



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council 1387 Vienna, 1 September 2022

EU Statement on the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances

1. On 30 August, we marked the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances. The European Union reaffirms its strong commitment to the prevention and eradication of involuntary or enforced disappearances, as well as to combatting impunity for those responsible for – or complicit in – such crimes.
2. Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine has starkly reminded us of the brutality of enforced disappearances. The fear generated by this practice is not only limited to the victims and survivors, but also affects their families, communities and societies as a whole.
3. We are deeply alarmed by the reports, including the ones under the OSCE's Moscow Mechanism, documenting how Russian troops are abducting, detaining and unlawfully arresting civilians, including children, while refusing to provide any information about their fate or location. Such abhorrent practices, including in the so-called filtration camps, are deeply concerning. We also deplore the enforced disappearances and persecution of Crimean Tatars in the illegally annexed Crimean peninsula. We strongly condemn these grave violations of international law, including international human rights and international humanitarian law and stand firm that those responsible will be held to account.
4. Mr. Chair, enforced disappearances are a serious violation of human rights. Our OSCE and international commitments and obligations are abundantly clear: Any forms of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment are

unequivocally prohibited, under all circumstances, without exceptions. With the adoption of the 2020 Ministerial Council Decision on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, the participating States recognised enforced disappearances as a serious human rights violation in the OSCE area.

5. Regrettably, we continue to receive new alarming reports of enforced disappearances from several parts of the OSCE region. While Russia's actions in Ukraine constitute the most recent grave example, many older cases remain unresolved, denying an effective remedy and assistance to the victims and survivors.
6. In this regard, the EU remains seriously concerned about the fate of people subjected to enforced disappearances in Turkmenistan. We reiterate our strong call on Turkmenistan to immediately acknowledge this scourge, take action on the outstanding cases and eradicate the problem of enforced disappearances. The EU also reiterates its call on Belarus for a complete and transparent investigation into all alleged violations and abuses of human rights, including the reports of enforced disappearances in the aftermath of the 2020 fraudulent presidential elections. All individuals, including civil society and opposition actors, must be protected from such criminal acts.
7. We have to ensure that all persons in vulnerable situations are protected against enforced disappearances. The lack of effective protection of economic, social and cultural rights is a contributing factor to enforced disappearances. According to the UN Committee and Working Group on Enforced Disappearances, people living in poverty are more vulnerable and exposed to higher risk of enforced disappearances.
8. In light of persisting challenges, we encourage all participating States to strongly consider ratifying the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, to cooperate fully with the UN Committee and the Working Group on Enforced Disappearances and to take concrete measures to prevent enforced disappearances. This includes investigating effectively all allegations of enforced disappearances, bringing perpetrators to justice and providing proper redress to the victims and their families.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ALBANIA*, REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, the Potential Candidate Country BOSNIA

and HERZEGOVINA*, the EFTA country ICELAND, member of the European Economic Area, as well ANDORRA align themselves with this statement.

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