21 ethnic republics and more than 190 languages, the state deliberately undermines national minorities and

restricts their rights to land, a clean environment, equal access to education and employment, as well as cultural and linguistic self-determination. These patterns normalize exclusion and stigmatization, entrench repression, and threaten the development of rights and freedoms, leaving ethnic minorities marginalized and vulnerable. The side-event will raise awareness among OSCE member states and civil society actors of the urgent need to address violations of national minority rights in Russia. It will also provide a platform for activists and experts to connect with policymakers and develop collaborative strategies for advocacy and protection for minority communities. The panel will focus on the following key questions: What are the immediate problems faced by national minorities in Russia? How can international organizations and civil society address these issues and protect the rights of national minorities in an authoritarian country? How do ethnic minorities develop new forms of protest, cultural revival and resistance despite the risk of repressions?

**Speakers:**

- Sargylana Kondakova, Free Yakutia Foundation
- Abubakar Yangulbaev, Chechen human rights lawyer
- Iliuza Mukhamedianova, social researcher from Bashkortostan
- Islam Belokiev, Chechen activist

**Moderator:**

- Zarina Mukanova, social researcher

Time: **08:30-09:30**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 3 - Krolewski**  
Title: Investigating War Crimes of Authoritarian Regimes  
Convenor: Union of Informed Citizens  
Working language: English

Summary: The role of investigative journalists in documenting and exposing war crimes has been growing year by year. However, in the OSCE region, such crimes are most often committed by undemocratic states, where independent journalism is either severely restricted or entirely suppressed. Thanks to technological advancements, investigative journalists are now increasingly able to uncover and verify war crimes even without direct access to the sites where they have taken place. In some cases, evidence emerges through the work of colleagues on the ground; in others, through testimonies of victims and witnesses, or the analysis of satellite imagery and other open-source materials. These tools and methods are expanding the possibilities for remote investigations, making accountability efforts more effective despite restrictions on press freedom. The Side Event will bring together investigative journalists who specialize in documenting war crimes to share how they conduct remote investigations, what challenges they face in the process, and what resources and support are needed to strengthen this vital work.

**Speakers:**

- Stanislau Ivashkevich, Head of the Belarusian Investigative Center (Belarus) “Western supplies to the Russian military, Russian war crimes against Ukrainians committed in Ukraine and Belarus”. The speech will focus on how Russian and Belarusian industries circumvent sanctions to maintain military production, highlighting new and less obvious sanction evasion schemes. It will also present findings from two war crimes investigations — the torture camp for Ukrainian POWs in Belarus and the use of leaked Belarusian hospital documents to investigate the Bucha crimes.
- Galyna Petrenko, Director, Detector Media NGO (Ukraine)
- Ani Grigoryan, Editor, CivilNetCheck (Armenia). The speech will highlight the importance of fact-checking during wartime and the role of new technologies that allow investigations to be carried out in areas inaccessible to journalists.



- Danylo Mokryk, Kyiv Independent (Ukraine) (to be confirmed)

**Moderator:**

- Daniel Ioannisyan, Program Coordinator, Union of Informed Citizens

Time: **08:30-09:30**  
 Venue: **Meeting Room 4 - Opera**  
 Title: Human Rights in Belarus  
 Convenor: PEN Belarus  
 Working language: English, Russian

Summary: In May, 38 participating States delivered a joint statement highlighting the “disregard of OSCE principles and commitments by the Belarusian authorities” and calling for the release of the more than 1,000 political prisoners held in the country. The June 2025 report by the UN Special Rapporteur on Belarus noted that “there is no sign of improvement in the human rights situation in Belarus” and referred to “large-scale politically motivated prosecutions, severe ill-treatment of prisoners (including prolonged incommunicado detention and gender-based violence against women prisoners), and repeated extensions of prison terms.” Against this backdrop, Belarusian authorities refused to invite OSCE participating States to observe the country’s January 2025 presidential election - the third time it has done so since the 2020 fraudulent presidential election. This side event will examine new reporting from independent Belarusian civil society and human rights organisations in the context of Belarus’ on-going human rights crisis. The panel will focus on the following key questions: What notable trends in public policy affecting human rights have independent civil society from Belarus tracked in the last 4 months? What are the challenges facing independent civil society and human rights defenders in Belarus and those working in exile? How can participating States meaningfully follow-up on the May 2025 joint statement and July 2024 Moscow Mechanism invocation on Belarus?

**Speakers:**

- Dzmitry Hlotau, Legal Initiative
- Ekaterina Deikalo, Belarusian Helsinki Committee
- Taciana Niadbaj, PEN Belarus
- Natallia Satsunkevich, Viasna

Time: **08:30-09:30**  
 Venue: **Meeting Room 5 - Plenary**  
 Title: The OSCE’s Role in Advancing the Global Guidelines for Countering Antisemitism  
 Convenor: United States Mission to the OSCE; United Kingdom Delegation to the OSCE; Embassy of Israel in Vienna; Permanent Mission of Ireland to the OSCE; Permanent Mission of the Republic of Latvia to OSCE; Permanent Mission of the Republic of Croatia to the OSCE, UN and International Organizations in Vienna; Embassy of the Slovak Republic; Permanent Mission of Romania to the International Organizations; Delegation of Canada to the OSCE; Permanent Mission of the Republic of Lithuania to the International Organizations in Vienna; Permanent Representation of France to the OSCE; Permanent Mission of the Czech Republic to the OSCE; Permanent Representation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the OSCE; Italian Delegation to the OSCE; Permanent Mission of the Republic of Poland to the OSCE in Vienna; Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the OSCE  
 Working language: English

Summary: The Global Guidelines for Countering Antisemitism, launched in July 2024, is a landmark international framework that can be implemented and adapted to a wide variety of national, regional, and cultural contexts in order to monitor and combat antisemitism. The purpose of the Guidelines is to generate a shared, broadly recognized – and legally non-binding – framework for action that would expand and strengthen international cooperation to counter antisemitism. This event will discuss how the OSCE – both as an organization and through the work of individual participating States – can advance the Guidelines.

Questions for discussion: • What are the challenges that Jewish communities face today? How have these evolved since October 7, 2023? • What should the OSCE’s role be in helping all participating States move toward endorsing the Guidelines? • How can/should the OSCE as an organization use the Guidelines in its counter antisemitism work? • What are the next steps participating States should take after endorsing the Guidelines? Refreshments will be served.

**Opening remarks:**

- Ambassador David Roet, Permanent Representative of Israel to the OSCE

**Speakers:**

- Jonathan Boyd, Institute for Jewish Policy Research
- Eva-Esther Sobotka, EU Fundamental Rights Agency
- Cherrie Daniels, Office of the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism, U.S. Department of State

**Moderator:**

- Rabbi Andrew Baker, OSCE CiO Personal Representative on Combating Antisemitism

**Closing remarks:**

- Charge d’affaires Katherine Brucker, U.S. Mission to the OSCE

|                   |                                                                                                                               |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Time:             | <b>13:30-14:30</b>                                                                                                            |
| Venue:            | <b>Meeting Room 1 - Belweder</b>                                                                                              |
| Title:            | Exploring the achievements and challenges of the past and present: the future of Roma and Sinti human rights in the OSCE area |
| Convenor:         | OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights                                                                      |
| Working language: | English                                                                                                                       |

Summary: Over the past decade, the space for Roma and pro-Roma civil society organizations (CSOs) working on human rights monitoring and advocacy has significantly diminished. Organizations that once played a crucial watchdog role, documenting violations, litigating discrimination cases and holding institutions accountable, have increasingly shifted to service provision or have suspended operations. This is closely linked to insufficient and short-term funding, bureaucratic barriers, lack of political will and a lack of recognition and support for rights-based approaches. In light of this, ODIHR commissioned research to examine the state of Roma and Sinti human rights work across the OSCE area. The subsequent report outlines how broader democratic backsliding, coupled with persistent anti-Roma racism and the rise of far-right populism, continues to erode human rights protection for Roma and Sinti communities, including women and youth. This event will present and discuss the main findings, including the normalization of anti-Roma rhetoric, the weakening of Roma civil society and the need to rebuild the human rights infrastructure underpinning Roma advocacy. It will also explore concrete ideas for revitalizing rights-based Roma and Sinti activism, strengthening intersectional and grassroots responses and encouraging sustained donor and institutional engagement.

**Introductory remarks:**

- Dr. Tea Jaliashvili, First Deputy Director, OSCE/ODIHR [TBC]

**Speakers:**

- Dr. Margareta Matache, Lecturer and Director of the FXB Center Roma Program for Health and Human Rights at Harvard University
- Roland Ferkovics, Co-Manager and Project Officer of Roma Civil Monitor 2021-2025, Democracy Institute, Central European University
- Đorđe Jovanović, President, European Roma Rights Centre
- Simona Torotcoi, Advocacy officer, Global Forum of Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent

**Moderator:**

- Jashar Jasharov, Associate Programme Officer, Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues, OSCE/ODIHR

Time: **13:30-14:30**

Venue: **Meeting Room 2 - Saski**

Title: Panel: From Impunity to Expansion — How Repression Shapes Russia's Identity Politics and War

Convenor: Coming Out; North Caucasus SOS Crisis Group

Working language: English, Russian

Summary: In 2018, the OSCE documented systemic persecution, including abductions, torture, and killings of LGBTQ+ people in Chechnya. No investigation followed, setting a precedent of impunity for violent repression in Russia. Since then, persecution of LGBTQ+ individuals have escalated across the country and has been reframed as a central part of Russia's "defence of traditional values." This panel argues that the same logic of repression and identity construction—first normalized in the North Caucasus—was later expanded nationwide and finally exported as a justification for Russia's war against Ukraine. The discussion will connect:

- Impunity as precedent: how failure to address the 2018 crimes institutionalized permissibility of state violence.
- Identity through repression: how anti-LGBTQ+ narratives became the backbone of Russia's "anti-European" self-image.

The North Caucasus as laboratory: repression of LGBTQ+ people and women as a form of cultural self-defence under Russian dominance, later extended to the rest of Russia. - Nationalism and cultural violence: how identity in the Caucasus is shaped both by Moscow's cultural pressure and by internal mechanisms of exclusion, feeding narratives of repression that Moscow has since exported to the rest of Russia and weaponized in its war against Ukraine.

**Speakers:**

- Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Benedek, OSCE expert, author of the 2018 Moscow Mechanism report on LGBTQ+ persecution in Chechnya: Impunity and lack of follow-up on the report's findings and recommendations
- Lucy Shtein, Crisis Group North Caucasus SOS: Up-to-date insight on the situation with human rights violations in the North Caucasus
- Svetlana Anokhina, Human Rights Group Marem: Women's rights in the North Caucasus; voice from the region on nationalism, cultural violence, and the internal logic of repression
- Ksenia Mikhailova, LGBTQ+ Group Coming Out: Russian propaganda and "traditional values" narratives used to justify the war in Ukraine

**Moderator:**

- Ana Farifonova, Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights

Time: **13:30-14:30**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 3 - Krolewski**  
Title: Alarming Human Rights Situation in Azerbaijan  
Convenor: Institute for Human Rights  
Working language: English, Russian

Summary: The discussion will focus on the unprecedented rise in the number of political prisoners — now estimated at around 400, including some 40 journalists — as well as recent retaliatory arrests, torture, and systemic repression of independent voices. The event aims to raise international awareness, assess Azerbaijan's non-compliance with its human rights obligations, and identify urgent steps that the OSCE and its participating States can take to respond.

