



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Permanent Council No 1162 Vienna, 2 November 2017

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#### **EU Statement on the occasion of the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists**

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On the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists, the European Union commends the work of journalists in uncovering abuses of power, shining a light on corruption and human right violations, and questioning received opinion, often putting themselves at risk of intimidation, violence and death. An independent and free media is the basis of a participatory and pluralist democracy, and a tool to make governments accountable for their actions.

An attack on journalists represents an attack on democracy and pluralistic societies. Information comes to us at a price: journalists are still being persecuted, detained or even killed, not only in situations of armed conflict, but also in peacetime, including in the European Union, as we have sadly witnessed only a few weeks ago. Violence against journalists and media actors not only represents an attack on the victim, but also limits the ability of the public to access information and ideas of all kinds, both online and offline.

The EU will continue to use all appropriate external policy and financial instruments to enhance the quality of journalism, access to public information and freedom of expression. The EU plays a key role in funding the European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF) and provides targeted protection through Human Rights Defenders programmes.

We condemn killings, acts of violence, intimidation and harassment against journalists and other media actors in the strongest possible terms. We expect State authorities to uphold their international obligations by protecting

journalists against intimidation, threats and violence, irrespective of their source, whether governmental, judicial, religious, economic or criminal. Any alleged unlawful killing, ill-treatment, threat or attack against journalists, whether by State or non-State actors, should be promptly investigated in an effective and independent manner, with a view to prosecuting the perpetrators of such crimes and bringing them to justice. Any impunity for these crimes is a blow to democracy and to the fundamental rights such as freedom of expression.

In this regard we echo the recent calls of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media to governments of participating States to make greater effort to end impunity for crimes committed against journalists. We call on state authorities to fulfil their responsibility to protect journalists and we take this opportunity to mention a few specific cases recently raised by the RFoM. We echo his call on the Russian authorities, on the eleventh anniversary of the killing of Novaya Gazeta journalist Anna Politkovskaya, to make more efforts to end impunity for such crimes. We echo his condemnation of the attack on Tatyana Felgenhauer, deputy editor and presenter at Echo Moskvyy radio station and of the fire bombing of the Lenta.ru Moscow offices and the attack on their website. In both cases we welcome the swift launch of criminal investigations. We also join the Representative on Freedom of the Media in his call on the Kyrgyz authorities to investigate the assault of three journalists during the recent election and to bring the perpetrators to justice. On his recent visit to Kyiv the RFoM condemned the police violence against three journalists who were covering a protest. We welcome that the Ukrainian Ministry of Interior has publicly stated its intention to fully investigate the incident. The EU remains committed to engaging with the RFoM, and call on all participating States to make use of his expertise in order to fully implement their OSCE and other relevant commitments.

Active steps must be taken to promote safety for journalists and other media actors, enabling them to carry out their tasks independently, without undue interference and without fear of violence and persecution. In view of the

upcoming Ministerial Council in Vienna, the EU looks forward to engaging in discussions on how to cooperate further in this field.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA\*, MONTENEGRO\* and ALBANIA\*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA as well as UKRAINE and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

\* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.