



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Warsaw Human Dimension Conference Warsaw, 2 – 13 October 2023

EU statement – Plenary session 2 Fundamental Freedoms I

1. First, let me reaffirm that freedom of opinion and expression, media freedom and safety of journalists are key priorities for the EU at home and abroad, lying at the core of the comprehensive concept of security. As all human rights, they must be ensured online and offline.
2. As the RFoM has pointed out: for secure and democratic societies, journalists and other media actors must be able to perform their work freely and independently, without interference, restrictions, or fear. Female journalists face specific challenges and are often targeted both for being journalists, and simply for being women. Against the backdrop of democratic backsliding, including in the OSCE region, and the scale of violations of media freedom-related commitments, **the unique mandate and autonomous role of the RFoM** has never been more important, including in times of conflict and crises.
3. We deeply regret the number of journalists and other media actors who have lost their lives **as a result of Russia's unjustified, unprovoked and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine**. We condemn the so-called "sentences", issued in the **illegally annexed Crimea** by illegitimate Russian authorities, against Ukrainian journalists. Russia has severely restricted freedom of opinion and expression and media freedom in these areas of Ukraine.
4. The further increased internal repression in **Russia** has become a significant enabling factor of Russia's aggression abroad. The Moscow Mechanism concluded that among the accused and convicted persons under the "Fake news" legislation related to the Russian Armed Forces are strikingly many

journalists, opposition politicians and human rights defenders who did not follow the State-imposed narrative about Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. This, among too many other examples, shows the link between internal repression and external aggression.

5. As the RFoM has expressed, the continuous setbacks for independent media in **Russia** are deeply concerning, including the cases against Ruslan Leviev, Michael Nacke, Dmitry Ivanov, Andrey Novashov, and many others. We strongly condemn the severe expansion of restrictive legislation and systematic repression.
6. In **Belarus**, the systematic and widespread repression continues unabated and intensifies. Like the RFoM, we denounce the continued repression of media actors, including Maryna Zolatava, Ludmila Chekina, Valeryia Kastsyuhova, Andrzej Poczobut, Darya Losik, Ihar Losik, Dzmitryy Luksha, Larysa Shchyrakova, Siarhei Stankevich and Aleh Rubchenia, Ksenia Lutskina, Viaceslau Lazarau.
7. We reiterate our calls on both Russia and Belarus to immediately and unconditionally release all those arbitrarily detained and imprisoned. We also echo the RFoM's concerns about cases of imprisonment, arbitrary arrest or detention of journalists and media actors in **Tajikistan** and **Türkiye**, among others. We call on all OSCE participating states to fully abide by their OSCE commitments and international obligations related to this session's theme. We reiterate the EU's firm commitment to do the same.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ALBANIA*, UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, and BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA*, and the EFTA countries ICELAND and LIECHTENSTEIN, members of the European Economic Area, as well SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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