Time: **13:30-14:30**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 4 - Opera**  
Title: Addressing Hate Speech and Discrimination Based on Religion  
Convenor: Association of Religious Organizations of Kazakhstan (AROK); Association of Religious Organizations of Kazakhstan (AROK)  
Working language: English, Russian

Summary: The side event will focus on the discussion of freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) and the challenge of hate speech in the context of preventing discrimination based on religion. The right to FoRB is a fundamental human right; however, its exercise must be combined with responsibility and respect for the dignity of others. In the context of growing interreligious and intercultural tensions within the OSCE region, particular attention should be paid to countering the spread of hate speech. Discriminatory rhetoric on the basis of religious affiliation can pose threats to public security. At the same time, excessive restrictions on freedom of expression may undermine democratic principles and increase distrust towards state institutions. The event aims to explore ways of striking a balance between the protection of FoRB and the adoption of effective measures to counter discrimination and incitement to hatred. Special attention will be given to analysing the role of religious leaders, civil society representatives, and journalists in reducing the level of hate rhetoric. Community leaders and youth leaders within religious organizations remain important actors capable of making a positive contribution to conflict prevention. Youth are often both targets of hate speech and active promoters of ideas of tolerance and mutual respect. Therefore, strengthening their involvement in dialogue is of strategic importance for societal resilience. The discussion will also highlight the recent experiences of the Association of Religious Organizations of Kazakhstan (AROK) and the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Kazakhstan (SAMK). In addition, experts will address the issue of balancing permissible restrictions with the need to combat hate speech and discrimination based on religion.

**Speakers:**

- David Smith, UK Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief
- Mikaela Christiansson, Adviser on Combating Racism, Xenophobia and Intolerance against Christians and Members of Other Religions OSCE ODIHR
- Elizabeth Clark, Associate Director of the International Center for Law and Religion Studies at Brigham Young University
- Bijigit Qoishiev, Advisor to the Supreme Mufti of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Kazakhstan
- Danil Buglov, Expert on freedom of religion or belief
- Sergey Samokhvalov, Pastor of 'Satpayev Pentecostal Church "Agape"'

**Moderator:**

- Alexandr Klyushev, Chairman of Association of religious organizations of Kazakhstan (AROK)

Time: **13:30-14:30**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 5 - Plenary**  
Title: OSCE retrospective: from commitments to action: addressing hate crimes in South-Eastern Europe through cooperation.  
Convenor: Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the OSCE Missions to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Skopje, Serbia, OSCE Mission in Kosovo and OSCE Presence in Albania  
Working language: English

Summary: Hate crimes continue to be a concern across the South East Europe (SEE) region, threatening the security and safety of individuals and societal cohesion. This is particularly true in post conflict/transitional societies such as in SEE. Throughout the region there are common patterns in hate crime incidents, including against majority and minority ethnic groups, religious communities and sexual and gender minorities. These patterns are often influenced by cross-border narratives, nationalist rhetoric and regional political tensions. While individual SEE OSCE Field Operations (FOs) have made significant strides in addressing hate crimes within their respective jurisdictions, the cross-border nature of such crimes calls for a more coordinated and strategic regional response. Regional cooperation over the last 15 years has enabled ODIHR and the OSCE field offices to better understand and address these influences.

The event will showcase key developments, highlight areas of regional cooperation and identify achievements and positive practices in responding to hate crimes. It will also show how joint activities and cross-border dialogue facilitated by the OSCE encouraged national authorities to engage in collaborative efforts and regional forums, enhancing trust and the political will to combat hate crimes. The event will underscore the OSCE's central role as a platform for advancing dialogue, coordination and joint efforts in addressing hate crimes.

**Speakers:**

- Halisa Skopljak, OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Anita Pasha, OSCE Mission to Kosovo
- Matija Vasiljevic, OSCE Mission to Montenegro
- Simona Jordanov, OSCE Mission to Skopje
- Mira Xhamallati, OSCE Presence in Albania
- Jelena Jokanovic, OSCE Mission to Serbia

**Moderator:**

- Ruth Burns, Assistant Hate Crime Officer, ODIHR

Time: **18:30-19:30**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 1 – Belweder**  
Title: Launch of ODIHR publication: “Understanding Anti-Christian Hate Crimes and Addressing the Security Needs of Christian Communities: A Practical Guide”  
Convenor: OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights  
Working language: English, Russian

Summary: This event will launch Understanding Anti-Christian Hate Crimes and Addressing the Security Needs of Christian Communities: A Practical Guide, which forms part of a series of ODIHR Guides that promote a comprehensive approach to addressing religion-related hate crimes. Anti-Christian hate crimes, which are criminal offences motivated by bias against Christians, continue to pose a serious concern across the OSCE region. Attacks against Christians, their places of worship, cemeteries and other sites of historical and religious significance inflict lasting trauma on victims, their

families and their communities. By sending a message that Christian communities are not tolerated in society, such crimes stoke fear and division, undermine social cohesion and pose a serious security concern across the region.

Time: **18:30-19:30**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 2 - Saski**  
Title: From Guantánamo to Gaza: Counter-Terrorism, Islamophobia, and Civic Freedoms in the OSCE Area  
Convenor: CAGE Advocacy  
Working language: English

Summary: Across the OSCE region, anti-Palestinian racism has crystallised as a contemporary form of Islamophobia, increasingly embedded in state rhetoric and practice. Since the outset of the genocide, visible pro-Palestine solidarity has catalysed a new phase of Islamophobia: repression of pro-Palestinian actors has intensified, and counter terrorism measures are increasingly deployed to push pro-Palestinian speech out of the public sphere. This side event examines how solidarity with Palestine—from peaceful rallies to conferences —has been recast as a security problem, normalising expansive surveillance, protest restrictions, and administrative sanctions. Drawing on cases involving the proscription of Palestine Action in the UK and the proposition of dissolution of Urgence Palestine in France, we show how routine civic advocacy is reframed through “terrorist” discourse, chilling free expression, freedom of religion or belief, and peaceful assembly. The result is a policy climate where “exceptional” counter terrorism measures migrate into ordinary governance, with measurable impacts on Muslim and pro-Palestine communities. This session will be delivered by European experts who will present from a European and international lens, alongside frontline organisers and survivors of Guantánamo offering first-hand testimony. The panel brings together legal practitioners, human-rights advocates, and policy researchers to interrogate how counter-terrorism measures are applied to pro-Palestine advocacy across the OSCE space. A dedicated Q&A will invite precise and technical questions on surveillance powers, proscription frameworks, dissolution proceedings, and safeguards for freedom of expression, religion or belief, and peaceful assembly. Participants will leave with a coherent understanding of the current geopolitical stakes as well as practical benchmarks to prevent human-rights violations and continue to fight for justice.

**Speakers:**

- Rayan Freschi, researcher Nehal Abdalla, political scientist
- Amanj Aziz, human rights activist
- Mansoor Adayfi, Guantanamo survivor
- Elias d’Imzalène, human rights activist

Time: **18:30-19:30**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 3 - Krolewski**  
Title: Racial discrimination in the occupied territories of Ukraine as a systemic challenge to human dimension  
Convenor: Center of Political Analysis and Forecasting "Crimea"; Crimean Tatar Resource Center  
Working language: English, Ukrainian

Summary: The side event is dedicated to the analysis of systemic policies of racial discrimination and repression against the collective rights of indigenous peoples and the rights of their representatives in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. Particular attention will be paid to the persecution of members of Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar people, regional and local Mejlises of the Crimean Tatars by

the occupiers. Speakers will present facts of politically motivated criminal prosecutions, illegal arrests, torture, and other forms of pressure on Crimean Tatar activists in the temporarily occupied Crimea and areas of the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions after the beginning of the full-scale Russian intervention. The event will also feature an analysis of Ukraine's state policy on the protection of the rights of indigenous peoples in the context of the implementation of the relevant legislation. The event aims to draw awareness to systemic and widespread violations of human rights and collective rights of the indigenous peoples in the occupied territories of Ukraine, as well as to discuss international mechanisms for combating racial discrimination and ensuring the participation of indigenous peoples in decision-making processes.

**Speakers:**

- Eskender Bariiev, Head of the Board of the Crimean Tatar Resource Center, member of Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People
- Dr. Borys Babin, Expert of the Crimean Tatar Resource Center, professor at the State University “Kyiv Aviation Institute”
- Fadme-Sherfe Bielialova, Sister of the political prisoner Mamut Bielialov
- Natalia Flouris, Sister of the abducted in Crimea Anatoliy Kobzar
- Liudmyla Korotkykh, Lawyer of the Crimean Tatar Resource Center, expert of the Center of Political Analysis and Forecasting “Crimea”
- Tetiana Savchuk, Communication manager of the Crimean Tatar Resource Center

Time: **18:30-19:30**  
 Venue: **Meeting Room 4 - Opera**  
 Title: Film screening and panel discussion: “That Boy” a conversation about hates and healing  
 Convenor: Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in co-operation with Fundacja Jaw Dikh, Poland  
 Working language: English

Summary: Roma and Sinti communities remain among the most vulnerable minorities in the OSCE region, continuing to face high levels of deprivation, marginalization and discrimination. The anti-Roma violence that erupted in Central and Eastern Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall remains an underexplored chapter in Europe’s history of racism. From the 1990s onward, waves of violent attacks against Roma communities swept through several OSCE participating States, perpetrated by both local rioters and organized neo-Nazi and far-right groups. These events significantly shaped the far-right movements that persist today, with some former perpetrators now in prominent positions. The rise of exclusionary politics, the mainstreaming of far-right ideologies and the increasing diversity of societies due to migration make it crucial to revisit these historical patterns to offer solutions for the contemporary rise of the far-right. “*That Boy*” documents the journey of Toby, a former Roma refugee, and his encounter with Mirek, a former neo-Nazi. It captures their raw conversation about the roots of hate, its impact and the potential for reconciliation, offering a powerful lesson on the long-lasting effects of hate and the potential for transformation, reconciliation and justice.

Time: **18:30-19:30**  
 Venue: **Meeting Room 5 - Plenary**  
 Title: The Latest Updates on Human Rights in Karakalpakstan: Arbitrary Detentions, Transnational Repression, and Torture  
 Convenor: Karakalpak Diaspora in the U.S.A  
 Working language: English

Summary: This side event will shed light on the escalating human rights crisis in Karakalpakstan and beyond its borders. Speakers will present the latest updates on the situation faced by Karakalpak activists, journalists, and ordinary citizens who are subjected to arbitrary detentions, torture, enforced disappearances, and long prison sentences under fabricated charges.

The discussion will also address transnational repression, as the Uzbek government extends its campaign of intimidation and persecution against Karakalpaks living abroad. Testimonies and documentation will highlight patterns of systemic abuse, lack of accountability, and the silencing of civil society voices. This event aims to bring international attention and solidarity to one of Central Asia's most overlooked crises, call for the release of political prisoners, and urge the OSCE, participating States, and human rights institutions to take concrete action in protecting the rights and dignity of the Karakalpak people.

