



EUROPEAN UNION

**OSCE Permanent Council 1519
Vienna, 8 May 2025**

**EU Statement on the occasion of
World Press Freedom Day**

Mr/Madam Chair,

1. Massive funding cuts, compounded by growing political repression and increasing violence towards journalists, are driving the media sector into a deep crisis and underline the immense risks that free and independent media face in 2025. As public interest media struggle for survival, authoritarian regimes and disinformation actors move swiftly to fill the void, distorting facts and manipulating public opinion.
2. We are increasingly concerned by the growing threats to journalists and other media actors, including online and offline intimidation and attacks, arbitrary detention, legal persecution and transnational repression, all aimed at silencing their work. Emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, can intensify these risks by enabling pervasive surveillance and targeted harassment. Particular attention should be paid to women journalists who face heightened, gender-specific risks.
3. Across the world, free and independent media need urgent and decisive support. Without their survival, democracy falters, along with the safety, security and freedom of citizens.

Mr/Madam Chair,

4. All OSCE participating States have jointly agreed to respect human rights, democracy and the rule of law, which are at the core of our comprehensive concept of security. Media freedom and the safety of journalists are essential notions in this regard. The RFoM has rightly pointed out that there can be no security without media freedom.

5. The link between security and media freedom is starkly illustrated in situations of armed conflict, particularly in the context of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, where journalists and media actors continue to be at risk daily. Credible reports indicate that journalists have been killed, arbitrarily detained and subjected to torture and enforced disappearances, some of which as crimes against humanity. Perpetrators must and will be held accountable according to international law. We condemn violence and crimes, such as harassment and intimidation of journalists covering war zones and frontlines and call on Russia to respect international law and to comply with their international commitments, including by protecting journalists and media actors reporting from armed conflict, in accordance with international humanitarian law.
6. Alongside external aggression, Russia and its accomplice Belarus continue their systematic, state-sponsored and intensifying internal repression. We condemn the continuous systematic crackdown on civil society, including independent media and journalists. We remain concerned about recent UN reports that systematic human rights violations are part of broader government strategies to control all spheres of life, and to suppress dissent, particularly in the context of aggressive foreign policy actions, including waging or enabling wars of aggression.
7. In the same context, we strongly condemn the gross, systematic and widespread human rights violations in these participating States, including continuing persecution and intimidation campaigns against all segments of society. We urge authorities responsible to halt the internal as well as transnational repression and to adhere to their country's international obligations to respect, protect and fulfil human rights, including to immediately and unconditionally release all political prisoners, ensuring their effective rehabilitation and an enabling civic space with free, independent and pluralistic media.
8. In other participating States, new legislation has been adopted without due public consultation, granting authorities additional tools to suppress dissent and tighten repressive measures. Laws, such as on "Foreign Agents" or "Broadcasting", risk stigmatising the work of civic activists, threatening the survival of civil society and independent media, rolling back human rights

protections, unduly restricting fundamental freedoms, and eroding democratic decision-making. We strongly condemn any acts of violence against peaceful protesters, media representatives and politicians.

9. Dozens of journalists have been arrested in various participating States in recent months, with free media outlets facing prosecution on politically motivated charges. We call on all participating States to ensure that due process guarantees and the right to a fair trial are upheld in accordance with international law. All those detained for exercising their fundamental rights should be released. Among others, we call for the release of Vladyslav Yesypenko from the RFE/RL's Ukrainian Service, unjustly held behind the bars for more than four years now.
10. We reiterate our concern over instances where journalists have been arrested while covering demonstrations. Journalists must be able to work freely and independently, as it is a fundamental principle of democracy.
11. We are also concerned about the disproportional and specific threats faced by women journalists and media actors, both online and offline.
12. We call on all participating states to join the Information and Democracy Partnership and support the international community's efforts for a global space of free, democratic and trustworthy information.

Mr/Madam Chair,

13. On this World Press Freedom Day, the European Union reaffirms its resolute commitment to defend free and independent journalism in the face of unprecedented threats. Without press freedom, our right to information, freedom to think critically and ability to hold people in power to account are compromised. A thriving, independent and pluralistic media sector is essential for the resilience and survival of democracy. We must act now to secure its future.

Thank you.

Albania, Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Republic of Moldova, San Marino and Ukraine align themselves with this statement.