



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1259 Vienna, 13 February 2020

EU Statement on the recent attack in the Chechen Republic, Russia, against Elena Milashina and Marina Dubrovina

The EU is deeply concerned about the recent attack in Grozny, Russia, against Elena Milashina, a Novaya Gazeta investigative journalist, and Marina Dubrovina, a human rights lawyer. According to reports, on the night of 6 February, a group of unidentified individuals attacked Milashina and Dubrovina and recorded the incident on camera inside the Continental Hotel in Grozny, where the pair were to attend the hearing of Islam Nukhanov. Both of them link the attack with their professional activities, as they previously received threats for working on human rights violations in Chechnya.

We echo the strong condemnation expressed by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media and the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights and call on the Russian authorities to carry out a prompt, independent and effective investigation, in order to bring those responsible to justice. We would welcome any information from the Russian delegation on the state of the investigation in this case.

This attack adds to the EU concern regarding the dire human rights situation in the Chechen Republic and the climate of hostility against human rights defenders, lawyers, independent media, and civil society organizations. Moreover, it fosters a climate of self-censorship and fear of attacks or reprisal. In this context, we reiterate our call upon the Russian authorities to make full use of the report under the Moscow Mechanism and to implement all recommendations contained therein.

The EU remains concerned for the safety of journalists in the Russian Federation considering the reports on incidents of intimidation, threats and violence. This situation puts serious pressure on freedom of expression in Russia. We echo the repeated calls by the

Representative on Freedom of the Media on the Russian authorities to intensify their efforts to end impunity for crimes committed against journalists. In Milan 2018 the Ministerial Council called on participating States to “condemn publicly and unequivocally all attacks and violence against journalists such as intimidation, harassment and threats of all forms, including legal, political, technological or economic” and we expect the Russian authorities to take a firm stance against any such attacks, including the recent one in the Chechen Republic.

Furthermore, we remain worried about the situation regarding freedom of expression in Russia and reiterate our concern regarding the legal restrictions on freedom of expression, the “foreign agents” legislation and the “undesirable organisations” legislation. We call on Russia to fully implement all OSCE commitments and international obligations related to freedom of expression and media freedom, including on the safety of journalists.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, GEORGIA and CANADA align themselves with this statement.

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