



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council No. 1236 Vienna, 18 July 2019

EU Statement on the 10th Anniversary of the Murder of Natalia Estemirova, Human Rights Defender and Journalist in the Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation

15 July marked ten years since the abduction and murder of Natalia Estemirova, a journalist and human rights defender working in the Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation. According to witnesses, unknown men forced Estemirova into a car outside her apartment building on the morning of 15 July 2009. She was found later that day in the neighbouring Republic of Ingushetia, with gunshot wounds to her head and chest.

Estemirova was a board member of the Russian human rights organisation, Memorial, a journalist and a frequent contributor to the Novaya Gazeta and the Caucasus news Web site Kavkazsky Uzel. She had been awarded the Anna Politkovskaya Award in 2007, the Human Rights Watch annual award for extraordinary activism also in 2007, the European parliament's Robert Schuman medal in 2005, and the Right to Survival award from the Swedish Parliament in 2004.

When Estemirova was murdered in 2009, the then OSCE Chair in Office condemned her killing, describing it as a “horrible and cowardly attack against fundamental human rights principles.” Although the then Russian President, Dmitry Medvedev, condemned the murder and called for a thorough investigation, no one has been brought to justice. The EU deplores the lack of accountability 10 years after the murder.

In 1975, participating States recognised the universal significance of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the right of the individual to know and act upon their rights. In Vienna in 1989, we expanded this, committing states to “ensure that no individual exercising, expressing the intention to exercise or seeking to exercise these rights and freedoms or any member of his family, will as a consequence be discriminated against in any manner”.

Natalia Estemirova was the sixth Novaya Gazeta journalist murdered since 2000. We remind the Russian authorities, that last year in Milan we committed to “take effective measures to end impunity for crimes committed against journalists, by ensuring accountability as a key element in preventing future attacks.”

We also echo the statement of 15 July by the Human Rights Commissioner of the Council of Europe, Dunja Mijatovic, who called on the Russian authorities to pursue more resolutely the investigations to identify all the persons involved in her murder, and in particular those who ordered it, and ensure that they are held to account.

Natalia Estemirova devoted her career to shining a light on violations of human rights in the Chechen Republic, and ensuring that others around her knew and could act on their rights. She embodied the spirit of the Helsinki Final Act; she and her family deserve justice.

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 and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.