**Speakers:**

- Bruce Pannier, journalist and correspondent covering Central Asia
- Steve Swerdlow, Associate Professor of the Practice of Human Rights in the Department of Political and International Relations at the University of Southern California
- Karlibay Bekmuratov, the founder of Karakalpakstan News Channel
- Koshkarbay Toremuratov, the founder of Zhaslyq Human Rights Center
- Karakalpak Diaspora Representatives
- Vitaly Ponomarev, the director of the Central Asian program on the Memorial Human Rights Centre

## **Tuesday, 14 October**

### **Special Event**

Time: **08:00-09:45**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 1 - Belweder**  
Title: Women's Power Breakfast: 50/50 gender parity in politics – Why is it important and how to make it happen?  
Convenor: Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights  
Working language: English

Gender equality in politics has been a core focus of efforts to promote women's rights around the world. The **1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)** established the duty to eliminate discrimination against women in political and public life. In the intervening decades, these commitments have been deepened and expanded at the global and European levels. The **1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action** identified women in power and decision-making as one of its twelve strategic objectives. The global framework was strengthened with the **2024 CEDAW Committee's General Recommendation 40**, which clarifies that **50/50 parity is not just a target but a human rights obligation**. Parity should not only be a core principle of governance, but also a leading force for transformative change; women should have an equal say, on a par with men, in all decision-making systems.

Currently, only one OSCE participating State has achieved gender parity in its national parliament, and while women's parliamentary representation has increased overall, the growth of women's representation has been stagnating over the last five years. In parallel, the OSCE region is witnessing unprecedented mobilization against gender equality, with a significant impact on women's political



participation. At the 2025 Women's Power Breakfast, we will discuss how we can counter these developments, why equal participation is important today and what OSCE states can do to achieve gender parity.

|           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 8:00-8:30 | <b>Arrival and light breakfast</b>                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 8:30–8:40 | <b>Welcome remarks</b><br>Maria Telalian, ODIHR Director<br>Saara-Sofia Sirén, Special Representative of the<br>OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Gender, Member of Parliament                                                    |
| 8:40-9:40 | <b>Moderated chat</b> , with interactive Q&A with participants<br>Nicole Ameline, former Chair of the CEDAW Committee,<br>former Minister for Parity and Equality of France &<br>Saša Gavrić, Adviser on Gender Issues, ODIHR |
| 9:40-9:45 | Alternative closing words: <b>Presentation of ODIHR's Gender Parity Roadmap</b>                                                                                                                                               |

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*The Women's Power Breakfast will be held in English language.  
A light breakfast, tea and coffee will be served.  
**RSVP/confirm your participation by registering at this [LINK](#).***

Time: **08:30-09:30**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 3 - Krolewski**  
Title: The situation with the right to a fair trial, freedom from torture, and migrants' rights in Kazakhstan  
Convenor: Equal Rights; Public Fund Daris-2016  
Working language: English, Russian

Summary: The situation regarding the right to a fair trial and freedom from torture in Kazakhstan remains the most pressing issue at present. Despite Kazakhstan's legislative efforts to prevent torture, people continue to be subjected to torture both during the investigation stage and while serving their sentences. In addition, the unlawful deprivation of liberty followed by the deportation of migrants can be considered torture. During the event, participants in a parallel event—human rights defenders—will discuss the current situation and specific cases concerning the right to a fair trial, freedom from torture, and the rights of migrants in Kazakhstan. Reports will be presented and recommendations will be made to improve the situation with regard to these human rights.

**Speakers:**

- Danchev Alexander, Director of the Equal Rights Public Association, human rights activist
- Gulnur Idigeeva, Director of the Daris-2016 Public Foundation, human rights activist

Time: **08:30-09:30**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 4 - Opera**  
Title: Global Pressures on the Legal Profession: A Threat to the Rule of Law  
Convenor: Lawyers for Lawyers; American Bar Association  
Working language: English

Summary: Across the globe, legal professionals are facing escalating threats that undermine the very foundation of democratic governance and the rule of law. Lawyers are being harassed, disbarred, and prosecuted for defending clients in politically sensitive cases or challenging state authorities. Alarming, this phenomenon is no longer confined to transitional democracies. Even in established legal systems judges, prosecutors, and lawyers face politicized retaliation, online harassment, and threats to their independence. These converging trends indicate a global crisis for legal independence and threaten the rule of law in OSCE member states. This side event, co-organized by the Lawyers for Lawyers and American Bar Association's Center for Human Rights (ABA/CHR), brings together international experts and practitioners to explore national and global patterns of increasing repression, make comparative analysis between regional trends, and offer concrete policy recommendations for OSCE members. The discussion will underscore the importance of protecting legal professionals as a cornerstone of a healthy, functioning rule of law system.

**Introductory remarks:**

- Ms. Sophie de Graaf, Executive Director, Lawyer for Lawyers
- Ms. Ginna Anderson, Associate Director, ABA/CHR

**Speakers:**

- Ms. Melissa Hooper, Senior Fellow, German Marshall Fund
- Ms. Anara Ibraeva, Head, Kadyr Kasiet
- Mr. Maksim Polovinko, Human Rights Lawyer
- Ms. Fernanda Nicola, Professor of Law, American University

**Closing Remarks:**

- Ms. Judith Lichtenberg, Special Advisor to the Board, Lawyers for Lawyers

**Moderator:**

- Ms. Jasmine Cameron, Senior International Consultant, ABA/CHR

Time: **14:30-15:30**

Venue: **Meeting Room 1 - Belweder**

Title: **End it Now! Addressing Prevention of Femicide in the OSCE Region and Beyond**

Convenor: OSCE Secretariat; Permanent Mission of the Republic of Croatia to the OSCE, UN and International Organizations in Vienna; Delegation of Malta to the OSCE; Permanent Representation of the Kingdom of Belgium to the OSCE

Working language: English

Summary: In 2023 approximately 85 000 women were killed intentionally, and out of that number 51,100 women were killed by an intimate partner or other family member. Equally, across the OSCE participating States, the surge in femicides, or gender-related killings of women and girls, has been an alarming phenomenon calling for strengthening of the existing mechanisms to prevent femicide and gender-based violence in all its forms. In response to these developments the OSCE Secretariat Gender Issues Programme under the WIN project carried out an extensive mapping of the current trends in OSCE pS in combatting femicide, noting steps forward in developing effective prevention and protection measures. The key findings of the report were published in March 2025 on the occasion of the Commission of the Status of Women 69 in New York. Following up to these discussions, this side event aims to:

- Present the publication Mapping trends in Combatting Femicide in OSCE Region
- Reflect on the impact of legislative change and criminalization of femicide across OSCE pS
- Discuss effective mechanisms to prevent and combat femicides
- Encourage sharing of best practices including the importance of implementing specific legislative measures specifically on targeting femicides.

**Agenda:**

14:30-14:35: Opening Dr Lara Scarpitta, OSCE Senior Adviser on Gender Issues/Head, Gender Issues Programme, OSCE Secretariat

14:35-14:40: Keynote: Global state of affairs on combatting femicide Dubravka Šimonović, former UNSR on VAWG, former CEDAW member

14:40-15:10: Panel Discussion

- Trends on Addressing Femicide in the OSCE region, Elmaja Bavčić, Adviser on Gender Equality, OSCE
- Ensuring comprehensive response to violence, Ivan Crnčec, State Secretary, Ministry of Justice, Public Administration and Digital Transformation Croatia
- Lessons learned from criminalizing femicide, Samantha Pace Gasan, Commissioner on the Commission on Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence, Malta
- How legislation on femicide can move the agenda forward, Clara Mareschal, Institute for the equality of women and men in Belgium

15:10-15:25: Q&A

15:25-15:30: Closing of the event - Saara Sofia Siren, Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Gender

Time: **14:30-15:30**

Venue: **Meeting Room 2 - Saski**

Title: From Dialogue to Action: Women Shaping Peace and Democracy in the OSCE Region

Convenor: OSCE Mission to Serbia; OSCE Mission in Kosovo

Working language: English

Summary: This side event seeks to promote meaningful women's participation in peace-building and democratic processes within the OSCE region; the discussion will focus on how women-led networks can enhance peace, democracy, and resilience, especially in conflict-affected and transitional areas. The side event will showcase the importance of diverse forms of women's engagement beyond formal negotiations, highlighting indirect and networked forms of participation, such as consultations and local dialogue. These efforts, often more inclusive, have demonstrated greater success in fostering sustainable peace. The OSCE has long acknowledged the necessity of equal opportunities for women in public life, and its initiatives, including the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for Gender Equality and the recent Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Roadmap, underscore the need for women's involvement at all levels of decision-making. The panel discussion includes representatives from various women's networks, such as the Dialogue Academy Network of Alumnae (DANA) and the OSCE Networking Platform for Women Leaders, offering real-life examples of how these networks advance peace and democratic resilience. Topics will cover the role of women's networks in peacebuilding, cross-community collaboration, and policy actions needed to further the WPS agenda. By fostering a space for dialogue and sharing good practice, the side event aims to inspire policymakers and civil society actors to strengthen their commitment to inclusive, gender-responsive peace processes, and contribute to a broader understanding of women's critical role in establishing democratic, resilient societies across the OSCE region.

#### **Opening remarks:**

- Saara-Sofia Sirén, Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Gender, Member of Finnish Parliament and Nordic Women Mediators Network

#### **Speakers:**

- Dr. Lara Scarpitta, OSCE Senior Adviser on Gender Issues (video message)
- Nita Zogiani, OSCE Dialogue Academy Network of Alumnae member
- Jovana Marjanović, OSCE Dialogue Academy Network of Alumnae member

- Dr. Esra Çuhadar, Associate Professor, Bilkent University and member of Mediterranean Women Mediators Network

**Facilitators:**

- Martina Garbuglia, OSCE Mission in Kosovo Senior Representative
- Milena Jevtić, OSCE Mission to Serbia Representative

**Time:** 14:30-15:30

**Venue:** Meeting Room 3 - Krolewski

**Title:** Voices of a New Generation: Human Rights Challenges in Central Asia

**Convenor:** Human Rights Consulting Group Public Foundation; Public Fund Nomad Rights; Human Rights Centre Glotion; Public Organization Ibtido

**Working language:** English, Russian

**Summary:** A new generation of human rights defenders is emerging in Central Asia, representing a new wave of ideas, strategies, and formats of work in the context of shrinking civic space and growing challenges. These organizations and initiatives not only respond to local problems but are increasingly engaging with international human rights protection mechanisms, preparing reports, recommendations, and analytical contributions for global structures. Their work demonstrates both the determination to achieve change within their countries and the readiness to engage in dialogue at the international level. This side event will provide a platform for human rights defenders from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to present key areas of their work: digital rights, access to information, freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, housing and social rights, gender equality, protection of LGBTQIA+, transgender people and PLHIV communities, as well as the fight against torture and the promotion of fair trial rights. For diplomatic missions and international organizations, this event will be an opportunity to directly hear voices from the region, access up-to-date information, and review independent assessments and practical recommendations. A key focus will be placed on partnership opportunities, including joint advocacy initiatives, resource mobilization, and building sustainable cross-border networks. The session will highlight the renewal and expansion of the human rights movement in Central Asia and conclude with a discussion on concrete steps international partners can take to support its resilience and long-term impact. Glotion Human Rights Center; Public Foundation, Human Rights Consulting Group; Public Foundation, Nomad Rights; Public Foundation, REQUEST; Human Rights LGBTQIA+ Initiative, Kazakhstani Transgender Initiative Alma-TQ; (Kazakhstan), Public Foundation Civics, Coalition of the New Generation of Human Rights Defenders of Kyrgyzstan (Kyrgyzstan), Public Organization Ibtido; (Tajikistan), Invisible Rainbow Turkmenistan (Turkmenistan), for security reasons, some organizations are not named.

