



30th Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council Skopje, 30 November-1 December 2023

Joint Statement on the Safety of Women Journalists

The following OSCE participating States align themselves to this statement by the Chairpersonship-in-Office:

(Albania, Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America)

Recognizing the essential role of media freedom, pluralism and the diversity of voices in enabling and sustaining democracy and comprehensive security, it is imperative that States intensify their efforts to safeguard the rights and safety of journalists. Of particular concern is the alarming trend of online violence and disinformation disproportionately targeting women journalists, with severe repercussions for plurality and democracy. With nearly three quarters of women journalists experiencing online gender-based violence in the course of their work increased collaborative efforts are urgently needed to address the safety of women journalists, both online and offline.

Studies further substantiate a clear causal relationship between online threats and gender-related disinformation targeting women journalists and subsequent offline attacks. Gender-based violence online and offline and gender-related disinformation

endangers the well-being of journalists and their ability to perform their professional duties. These acts have a chilling effect, causing women journalists to self-censor or even leave their careers entirely at a cost not only to those targeted, but also to media freedom and plurality as a whole.

This also perpetuates a climate of impunity for crimes against them. Enhanced efforts are thus needed to uphold key OSCE commitments, in particular the 2018 Ministerial Council Decision No. 3 on the Safety of Journalists, as well as international human rights obligations and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Building on the OSCE CiO Conference on Gender Equality and the OSCE Representative of Freedom of the Media (RFoM) work on the Safety of Female Journalists Online (#SOFJO), we hereby reaffirm our commitment to comprehensively enhance the safety of women journalists and promote media freedom and information integrity.

The 2023 OSCE Ministerial Council, following the launch of the SOFJO Monitoring Guidelines by the OSCE RFoM provide an important opportunity for States to underscore the crucial role of the SOFJO agenda for the principles of equality, free media and democracy in the OSCE area. Recognizing the need to enhance data collection and analysis on online gender-based violence and gender-related disinformation against women journalists, we commend the RFoM on the launch of the SOFJO Monitoring Guidelines and endorse the Guidelines' objective of more effective monitoring, recording and transparently reporting on incidents.

To this end, we declare our dedication to prioritize the crucial issue of online safety for women journalists on both the international stage and within our respective national contexts and recall the importance of

1. Condemning incidents of online gender-based violence and gender-related disinformation, against women journalists as one of the most serious contemporary threats to their safety and damaging to media freedom, as

highlighted in the 2022 Joint Declaration on Freedom of Expression and Gender Justice.

2. Addressing the safety of journalists holistically, including by adopting a gender perspective, by paying attention to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination facing journalists, and by recognizing the multifaceted nature of threats faced by journalists, we acknowledge that physical, legal, psychological, digital and economic risks are interlinked and often intertwined with broader challenges to media freedom.
3. Enhancing data collection efforts, the analysis and reporting of cases of gender-based online violence building on the SOFJO Monitoring Guidelines in order to prevent the escalation of violence, facilitate research, raise public awareness and inform the design of effective protection measures and policies.
4. Strengthening mutual cooperation to foster an inclusive, gender-responsive, and whole-of-society approach. Sharing best practices in combating online gender-based violence contributes to enabling an environment conducive for pluralism and media freedom. Encouraging digital technology companies, in particular online platforms, to proactively fulfil their responsibilities to respect the rights of women and girls, center their policies and practices on human rights, and implement transparent and accessible reporting mechanisms.

Dedicating sufficient human and financial resources to tackling online gender-based violence against women journalists, supporting those targeted.

We underscore the vital importance of upholding media freedom, adopting a gender perspective in our approach to respect, protect, and fulfil the right to freedom of expression, and enhancing the psychological and physical safety of journalists, both offline and online. We extend a call to action to all OSCE participating States, urging all States to join us in increasing efforts to champion both media freedom and gender equality across the OSCE region.