



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE

JOINT STATEMENT ON THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNIVERSAL
DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

As delivered by Ambassador Anne-Kirsti Karlsen at the Permanent Council,
Vienna, 14 December 2023

Mr Chair,

On behalf of the following countries: Albania, Andorra, Canada, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Norway, Switzerland, United Kingdom, we solemnly reflect and reaffirm our commitment on this 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The past decades have witnessed the transformative power of human rights in improving lives across the globe. Members of civil society and others who stand up for human rights and democracy have played a pivotal role in advancing the respect and protection of human rights. However, today's challenges remind us that our journey towards upholding human rights and fundamental freedoms is far from over. Respecting human rights of all people is key to our common future, peace, and stability.

In Ukraine, civilians suffer from Russian hostilities. Evidence of atrocities is being collected for accountability and memorialisation purposes.

In Iran, human rights defenders, and not least women, continue to face arbitrary detention and lengthy prison sentences. Just this week, the Nobel Peace Prize for 2023 was awarded to Narges Mohammadi for her long and courageous battle against oppression of women in Iran and her struggle for freedom and liberty to all.

In Afghanistan, women and girls are facing systemic and institutional discrimination. They have been excluded from public life and banned from secondary and higher education.

In Belarus the practice of incommunicado and lengthy detentions – with a risk of enforced disappearances – continues to increase for members of the political opposition.

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In Russia, fear of repression has led protesters to use blank sheets of paper as a symbol of their silenced voices. The assault on LGBT rights has become a symbol of Russia's rejection of The Universal Human Rights.

Mr Chair,

We face a complex web of conflicts, the lingering effects of the pandemic, climate crisis, disinformation, and attacks on democratic institutions, all stressing our human rights system.

In the region of Nagorno-Karabakh, over 100'000 refugees fled to Armenia, having to leave everything behind.

Recognizing Israel's right to ensure its security, we also remind the belligerents of their obligations in the conduct of hostilities. In particular that of respecting the principles of international humanitarian law, including humanity, proportionality, distinction, and precaution in all circumstances.

Mr Chair,

Shrinking civic space is a fundamental challenge to the role of civil society in the promotion and protection of human rights. Human rights defenders need protection and support. In particular, we need to defend and promote the rights of all women and girls and ensure their full, equal, meaningful, and safe participation in all spheres of public life.

Without the liberty for media to operate freely, to report and analyse events without fear of censorship or reprisal, true security cannot be achieved.

Nowhere in the OSCE region is media freedom under greater threat than in the Russian Federation and in the parts of Ukraine that Russia has illegally occupied. Let me just insert here, that it is puzzling to hear the Russian Federation blame others for the lack of cooperation in the third dimension.

Protecting journalists and ending impunity is key to the OSCE's vision of comprehensive security. We applaud the OSCE's Representative on the Freedom of the Media in upholding this fundamental pillar.

Mr Chair,

We acknowledge democratic governance and the rule of law as the cornerstones of stable, prosperous a peaceful societies Safeguarding democracy is an important part of

that. We commend ODIHR for conducting an impressive number of 24 election observation missions in 23 OSCE participating States this year alone.

The principle of universality and indivisibility of human rights needs to be upheld. Political shifts and economic progress cannot undermine fundamental freedoms; security should never be prioritized over the rights of individuals; the need for online privacy cannot conflict with our duty to protect children from sexual abuse. Just as managing migratory flows should never be more important than protecting people who need protection.

Mr Chair,

The promotion and protection of human rights is not just a moral imperative or a strategic necessity, it is based on legal obligations. It's an integral part of a broader approach that recognizes the interdependence of human rights, economic development, and political stability in achieving lasting peace and security.

Violations of human rights serve as early warning signs of greater instability or impending conflict. By monitoring and addressing these violations, the OSCE can take proactive measures to prevent the escalation of conflicts, thereby contributing to the security of the whole region.

As we commemorate this anniversary, we confirm our dedication to these rights and principles, understanding that the path towards a world where every individual's dignity and rights are respected is a continuous journey, one that we must undertake with unwavering commitment and collective effort.

I thank you.