**Speakers:**

- Rustam Zhantassov
- Alisher Kozhagulov
- Viktoria Primak
- Arsen Aubakirov
- Aidém Baketayeva
- Amantai Moldogaziyev
- Mika Okinova
- Khursheda Rahimova
- David Omarov
- and two anonymous speakers

**Moderator:**

- Rustam Kypshakbaye

Time: **14:30-15:30**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 4 - Opera**  
Title: Adapting Under Pressure: LGBTQ+ Strategies for Resilience in Belarus  
Convenor: Civil Rights Defenders  
Working language: English, Russian  
Summary: This panel will highlight the current challenges faced by LGBTQ+ communities in Belarus, focusing on concerning trends such as forced outing cases and discriminatory legal measures, as well as current legal practices. The discussion will present issues with discriminatory legislation and expected legal developments of concern. Speakers will showcase resilience strategies and success stories: building safe online spaces, rebranding initiatives, and using diverse social media platforms to maintain engagement and visibility. Community-based approaches will also be explored as crucial strategies to keep LGBTQ+ communities alive, connected, and empowered, despite the challenging environments. The panellists will address how to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances, strengthen cooperation with international partners, and ensure the survival and well-being of Belarus's LGBTQ+ community under pressure. The speakers are the representatives of the Belarus organisations working on LGBTQ+ topics.

Time: **14:30-15:30**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 5 - Plenary**  
Title: "Combating Domestic Violence in Kazakhstan: Progress and Future Plans".  
Convenor: Permanent Mission of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the OSCE; Human Rights Commissioner in the Republic of Kazakhstan  
Working language: English

Summary: Violence against women and girls, including domestic violence, remains a serious global human rights challenge that undermines the foundations of gender equality and social justice. In recent years, Kazakhstan has taken decisive and comprehensive steps to address and prevent gender-based violence and strengthening legal protections for women and children. A key milestone in this reform agenda was the adoption of the Law on the Protection of Women's Rights and Child Safety (commonly referred to as the "Saltanat Law") on April 15, 2024. This legislation introduced one of the most progressive legal frameworks in the region to combat domestic violence and ensure a coordinated institutional response to protect victims. While these legal frameworks are critical, effective implementation, inter-agency coordination, and civil society engagement are essential for meaningful change. The Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsperson) of Kazakhstan has played a crucial role in advocating for victims' rights, monitoring compliance with these laws, and facilitating reforms. Civil society organizations (CSOs) contribute by raising awareness, providing support and rehabilitation services, and holding authorities accountable. This side event aims to explore the collaborative efforts undertaken by the Commissioner's Office and civil society to strengthen Kazakhstan's legal and policy responses to domestic violence. The event will highlight best practices, challenges and opportunities, and identify remaining challenges and opportunities for international and regional cooperation.

**Speakers:**

- Artur Lastayev, Commissioner for Human Rights in the Republic of Kazakhstan
- Dinara Yessimova, Executive Director of the National Alliance of Professional Social Workers, Kazakhstan

Time: **16:00-17:00**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 1 - Belweder**

Title: Promoting gender equality within security sector institutions in Moldova and Ukraine: the role of associations of women in the security sector  
Convenor: OSCE Secretariat, Conflict Prevention Centre; OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights; Permanent Mission of Slovakia to the OSCE  
Working language: English

Summary: Security sector institutions play a central role in ensuring the safety of all members of society. A security sector that is gender-balanced, diverse and human rights compliant is better equipped to fulfil this role and meet the security needs of the communities it serves. Promoting gender equality in the security sector is central to Security Sector Governance and Reform (SSG/R) efforts, fostering the effective, inclusive, and responsive provision of security. Achieving gender equality in the security sector involves a positive obligation to transform unequal power relations; to address the underlying causes and structures of gender inequality, including discriminatory norms, prejudices and stereotypes; and to reform institutions to avoid perpetration of discrimination and inequality. Associations of women in the security sector are an important driver for change in this regard. By influencing inclusive policies and practices; promoting the recruitment, retention and promotion of women and under-represented groups; advocating for working environments that are free of harassment and abuse and challenging gender stereotypes that hamper effective security delivery, these associations meaningfully contribute to SSG/R processes. The side-event, organized by the OSCE CPC, ODIHR and the Permanent Mission of Slovakia to the OSCE will highlight the experience of associations from Moldova and Ukraine - the Moldovan Association of Women in Police, the Moldovan Association of Women in the Army, and the Ukrainian Association of Women in Law Enforcement – discussing the challenges and opportunities that these associations face in promoting gender equality and advancing reforms within the security sector.

**Opening remarks:**

- Shawn DeCaluwe, Deputy Director for Operations Service, OSCE/CPC
- Andrew Gardner, Acting Head of Human Rights Department, OSCE/ODIHR

**Speakers:**

- Olha Yuskevych, Assistant to Head of the National Police of Ukraine, Ukrainian Association of Women in Law Enforcement
- Cristina Schimbov, President of the Moldovan Association of Women in Police
- Elena Taralunga, Head of Public Policy Coordination and European Integration Section, Ministry of Defence of Moldova, Moldovan Association of Women in the Army

**Moderator:**

- Ruzanna Baghdasaryan, Project Officer, OSCE Conflict Prevention Center

**Closing remarks:**

- Roman Oroszi, First Secretary, Permanent Mission of the Slovak Republic to the OSCE

Time: **16:00-17:00**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 2 - Saski**  
Title: Invisible from Birth: Challenges and Good Practices in Preventing Childhood Statelessness  
Convenor: Human Constanta  
Working language: English

Summary: Despite clear international obligations, thousands of children in the OSCE region remain stateless today. This affects children born into long-marginalised communities, such as Roma, as well as those whose parents face legal and political barriers to registering their children's nationality, such as Belarusian families who cannot obtain national passports abroad for their newborns. Childhood

statelessness has long-lasting impacts on access to education, health care, social protection, and participation in society. ODIHR, together with the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities and UNHCR, recently issued Opening Doors for Children: Prevention of Childhood Statelessness — Good Practices in the OSCE Area, offering concrete measures that states can take to ensure every child acquires a nationality. However, persistent gaps in implementation and discriminatory practices mean that the problem is far from solved. This side event will highlight contemporary challenges in preventing childhood statelessness in the OSCE region, combining evidence-based analysis with lived experiences. It will discuss barriers in law and practice, showcase recent good practices, and identify priority actions for governments, civil society, and international organisations.

**Speakers:**

- Roma community advocate – lived experience and systemic barriers leading to childhood statelessness among Roma families
- Belarusian civil society representative – recent cases of Belarusian children born abroad unable to obtain citizenship documents due to political restrictions
- TBC

**Moderator:**

- Representative from ODIHR's Democratization Department

Time: **16:00-17:00**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 3 - Krolewski**  
Title: Invisible Voices: Disability rights through the lens of Women, Peace, and Security  
Convenor: The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation  
Working language: English, Ukrainian

Summary: In the South Caucasus and Eastern Europe, where communities face protracted conflicts and ongoing instability, the intersection of disability rights and the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda remains largely overlooked. Women and girls with disabilities are disproportionately affected by conflict, experiencing heightened risks of gender-based violence, displacement, and exclusion from decision-making. Despite their potential to contribute unique perspectives to crisis response, peacebuilding, humanitarian aid, and post-conflict recovery, they are rarely included in these processes. In this session, women's rights and disability rights activists from Armenia and Ukraine will bring forth their own experiences and recommendations, showcasing how including the needs of women and girls with disabilities in conflict resolution will benefit a sustainable peace and inclusive society.

**Speakers:**

- Nataliya Kyrkach, Slavic Heart, Ukraine
- Maria Poceliak, Fight for Right, Ukraine
- Knarik Mkrtchyan, Women's Agenda, Armenia
- Karine Grigoryan, Agate Rights Defence Center for Women with Disabilities, Armenia
- Liana Margania, The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation

**Moderator:**

- Charlotte Pruth, The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation

Time: **16:00-17:00**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 4 - Opera**  
Title: "Protecting the Rights of Ethnic Minorities in Uzbekistan: Reforms and Achievements"

Convenor: NGO Central Asian progress and Integration Forum; National Human Rights Centre of the Republic of Uzbekistan; Office of the Authorized Person of the Oliy Mazhlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Human Rights (Ombudsperson)

Working language: English, Russian

Summary: The parallel event will examine ongoing reforms and achievements in Uzbekistan in protecting the rights of ethnic minorities and ensuring their equal opportunities.

**Speakers:**

- Feruza Eshmatova, Ombudsman

**Moderator:**

- Shakhnoza Almosova, the Head of the NGO Central Asian Progress and Integration Forum

Time: **16:00-17:00**

Venue: **Meeting Room 5 - Plenary**

Title: The Future of Gender Equality: Uzbekistan's Contribution to the Global Women's Rights Agenda

Convenor: Permanent Mission of the Republic of Uzbekistan to the OSCE

Working language: English, Russian

Summary: Uzbekistan remains dedicated to achieving its domestic and global objectives for gender equality by 2030. Ongoing initiatives in legal reform, organisational capacity building, public education efforts, and global collaborations are essential for strengthening progress and broadening prospects for women across all spheres of society. The side event will offer a forum for dialogue regarding Uzbekistan's latest reforms and key priorities in gender equality, women's advancement, and safeguarding women's human rights and liberties. Particular focus will be given to national policy frameworks, combating gender-based violence, executing the Women, Peace and Security programme, and opportunities for international collaboration through Beijing+30 and the OSCE Gender Action Plan initiatives. Refreshments will be provided.

**Speakers:**

- Mrs. Gulnora Marufova, Member of the Senate of the Oliy Majlis of Uzbekistan and member of the Commission on Enhancing the Role of Women in Society, Gender Equality, and Family Affairs. She has over 30 years of experience in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment.
- Ms. Ilmijaxon Tleubergenova, Chief Specialist on Human Resources Development and Management at the Committee on Family and Women Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan since August 2025. She has extensive experience in human resources management, compliance, and organizational development, and has contributed to advancing gender equality policies in Uzbekistan.
- Ms. Nodira Karimova, prominent women's rights activist and Chairperson of the Republican Social Information Center "Istiqbolli Avlod" ("Generation of the Future"), Uzbekistan. She has over 20 years of experience combating human trafficking, protecting women's rights, and strengthening civil society.

**Moderator:**

- Mrs. Dilnoza Muratova, Deputy Director of the National Center of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Human Rights. Mrs. Muratova holds advanced degrees in law, specializing in international human rights, constitutional, and international law. In 2025, she was appointed the national focal point for the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda and the Regional Action Plan for Central Asia, with UN Women commending her significant contributions to the process.



## **Wednesday, 15 October**

Time: **08:30-09:30**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 1 - Belweder**  
Title: Truth over fear: countering attacks on migrant and refugee rights  
Convenor: OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights  
Working language: English

Summary: Across the OSCE region, migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees are increasingly targeted by anti-migrant rhetoric, disinformation and smear campaigns. These narratives, often amplified in political debates and public discourse, undermine solidarity, distort facts, and erode respect for fundamental human rights. The initial reception of Ukrainian refugees has demonstrated that welcoming people in need is not only necessary and possible, but also enriches and strengthens host societies, and even enhances economic growth. This experience offers powerful lessons for protecting rights, building inclusive communities, and countering fear-based narratives. At the same time, those who support, stand up for the rights of people on the move - human rights defenders, NGOs, and even local communities, face significant challenges, including harassment or criminal sanctions, further shrinking the space for civic engagement and humanitarian action. Yet, positive examples show another way forward. This side event will explore how international organizations, national and local actors, and human rights defenders can work together to push back against hostility, promote rights-based approaches, and safeguard democratic values.

