



STATEMENT ON THE
INTERNATIONAL DAY TO END IMPUNITY FOR CRIMES AGAINST JOURNALISTS

Delivered by Ambassador Steffen Kongstad to the Permanent Council,
Vienna, 31 October 2019

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Mr. Chair,

I am speaking on behalf of Andorra, Canada, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Mongolia, San Marino, Switzerland and Norway.

On Saturday, 2 November, we observe the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists to emphasise the importance of taking further definite measures to counter the culture of impunity for crimes against journalists.

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, 2019 has so far seen the lowest number of worldwide killings of journalists in more than 15 years. Still, more than half of the killings of journalists in our region remain unresolved. Of the 12 journalist killings in the OSCE region in the last two years, UNESCO claims that only three have been resolved. Impunity must not prevail.

While the reduction in killings is welcome, other factors contribute to an increasingly difficult working situation for journalists, also in the OSCE region. According to Reporters Without Borders, journalists are in prison due to their journalistic work in six OSCE participating States. The Council of Europe has issued media freedom alerts for 25 member states that also participate in the OSCE. In his July report, the RFoM reported having raised issues with 41 participating States.

We continue to see further threats and harassment against media and journalists in our region, both online and offline, even from political leaders who should not only refrain from denigrating the media, but actively promote and protect their freedom. Female

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journalists, in particular, continue to pay a high price for carrying out their work. They face the majority of online violence, harassment and intimidation.

The freedom of expression and its derivative, the freedom of the media, are cornerstones of all democratic freedoms. Attacks on journalists are attacks on these freedoms. Impunity enables continuing attacks, and a more repressive environment. Ensuring accountability is a key component in preventing future attacks, and in securing a free and pluralistic press.

We have obligations to prevent violence against journalists and media workers. We must ensure accountability through the conduct of impartial, speedy, thorough, independent and effective investigations into all alleged violence. Perpetrators must be brought to justice in accordance with the rule of law. Victims and their families must have access to appropriate remedies. We must ensure even stronger legal frameworks for the protection of journalists and media workers.

Constituting the fourth pillar of democracy, journalists and other media actors must be able to perform their work independently, without undue interference, and free from fear of violence and persecution.

Thank you