Objectives:

1. Reaffirm the necessity and benefits of protecting refugee and migrant rights in today's socio-political climate.
2. Identify effective strategies to counter smear campaigns and anti-migrant narratives across the OSCE region.
3. Highlight successful cooperation between international organizations, NGOs, and human rights defenders in challenging and restrictive environments.
4. Showcase ODIHR's contributions, particularly through COMPASS project, to advancing rights-based approaches and protecting defenders.

**Speakers:**

- Aniko Bakonyi, Director of the Refugee Program, Helsinki Committee, Hungary, operating where civic space is restricted
- Agnieszka Kosowicz, Founder and president of the Polish Migration Forum Foundation, Poland, countering anti-migrant narratives
- Magda Faltova, Director, Association for integration and migration (SIMI), Czechia, defending migrants and refugee rights
- Eliza Przeździecka: Assistant Livelihood and Economic Inclusion Officer, UNHCR Poland, changing narratives by showing the positive impact of welcoming refugees, the example of Ukrainian refugees in Poland

**Moderator and introduction of ODIHR's role in support to States and Civil Society:**

- Julia Gebhard, ODIHR Deputy Head of Democratisation

Time: **08:30-09:30**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 2 - Saski**  
Title: "The Future of the National Human Rights Protection System in Uzbekistan: Trends and Reforms".

Convenor: Central Asia Progress and Integration Forum  
Working language: English, Russian

Summary: Human rights issues in Uzbekistan will be considered in the context of the state's international obligations. Trends of recent years will be considered.

**Speakers:**

- Serik Muratayev
- Sh. Almosova

**Moderator:**

- Bakhrom Boymurodov, representative of NGO Barqaror hayot

Time: **08:30-09:30**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 3 - Krolewski**  
Title: Migration in Practice: Voices from the Front Lines  
Convenor: Pantarey Foundation  
Working language: English

Summary: As a side event of the OSCE conference, a panel discussion will be held titled Migration in Practice: Voices from the Front Lines. The panel focuses on personal experiences and practical challenges related to migration, integration, and the protection of human rights in the context of national security policies. Participants representing diverse perspectives shared their observations on the situation of migrants in the USA, Poland, and Palestine, emphasizing the need to balance a humanitarian approach with security requirements.

**Speakers:**

- Michał Specjalski, a political scientist and expert in asylum applications and international aid for migrants crossing the Belarus-Poland border. As Vice-Chair of the Pantarey Foundation's Founders' Council, he supports families in cross-border proceedings, providing legal and therapeutic assistance. His experience in the Polish Geopolitical Society informs his work on the exploitation of migrants in interstate conflicts, advocating for their rights and humane treatment.
- Klara Sołtan, Polish expert on migration and the Middle East. Former employee of Polish diplomatic missions in South Africa and Palestine. Since the migration pressure on the BY-PL border, she has been familiarizing Arabic-speaking chats and migrant forums related to illegal travels along this route.
- Cameron Macgregor, an American entrepreneur, YouTuber, and cohost of The Backlash, a podcast about the rise of masco-nationalism against mass immigration and the Great Replacement. Cameron has a broad background beginning in the US military where he was commissioned as an officer from the US Naval Academy and deployed to the Arabian Gulf in 2008. He has worked in and around Washington DC for over a decade and also worked in the information technology where he saw the effects of H1B replacement first hand on America's disintegrating middle class.

The panel will be moderated by Michał Specjalski and the discussion concluded with an open question-and-answer session, during which conference participants could delve deeper into the issues discussed. The event aimed to enrich the main conference with practical and diverse perspectives, promoting dialogue between academia, activists, and policymakers.

Time: **08:30-09:30**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 4 - Opera**  
Title: Beyond Rhetoric: The Struggle Against Domestic Violence in Central Asia

Convenor: International Partnership for Human Rights  
Working language: English, Russian

**Summary:** Fifty years after the Helsinki Final Act, domestic violence remains a human rights scandal undermining women's security across the globe. This side event will bring together civil society experts from across Central Asia to examine both the progress made and the persistent challenges in addressing domestic violence in the region. While recent years have seen important legislative advances—most notably developments in both Kazakhstan in 2024 and Uzbekistan's criminalising domestic violence and sexual harassment in 2023 —implementation remains uneven and especially weak in rural areas. Persistent social attitudes, gaps in institutional capacity, and the limited availability of accessible support services still leave many women at risk. Panellists will reflect on protection opportunities for women since domestic violence was criminalised and the role of NGOs in providing critical victim support, as well as the ongoing gaps in accessing protection and prevention. The discussion will place these issues in the broader regional context, highlighting common patterns across Central Asia and exploring innovative approaches that are emerging at the local level. The goal of this session is not only to assess where countries stand in terms of legal reforms, but also to chart concrete pathways forward. How can criminalization be implemented effectively in practice? What specific steps are needed to improve victim-centered protection? How can regional solidarity be built to share experiences, strengthen civil society, and push for more effective, coordinated responses? Language of the event: English and Russian (simultaneous translation will be provided). Refreshments will be provided.

**Speakers:**

- Khursheda Ibragimova, Director NGO Mehrjon, Fergana/Uzbekistan
- Malika Inakova, Lawyer and Gender Expert, Tashkent, Uzbekistan
- Aigerim Kyssaiynkyzy, Senior Lecturer, Researcher at Maqсут Narikbayev University, Gender Expert
- Najiba Shirinbekova, Lawyer, Gender Expert, NGO Right and Prosperity, Tajikistan

**Moderator:**

- Andrea Strasser-Camagni, IPHR

Time: **08:30-09:30**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 5 - Plenary**  
Title: The Role of Diaspora Engagement as a Tool Against Human Trafficking: The Case of Central Asian and African Diasporas in Europe.  
Convenor: The Danaker Association of Women from Kyrgyzstan in Poland  
Working language: English

**Summary:** Human trafficking continues to represent one of the most urgent human rights and security challenges in the OSCE region. Migrants, and particularly women, face heightened risks of exploitation due to precarious working conditions, lack of information, and barriers to accessing protection mechanisms. While governments and international organizations hold central responsibilities in combating trafficking, diaspora communities remain an under-recognized yet vital actor in this field. With their dual connection to both the country of origin and the host society, diasporas act as bridge-builders, service providers, and advocates, offering unique perspectives and practical solutions. This side event will highlight the potential of diaspora engagement as a tool in preventing and addressing human trafficking, focusing on the experience of the Kyrgyz diaspora in Europe. Drawing on the work of Danaker (Diaspora of Women from Kyrgyzstan in Poland) and the Migration and Human Trafficking Council under the Speaker of the Kyrgyz Republic's Parliament, the discussion will showcase how grassroots diaspora organizations can contribute to prevention, awareness-raising, and victim support. The event will examine gender-sensitive approaches to community empowerment and the role of women leaders in strengthening resilience against trafficking. Participants will discuss three key dimensions: 1.

Prevention and Awareness: How diaspora-led initiatives educate potential migrants about trafficking risks and promote safe migration. 2. Protection and Support: How diaspora organizations provide peer support, trust-based networks, and access to services for vulnerable migrants in host societies. 3. Partnerships and Policy: How cooperation between diaspora actors, national governments, and international organizations can improve anti-trafficking responses and ensure victim-centered approaches.

**Speakers:**

- Ulan Nogoibaev, Head of the Secretariat at the Migration and Human Trafficking Council under the Speaker of the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic
- Aitolgon Boronbaeva, Founder and Executive Director of Association DANAHER - Diaspora of Women from Kyrgyzstan in Poland
- Alessia Vedano, Adviser on Anti-Trafficking Issue /OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights,
- Lydia Osifo, Festus position: mediator intercultural of the Association Action Against Trafficking (ACT) in Spain Navarra

Time: **14:30-15:30**

Venue: **Meeting Room 1 - Belweder**

Title: Human Trafficking for Exploitation in Criminal Activities: Understanding and Addressing a Major Trend

Convenor: OSCE Secretariat; Office of the Special Representative/Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings

Working language: English, Russian

Summary: In recent years, trafficking in human beings (THB) for the purpose of exploitation in criminal activities (forced criminality) has expanded significantly in both scale and scope, drawing increased attention from governments, CSOs and IOs. According to the UN Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2024, identification of this form of THB rose sharply from 1% of total victims detected globally in 2016, to 6% in 2019 and 8 % in 2022. A similar trend has been documented in the OSCE region, with 63% of participating States reporting cases of THB for forced criminality under investigation and/or in the judicial process in 2020 versus 47% in 2016. This alarming trajectory reflects both heightened awareness and a troubling reality of its growing prevalence. Persistent global crises as well as social and deep-rooted economic inequalities continue to fuel conditions conducive to exploitation. Traffickers prey on the complex interplay of various vulnerabilities – especially those affecting adults and children from marginalized and displaced communities. Against this backdrop, effective application of the non-punishment principle remains a pressing concern. Its delayed and ineffective application have led to the punishment of many THB victims. Even when victims are eventually identified later in the criminal proceedings, they often face lasting consequences of convictions, such as the struggle to access employment, housing, education, and travel, among other long-term effects. Without effective and immediate clearance of their records, THB victims and survivors are punished by the legal system that failed to recognize their exploitation as victims. This event aims to discuss the increasing pattern of THB for the purpose of forced criminality, examine challenges of identification of victims of such crimes, and offer solutions and safeguards to ensure effective identification and protection of THB victims.

**Opening and moderation:**

- Kari Johnstone, OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings

**Speakers:**

- Sosa Henkoma, expert by experience, public speaker, consultant, mentor and school governor

- Tetiana Rudenko, Senior Project Officer, OSR/CTHB
- Tarana Baghirova, Programme Officer, OSR/CTHB
- Ulan Nogoibaev, Head of the Secretariat, Migration and Human Trafficking Council under the Speaker of the Parliament, Kyrgyz Republic

#### **Closing remarks:**

- Dr. Tea Jaliashvili, First Deputy Director of OSCE ODIHR

Time: **14:30-15:30**  
 Venue: **Meeting Room 3 - Krolewski**  
 Title: Human trafficking in Kazakhstan: progress and challenges via social work lens  
 Convenor: National Alliance of Professional Social Workers  
 Working language: English

Summary: This event is dedicated to a comprehensive discussion of the problem of human trafficking in Kazakhstan with an emphasis on social work. The meeting will consider key achievements of the state and public organizations in the field of prevention and combating this phenomenon, as well as remaining challenges - from identifying and protecting victims to their rehabilitation and social integration. One of the significant and proven effective measures to prevent human trafficking in the Republic of Kazakhstan is the introduction of the Universal Progressive Model of Home Care for Pregnant Women and Young Children in the healthcare system, which ensures early detection of risks and reduces social vulnerability factors. The Universal Progressive Model of Home Care (UPM) for Pregnant Women and Young Children is a mixed approach that combines the advantages of the universal model (covering all pregnant women and young children) and the target model (special attention to risk groups exposed to medical and psychosocial threats, including human trafficking, violence, abuse, disability and other manageable risks). To eliminate such risks and meet the needs of families, an individual approach based on professional social work technologies is needed. The current UPM system includes an assessment of the socio-economic situation of families with subsequent resolution of identified problems through intersectoral interaction. Particular attention will be paid to the role of social workers as specialists who directly interact with affected families, help them recover and contribute to the formation of sustainable mechanisms for the protection of human rights.

Time: **14:30-15:30**  
 Venue: **Meeting Room 4 - Opera**  
 Title: Ensuring Meaningful Civil Society Participation in the Helsinki Process and OSCE Work  
 Convenor: Freedom Files Foundation  
 Working language: English

Summary: Although a range of opportunities for civil society organisations to participate in various OSCE meetings exists, there is no obvious mechanism for them to affect OSCE policies and decision-making and no coherent and comprehensive policy on citizen engagement. There is an obvious gap between participation in OSCE meetings or various modes of expert involvement, on the one hand, and influence on both operational and political level of the organisation, on the other. Citizens' participation in the OSCE remains largely symbolic and is limited to the lower forms of engagement. In seeking a meaningful engagement with and influence on OSCE structures, civil society stumbles on the reality that declarations about participation are not backed by relevant policies and procedures, funding, professional incentives, and training and skill development for CSOs. This needs to change if there is a genuine interest in promoting the Helsinki principles and not just declaring them. The way forward in the present challenging conditions might be a stronger political will that would give enough courage to

Chairpersonships, other OSCE bodies, and participating States to take bold steps and seek creative solutions that do not require consensus decisions by all participating States. Panellists will present and discuss analysis and recommendations on civil society engagement in the OSCE work generated in the framework of the Helsinki+50 Reflection Process organised by the Civic Solidarity Platform ahead of the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Final Act. Establishing a mandate of the Special Representative of the CiO on Civil Society has been an important step forward to develop stronger cooperation of the OSCE with civil society. Special Representative of the CiO on Civil Society Anu Juvonen will provide commentary on meaningful civil society engagement in OSCE work on the basis of her work and experiences in 2025.

**Speakers:**

- "Yuri" Georgy Dzhibladze, Freedom Files and Prospect Foundation
- Anu Juvonen, CiO Special Representative on Civil Society
- Jacob Reimer, Austausch
- Konstantin Baranov, Centre for Solidarity International
- "Harry" Harm Hummel, Libereco (online via zoom)
- Dmitry Makarov (recorded video message)

Time: **14:30-15:30**

Venue: **Meeting Room 5 - Plenary**

Title: Safe Borders Project: Field Research Insights on Child Trafficking in Greece and Poland

Convenor: General Secretariat for Vulnerable Persons and Institutional Protection / Hellenic Ministry of Migration and Asylum

Working language: English

Summary: This side event will present and discuss the findings of the field research conducted in the framework of the Safe Borders project in Greece and Poland, which aims to strengthen cross-border cooperation and empower frontline professionals and judicial authorities in the fight against child trafficking. While the desk research mapped the legal and policy framework, the field research provides unique insights from practitioners directly engaged in prevention, victim support, investigation, and prosecution. Bringing these voices into the conference will ensure that policy discussions are grounded in real-world challenges and opportunities. Objectives: • To share the main findings of the field research with an international audience. • To highlight the perspectives of frontline professionals and civil society actors. • To foster dialogue between researchers, practitioners, and policymakers on how to translate evidence into practice. • To identify priority areas for training, cooperation, and policy improvement. Event Description The session will open with a concise presentation of the field research methodology and key results, covering prevention and early identification, victim support, investigation and prosecution, cross-border cooperation and inter-agency coordination. This will be followed by a panel discussion with experts and practitioners reacting to the findings, contrasting formal frameworks with on-the-ground realities and presenting promising practices.

**Opening remarks:**

- Dr. Heracles Moskoff, Secretary General for Vulnerable Persons and Institutional Protection, Ministry of Migration and Asylum, Greece

**Speakers:**

- Elina Karagiorgi, Vulnerability Officer, Protection of Victims of Trafficking and Other Forms of Violence, GSVPIP/ EUAA
- Dimitriou Pantelis, Founder, Vela Humanitarian Organization for Protection and Education
- Dr. Najad Maalla Mj'd, UN Special Representative on Violence Against Children

- Itohan Okundaye, Member of the ODIHR International Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Council
- Magdalena Czajkowska, Head of International Affairs, Office of the Ombudsperson for Children, Poland
- Oleksandra Churkina, Child Protection Specialist, UNICEF, Poland
- Dimitris Palaiologos, Vulnerability assistant, National Emergency Response Mechanism GSVPIP/ EUAA

**Moderator:**

- Andrew Gardner Acting Head, Human Rights Department, OSCE/ODIHR

Time: **16:00-17:00**

Venue: **Meeting Room 1 - Belweder**

Title: A long road to recovery: sharing good practices on victim identification and long-term support for survivors of human trafficking

Convenor: OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

Working language: English

Summary: Victims of human trafficking are highly hidden in our societies. Due to significant levels of manipulation, emotional and physical coercion by traffickers, only a fraction of victims is ever detected and identified. Even after identification, survivors often face complex and systemic challenges that go far beyond immediate support. Addressing these challenges requires more than reactive measures - it demands a comprehensive, human rights-based, victim- and survivor-centered, trauma-informed, and gender-sensitive response. To meaningfully support recovery, it is essential to provide tailored, individualized services that enable effective rehabilitation and reintegration into society. To that end, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), in collaboration with its International Survivor of Trafficking Advisory Council (ISTAC), plans a side-event to explore good practices in the identification of victims of human trafficking and the provision of needs-based assistance services for victims and survivors of human trafficking within National Referral Mechanisms (NRMs). Among others, the event will promote the adoption of survivor-informed indicators, including through its recently-published tool, and the model and role of the “independent advocate”, a professional figure representing the best interests of survivors and help victims and survivors navigate support services. Speakers at this event will discuss practical tools and approaches that can effectively support the identification and access to long-term support for victims and survivors of trafficking in the OSCE region. Along with members of the International Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Council (ISTAC), ODHR will present its recently published Survivor-Informed Indicators.

**Opening remarks:**

- Dr. Tea Jaliashvili, ODIHR First Deputy Director

**Speakers:**

- Mariaam Bhatti, Member, ISTAC
- Yulia Sachenko, Anti-Trafficking and Child Protection Director, Save Ukraine
- Jane Lasonder, Vice-Chair, ISTAC
- Amélie Sieffert, Criminal Intelligence Analyst, European Anti-Trafficking Program, International Justice Mission

**Closing remarks:**

- Kari Johnstone, OSCE Special Representative/Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (closing)

**Moderator:**

- Jeanne Celestine Lakin, Chair, ISTAC

Time: **16:00-17:00**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 2 - Saski**  
Title: Two borders, unequal protections: human rights at Poland's eastern borders  
Convenor: Save the Children Poland  
Working language: English, Russian

Summary: As wars and humanitarian crises force millions to flee, Poland's eastern borders have become a stark symbol of Europe's double standards in refugee protection. At the Belarusian border, refugees - often from the Middle East and Africa - face pushbacks, violence and denial of basic rights. Just a few hundred kilometres away, those fleeing Ukraine receive solidarity, legal pathways, and integration support. This selective approach exposes deep inequalities, with the heaviest toll on children, women, LGBTQ+ people and minorities who remain most vulnerable to trafficking, exploitation and systemic neglect. Our side event will bring together frontline responders, human rights defenders and refugees themselves to shed light on the realities often excluded from official narratives. Speakers will include representatives from Polish civic society organizations, among them: Migration Consortium, We Are Monitoring Association, Egala Association and Save the Children Poland. Drawing on lived experience, monitoring data and international standards, the discussion will highlight urgent protection gaps and propose concrete, rights-based alternatives. Despite political change in Poland, accountability for past violations remains elusive, while hate speech and discriminatory policies continue to undermine Europe's humanitarian commitments. The double standard not only threatens the safety and dignity of those at Poland's borders but also erodes trust in the universality of human rights. This event offers space for honest debate, critical evidence and collective reflection. It asks: can Europe defend human rights if they are applied selectively? Join us to amplify the voices of those most affected and to push for a future where protection is not a privilege, but a right for all.

Time: **16:00-17:00**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 3 - Krolewski**  
Title: RACIRS: Human Rights Violations and Acts of Terror Under the Guise of Social Protection  
Convenor: Creative Society  
Working language: Czech, English, German, Polish, Russian, Slovak

Summary: This side event exposes the destructive role of the Russian anti-cult movement and its hub, RACIRS. Claiming to "protect society" from so-called cults, it in fact spreads stigma and incites persecution. Its reach extends far beyond Russia, shaping media narratives and legal frameworks in Europe and the U.S. The danger is not limited to defamation. The actions of anti-cult networks fall within the scope of international law as crimes of the highest gravity. According to the Eighth Review of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (22 June 2023), the activities of anti-cult organizations and their accomplices constitute acts, methods, and practices of terrorism, which are crimes directed against all of humanity. In line with the 1948 UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, such activities qualify as genocide. And under the 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, they are recognized as genocide and crimes against humanity. Evidence is clear: stigmatization and incitement fostered by RACIRS and affiliates have led to violent attacks, displacement, and repression. In Russia, Jehovah's Witnesses suffer raids and expulsions. In China, anti-cult rhetoric has fuelled organ trafficking against Falun Gong practitioners. Such narratives are not harmless, they translate directly into terror. These networks do not merely threaten minority religions. Their campaigns also target journalists, human rights defenders, climate activists, and volunteer initiatives. The very actors that could strengthen resilience and provide humanitarian support are instead branded as "undesirable" or "extremist", stripped of protection, and exposed to violence. Recommendations for OSCE States: \* Recognize and condemn anti-cult networks as perpetrators of



terrorism, crimes against humanity, and genocide. \* Reject fabricated “expert assessments” used to justify persecution. \* Ensure legal, financial, and psychological protection for victims. \* Support international mechanisms to hold perpetrators accountable. \* Defend pluralism and solidarity as the strongest safeguard against hatred and violence. If unchecked, fear will replace freedom, and terror will hide under the mask of “social protection”. The OSCE must act decisively for justice, pluralism, and the protection of all vulnerable groups.

**Speakers:**

- Monika Svajčíková
- Veronika Leštáková
- Jaroslava Trávníčková
- Roman Gural

**Moderator:**

- Roman Gural

Time: **16:00-17:00**

Venue: **Meeting Room 4 - Opera**

Title: Humanitarian Challenges of Russian Displacement: The Ark's Experience and Best Practices for Integration

Convenor: The Ark

Working language: English

Summary: Since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, hundreds of thousands of Russians who opposed the war have been forced to leave their country. For many, this has meant losing their homes, jobs, and social connections, all while facing the risk of criminal prosecution. In new countries, their situation is further complicated by challenges with legal status, housing, psychological well-being, and integration. The Ark project, founded in March 2022 with the support of the Anti-War Committee of Russia, has become a key civil society initiative dedicated to helping these displaced people. The organization provides emergency housing, legal and psychological counselling, and offers free language courses and professional retraining programs. Additionally, Ark develops mutual aid networks and resource centres in Armenia, Georgia, Poland, Germany, and other countries, helping to build communities of solidarity and reduce the risk of social isolation. This event will focus on the humanitarian challenges faced by displaced persons and refugees, as well as best practices for supporting them. Experts and practitioners will discuss the experiences of Ark and other organizations and present recommendations for OSCE member states, international bodies, and host countries on how to protect the rights and ensure the sustainable integration of displaced people.

**Speakers:**

- Margarita Kuchusheva, Legal counsel to the Consuls of the Anti-war committee
- Andrey Pivovarov, Russian opposition politician, former political prisoner released in the 2024 exchange
- Alexandr Meniukov, Ark's coordinator in Poland, Consul of the Anti-War Committee in Poland
- Julia Kuminova, Ark's community manager in Poland, social science researcher
- Yan Slovizki, Ark's emergency assistance coordinator

Time: **16:00-17:00**

Venue: **Meeting Room 5 - Plenary**

Title: On the Human Rights situation in Belarus

Convenor: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark and the *the informal Group of Friends of Democratic Belarus*

Working language: English, Russian

Summary: OSCE participating States have collectively committed to the prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and to uphold freedom from arbitrary arrest or detention as well as the right to a fair trial. They have also repeatedly agreed to commitments on treatment of persons in detention or prison, including in Vienna in 1989, Copenhagen in 1990, Moscow in 1991, Brussels in 2006, Helsinki in 2008, Belgrade in 2015 and Tirana in 2020.

Members of the informal Group of Friends of Democratic Belarus have repeatedly expressed our deep concern regarding the severe human rights violations and abuses occurring in Belarus. These were documented by rapporteur Professor Hervé Ascensio after 38 participating States invoked the Moscow Mechanism on 23 March 2023. His report, introduced to the Permanent Council on 11 May 2023, described repression designed to hinder any form of opposition, which led to waves of arrests on political grounds, targeting demonstrators, journalists, other media workers, human rights defenders, representatives of trade unions, lawyers, political opponents, and those expressing their opposition to the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, among others. The report recommended the release of all political prisoners and the reform of existing laws in Belarus to bring national criminal legislation and the code of administrative offences in full compliance with international norms and standards.

Regrettably, Belarus has followed neither these recommendations nor a similar call for the release of all the political prisoners issued by 17 UN experts. Other reports from various UN bodies, by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights Situation in Belarus and NGOs have confirmed that the human rights situation in Belarus, in particular the situation of political prisoners, has continued to deteriorate. In his latest report, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights stated that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the crime of persecution, which is a crime against humanity, may have been committed in Belarus.

With a view to facilitating a discussion on the human rights situation in Belarus and recommendations to OSCE participating States and institutions, the Group of Friends of Democratic Belarus is organising a side event to bring together representatives from OSCE delegations, OSCE structures, civil society organisations and experts.

Guiding question:

How can the OSCE – with its comprehensive definition of security, including human rights and democracy – best hold Belarus to account for its implementation of human dimension commitments?

## **Thursday, 16 October**

Time: **08:30-09:30**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 1 - Belweder**  
Title: Strengthening resilient national human rights institutions to promote and protect human rights  
Convenor: OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights; ENNHRI (European Network of National Human Rights Institutions)  
Working language: English

Summary: National human rights institutions (NHRIs) are key elements of national and international human rights protection systems and a bridge between civil society and participating States. Due to their broad mandate covering all human rights, NHRIs are well placed to provide independent expertise to state authorities, including on the human rights implications of law, policy and state practice. In this context, meaningful cooperation of NHRIs with state authorities has great potential to advance human rights protection on the ground. OSCE participating States committed to facilitating the establishment

and strengthening of independent NHRIs. At the same time, the deteriorating environment and shrinking civic space in the OSCE region are hindering NHRIs from fulfilling their human rights mandate. NHRIs are also facing growing challenges to their effectiveness and operations, including insufficient resources, limited follow-up on recommendations and even threats and attacks. This event will highlight the importance of strong and independent NHRIs and state authorities' cooperation with NHRIs, their added value and the need to strengthen an enabling space for them as a pillar of the rule of law and democracy in the OSCE region. It will raise awareness of the challenges and possible solutions, and will make recommendations on how to meaningfully engage with NHRIs and how states can better support their work. Moderated by ODIHR, speakers will include a member of the ENNHRI Expert Group, representatives of selected NHRIs, and a representative from civil society from the OSCE region.

**Opening Remarks:**

- Priska A. Babuin, Human Rights Adviser, ODIHR
- Tobias Rahm, Senior Advisor, Swedish Institute for Human Rights, member of the ENNHRI Expert Group

**Speakers:**

- Valentin Rosca, Deputy of the People's Advocate, Office of the People's Advocate (Ombudsman) of the Republic of Moldova
- Maarten Huvenne, Head of Research and Strategy Department, UNIA - Interfederal Center for Equal Opportunities (Belgium)
- Ivan Novosel, Director of Programs, Human Rights House Zagreb

**Moderator:**

- Priska A. Babuin, Human Rights Adviser, ODIHR

Time: **08:30-09:30**

Venue: **Meeting Room 2 - Saski**

Title: Repression and Misuse of Legal Means Against Freedom of Assembly in Serbia

Convenor: Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights - YUCOM

Working language: English

Summary: In the last 3 months, the political crisis in Serbia which began in November 2024 has deepened and human rights violations in the context of that crisis are mounting. Independent civil society organizations have documented the use of violence against protesters as well as ill treatment against those detained, including threats of sexual violence. Citizens face growing restrictions on their right to freedom of peaceful assembly, while the authorities increasingly misuse legal instruments, ranging from administrative fines and criminal charges to smear campaigns to suppress demonstrators, intimidate new generations of activists, and deter civic engagement. These practices, combined with excessive use of force and institutional retaliation, undermine trust in institutions and violate OSCE commitments to protect fundamental freedoms. Meanwhile, the authorities indicated that, "in due time, the full determination of the state would be demonstrated and that they will use all available means to restore peace and order."; This side event will provide participating States with updated reporting from independent civil society on human rights violations in the context of the Serbian authorities' response to the protests and provide recommendations for bilateral responses as well as steps the OSCE can take. The panel will focus on the following key questions: 1. Do Serbia's national protection mechanisms for freedom of assembly still serve their purpose, or are we witnessing a shift toward full-scale state repression against its own citizens? 2. What concrete steps can ensure accountability for police violence, legal harassment, and other violations against protesters and activists? 3. How can OSCE institutions and participating States support defenders of freedom of assembly in Serbia and the wider region?

**Speakers:**

- Milena Vasić, Attorney at Law, Program Director, YUCOM

- Dušan Pokuševski, Belgrade Centre for Human Rights, HRH Belgrade
- Uroš Jovanović, Civic Initiatives, HRH Belgrade
- Nikola Ristić, HRD (Sviće)

**Moderator:**

- Katarina Golubović, President, YUCOM

Time: **08:30-09:30**  
 Venue: **Meeting Room 3 - Krolewski**  
 Title: Freedom Of Thought, Conscience and Religion: The Human Right to Conscientious Objection to Military Service in the OSCE Area  
 Convenor: Connection e.V. (Germany), Conscientious Objection Watch (Türkiye), Stoparmy Movement (Russia)  
 Working language: English

Summary: The human right to conscientious objection to military service is inherent to the human right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Art. 18 Universal Declaration of Human Rights). Although to freely choose, according to one's own conscience and religious beliefs, to refuse to join the army training and actions. This human right is not fully implemented in all countries and as a consequence many conscientious objectors are victims of human rights violations and persecutions which often pressure them to flee their country. In some other countries this right is not recognized and those who exercise this human right face prison term, sanction and criminal investigation. During the side event we will present international standards on this right- and first-hand experiences of conscientious objectors experiencing persecutions. The side event will also offer the opportunity to detail legal aspects connected to these violations and the case of the Russian Federation, for instance. It will then highlight the issue of providing international protection to those who are forced to leave their country and seek asylum abroad, in line with UNHCR guidelines on international protection because their human right to conscientious objection to military service is not fully implemented. In conclusion there will also be a brief description of current international campaigns on this topic.

**Speaker:**

- Ms. Hulya Ucpinar, lawyer, Conscientious Objection Watch (Türkiye)
- Sasza Belik, Lawyer, Stoparmy Movement (Russia)
- Artem Klyga, Legal Advisor, Connection e.V. (Germany)

**Moderator:**

- Zaira Zafarana, Coordinator of International Advocacy, Connection e.V. (Germany)

Time: **14:30-15:30**  
 Venue: **Meeting Room 1 - Belweder**  
 Title: Human Rights Defenders in Exile: Prospects for stronger EU protection  
 Convenor: OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights; Araminta; World Organisation Against Torture / Organisation Mondiale Contre la Torture (OMCT)  
 Working language: English

Summary: The legitimate and important role that human rights defenders play in our societies makes it essential that they can operate in a free and safe environment. This is equally true when human rights defenders are forced to leave their home countries. As the crackdown on civil society intensifies in many parts of the world, a dramatically increasing number of human rights defenders are seeking safety in exile, where they hope to continue their work freely and openly. However, they face urgent personal,

legal and organizational challenges associated with relocation, and many encounters long-term barriers linked to legal insecurity, restricted mobility and limited opportunities to continue their work. This event will explore the lived experiences of human rights defenders in exile and reflect on how a European Union directive could address the most pressing gaps. Drawing on both institutional perspectives and lived expertise, the discussion will allow critical reflection on how international mechanisms, the European Union, and national governments can better respond to the urgent needs of displaced human rights defenders. Moderated by ODIHR, participants will include representatives of Araminta, that has led the drafting and consultation of a civil society proposal for an EU directive to enhance the protection of human rights defenders in exile, and human rights defenders living in exile in various countries.

Time: **14:30-15:30**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 2 - Saski**  
Title: Peaceful assembly, freedom and pressures on human rights defenders: An Assessment of the Human Rights and Equality Agency of Türkiye  
Convenor: Eşit Haklar için İzleme Derneği - ESHID (Association for Monitoring Equal Rights- AMER)  
Working language: Turkish and English

Summary: Despite constitutional guarantees and international obligations, there are still serious restrictions on the freedom of peaceful assembly and threats against human rights defenders in Turkey. Broad bans on meetings and marches, disproportionate interventions by law enforcement agencies and the judicial and administrative harassment of defenders undermine the fundamental values of a democratic society. As the national human rights institution, the Human Rights and Equality Agency of Türkiye (TİHEK) is obliged to play an independent, effective and accountable role in protecting these rights, in accordance with the Paris Principles and OSCE commitments. However, the institution is currently failing to fulfil this responsibility, remaining silent on rights violations and failing to function as an effective mechanism. This presentation will discuss the importance of 'institutional independence' for national human rights institutions in terms of their obligation to protect human rights, using TİHEK as a concrete example.

**Speaker:**

- Nejat Taştan, Chair of the Association for Monitoring Equal Rights

**Moderator:**

- Anhelina Shablovska, Netherlands Helsinki Committee (NHC)

Time: **14:30-15:30**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 3 - Krolewski**  
Title: Freedom of Religion and Belief and Association in the OSCE  
Convenor: Set My People Free  
Working language: English

Summary: The side-event will discuss the impacts of tolerance of blasphemy extremists and criminalisation of blasphemy on freedom of conscience religion and belief and freedom of assembly. We will hear from experts within and outside the OSCE region, best practices and also warnings from other contexts when these Article 18 and Article 22 freedoms are jeopardised.

Time: **14:30-15:30**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 4 - Opera**

Title: “Repression Without Borders?”: Confronting Transnational Repression in Europe  
Convenor: Global Diligence LLP; International Partnership for Human Rights  
Working language: English

Summary: Across Europe, refugees, exiles, and human rights defenders are increasingly targeted by authoritarian governments seeking to silence dissent beyond their borders. While transnational repression (TNR) is not new, its frequency and sophistication have surged, with authoritarian regimes exploiting both legal mechanisms and digital technologies to pursue critics abroad. These practices not only violate fundamental human rights of the individuals targeted, but also undermine the rule of law, erode democratic institutions, and threaten the national security of the host states. Addressing it is especially difficult for national authorities acting alone, given its cross-border nature and rapidly shifting methods. This side event will underline the urgent need for a coordinated response among OSCE participating States to strengthen protections, bolster security, and ensure accountability for perpetrators.

**Speakers:**

- Eleonora Mongelli, Italian Federation for Human Rights (FIDU)
- Alex Tinsley, Doughty Street Chambers
- Alex Prezanti, State Capture Accountability Project (joining online)
- Simon Papuashvili, International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR)

**Moderator:**

- Maryna Zastavna, International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR)

Time: **14:30-15:30**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 5 - Plenary**  
Title: Civic Engagement for societal resilience  
Convenor: Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland  
Working language: English

Summary: This side event explores how civic engagement strengthens societal resilience. The event discusses how civic action on local level contributes to societal resilience. The session will emphasize the importance of civic action for resilient societies across the OSCE region. The event is inspired by a recent report on the role of local communities’ role in strengthening societal resilience and it brings together experts from the OSCE structures as well as policymakers. During the event, initial findings for a civil society roadmap for the OSCE will be presented and participants’ views and thoughts on it are welcome. The session seeks to collect ideas and highlight best practices for integrating civic engagement into resilience strategies across the OSCE region. Furthermore, it seeks to strengthen the collaboration between national and local authorities and civil society. Anu Juvonen, OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Special Representative on Civil Society, will moderate the session, guiding discussions and ensuring a dynamic exchange between speakers and participants. The event includes a Q&A session where the audience may comment and give feedback for the roadmap.

**Speakers:**

- PhD Pasi Mäenpää, adjunct professor (docent) at the University of Helsinki, Finland, and a member of Societal Security Hub Research Network at the Faculty of Social Science
- Ambassador Jan Haukaas, Head of Mission, OSCE Mission to Montenegro
- Martina Garbuglia, Democratization Department, OSCE Mission in Kosovo

**Moderator:**

- Anu Juvonen, OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Special Representative on Civil Society

Time: **16:00-17:00**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 1 - Belweder**  
Title: **Pivoting to Local Dialogue: Strategic Responses to Polarization**  
Convenor: **OSCE Mission in Kosovo**  
Working language: **English**

Summary: Despite an inclusive multi-ethnic institutional framework, communities in Kosovo are increasingly growing polarized from each other. Youth in Kosovo often report that they have no meaningful relationship across ethnic lines. Many Kosovo Serbs, the largest non-majority community, more and more distrust Kosovo institutions and feel unsafe. Meanwhile, progress in the high-level Belgrade-Prishtinë/Priština Dialogue is slow, and both have yet to make significant progress after the 2023 Ohrid Agreement. This intractability, particularly along ethnic lines, is a growing phenomenon in the wider European sphere. Can any progress be made to better relations between communities when high-level negotiations reach an impasse? One of the most effective tools for overcoming entrenchment is dialogue facilitation, and the OSCE's Mediation Support Team (MST), a unit within the OSCE dedicated to supporting dialogue and mediation practices, has recently called for OSCE structures to elevate their dialogue efforts. Responding to the call, the OSCE Mission in Kosovo (OMiK) has collaborated with MST to adopt a mission-wide local dialogue facilitation strategy, which provides a structured approach to new and existing dialogue initiatives. While high-level dialogue remains at an impasse, OMiK has fostered some breakthroughs on the local level, including by building a level of regular co-operation between Kosovo Albanian and Kosovo Serb municipality mayors on joint areas of interest, facilitating discussions on Special Protected Zone disputes between institutions and the Serbian Orthodox Church, and organizing exchanges between young women from Prishtinë/Priština and Belgrade via its annual Dialogue Academy. MST and OMiK are actively collaborating to replicate and amplify the methodology used in these success stories to increase local dialogues in Kosovo. Join OMiK and MST to discuss their partnership, how OMiK fosters co-operation in a polarized environment, and lessons learned for the wider OSCE area.

**Opening Remarks:**

- Susan Kerr, Senior Adviser on Freedom of Religion or Belief at ODIHR
- Mikaela Christiansson, Adviser on Combatting Racism and Xenophobia at ODIHR

**Speakers:**

- Will Hamilton, Senior Co-ordination Officer at the OSCE Mission in Kosovo
- Alexandra Pfefferle, Senior Mediation Officer, OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre's Mediation Support Team
- Jenni Laakso, Mediation Support Team, OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre's Mediation Support Team

**Moderator:**

- Igli Totozani, Director of Regional Centre Gjilan/Gnjilane at the OSCE Mission in Kosovo

Time: **16:00-17:00**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 2 - Saski**  
Title: **The Anti-Cult Movement: A Hidden Threat to Freedom and Pluralism**  
Convenor: **ALLATRA International Public Movement**  
Working language: **Czech, English, German, Polski, Russian, Slovak,**

Summary: The anti-cult movement presents itself as a defender of society against "sects" and "cults." In reality, it systematically undermines fundamental rights. It labels, stigmatizes, and criminalizes entire communities, thereby legitimizing state interventions. The victims are not only religious minorities but also journalists, academics, and civic initiatives. A particularly dangerous actor is the Russian organization RACIRS, closely linked to the Russian Orthodox Church. RACIRS is ideologically and

rhetorically aligned agents produce so-called “expert assessments” that lack any scientific basis, yet serve to declare inconvenient groups “extremist” or “undesirable”. These practices are applied not only against believers but also against independent media, environmental movements, and human rights organizations. Through agents of influence and their reach into the media, RACIRS narratives spread to other states as well: Ukraine, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Germany, France, and the United States. This constitutes a form of information terrorism, where fabricated expertise legitimizes slander, police raids, and eventually full-scale persecution. Ukraine has become one of the first countries to legally prosecute these influences. Some RACIRS agents are being investigated, and this step has been welcomed by the United States, which praised Ukraine as an example of protecting democracy against totalitarian practices. This approach should inspire other OSCE participating States as well. Recommendations: \* Monitor and condemn the activities of anti-cult structures. \* Reject unsubstantiated “expert” reports. \* Provide legal and psychological support to victims of stigmatization. \* Share best practices – take inspiration from Ukraine. \* Protect pluralism as a core OSCE value. If we do not defend pluralism, freedom will be replaced by fear. We therefore call on OSCE participating States to stand up against anti-cult movements and their disinformation networks, and to ensure that in our common space freedom prevails over uniformity.

**Speakers:**

- Dušan Valeček
- Katarina Mikitová
- Veronika Leštáková
- Roman Gural

**Moderator:**

- Roman Gural

|                   |                                                                                                             |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Time:             | <b>16:00-17:00</b>                                                                                          |
| Venue:            | <b>Meeting Room 3 - Krolewski</b>                                                                           |
| Title:            | Safe Pathways for Human Rights Defenders: Practical Solutions in Times of Growing Risks and Prolonged Exile |
| Convenor:         | Araminta, Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, International Partnership for Human Rights, Voices in Exile |
| Working language: | English                                                                                                     |

Summary: In 2025, the continued war in Ukraine, intensifying repression of civil society in authoritarian states, and the weakening of multilateral institutions have together created a precarious environment for human rights defenders (HRDs) across the OSCE region. Lawyers, journalists, artists and activists face surveillance, arbitrary detention, torture, and exile for their work defending human rights and democratic values. These developments have placed strain on the international human rights system and exposed worrying gaps in protection mechanisms. While some OSCE participating States have developed specific responses—such as humanitarian visa schemes and emergency relocation programmes—these mechanisms are now at risk of being scaled back due to shifting migration policies, national security concerns and political pressure. This side event will explore practical, replicable models for supporting HRDs in exile, drawing on the lived experiences of HRDs, analysis of experienced human rights NGOs and the positive practices from OSCE participating States. The discussion will be led by real-life experiences of HRDs who have sought safety and continued their work in exile within the framework of the OSCE Guidelines on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders. It will be contextualized within the current threats to civic space and the opportunities for participating States to demonstrate leadership and solidarity. The event will highlight different country responses from Canada and Germany, and includes Poland’s targeted humanitarian visa scheme for HRDs, which enables access to healthcare, employment, and psychosocial support, and is implemented in close cooperation with national NGOs. It will also examine the risks posed by the potential rollback of similar programmes in other contexts,



and discuss how participating States can uphold their human dimension commitments while navigating the complex migration and asylum context.

**Speakers:**

- Tamilla Imanova, Memorial Human Rights Defence Centre
- Czarina Golda S. Musni, National Union of Peoples' Lawyers
- Jennifer Gaspar, Araminta (DE)
- Aleksandra Iwanowska, Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (PL)
- Frederick John Packard, Voices in Exile (CAN)

**Moderator:**

- Brigitte Dufour, Director of International Partnership for Human Rights

Time: **16:00-17:00**

Venue: **Meeting Room 4 - Opera**

Title: Human Rights Defenders Security and Protection

Convenor: Public Association Dignity

Working language: English, Russian

Summary: Human rights defenders worldwide face threats for their work. Mechanisms to protect them are essential. This year's 2024 Human Rights Defenders Protection Index covers eight countries, compared to only three in the 2023 edition. The Index is based on the standards of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. In 2023, the level of protection for civil society activists in three Central Asian countries ranged from 13% to 29%. Access to effective legal protection and fair trials for civil society activists is hampered by a lack of an institutional framework, threats, violations of rights, and failure by the state to take necessary minimum measures. In 2024, the situation worsened and assumed serious proportions, involving broad sections of the population and sowing social phobias in society. This is evidenced by criminal cases, arrests, the adoption of amendments on freedom of association and the designation of foreign agents, the closure of NGOs, and the inability to speak out and work openly, including due to funding cuts. Corruption is a serious barrier to protecting human rights activities, and we will dedicate part of the side event to discussing this.

**Introductory remarks:**

- Representative of the Permanent Representation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands/ Switzerland / Germany to the OSCE,
- Aleksandar Sekulic, Human Rights Advisers OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights ODIHR

**Speakers:**

- Mariya Kvitsinskaya, Human rights adviser, OMCT
- Sanzhar Bokayev, public figure, Kazakhstan
- Murat Adam, lawyer, Kazakhstan
- Vyacheslav Mamedov, The Democratic Civil Union of Turkmenistan

**Moderator:**

- Anara Ibrayeva, Director of the Public Association "Dignity"

Time: **16:00-17:00**

Venue: **Meeting Room 5 - Plenary**

Title: Ukraine's nuclear and hydroelectric plants under Russian occupation: the Zaporizhzhia NPP and Kakhovka Dam cases

Convenor: Truth Hounds

Working language: English

Summary: - Militarization of the ZNPP and human rights abuses against its personnel, including presentation of key takeaways from our new report. - Corporate accountability. - Destruction of the Kakhovka Dam: ecological, infrastructural, and humanitarian consequences, including heightened nuclear safety risks at the ZNPP. - International accountability mechanisms: legal pathways to justice and a call for coordinated global action.

**Speakers:**

- Roman Koval, Head of Research Department, Truth Hounds
- Alice Mee, Senior Researcher, Truth Hounds
- Andrii Latsyba, Lawyer, Truth Hounds
- Myroslava Markova, Investigator, Project Expedite Justice (external expert)
- Olena Pashkovska, Head of Communications, Truth Hounds
- Kateryna Holoborodko, Project Coordinator, Truth Hounds

**Special Event**

Time: **18:00-20:00**  
Venue: **Meeting Room 4 - Opera**  
Title: Film Screening: The Helsinki Effect  
Convenor: Permanent Mission of Finland to the OSCE and Embassy of Finland in Poland  
Working language: English

Summary: Finland will host a film screening of “The Helsinki Effect” documentary. A separate registration link and an invitation will follow. Light refreshments will be provided in the event.

“The Helsinki Effect” is a documentary that explores the power narratives of the Cold War era. It deconstructs the process of signing the Helsinki Final Act in 1975, and reveals how it came to impact the world.