

OSCE group of friends on safety of journalists: joint statement

Madam Chair,

I am speaking on behalf of the informal OSCE Group of Friends on Safety of Journalists, composed of the following participating States: Austria, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America.

I would like to welcome the Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM) and thank Ms Ribeiro for her report to the Permanent Council, and for keeping the topic of the safety of journalists high on her agenda, and the agenda of the Permanent Council.

We [agreed in Milan in 2018](#) that the work of journalists can put them, and their family members, at risk of violence, harassment and intimidation, and resolved to take action as participating States to enhance the safety of journalists.

Unfortunately, Ms Ribeiro's report highlights that not all participating States, have lived up to our common OSCE commitments. Journalists and other media actors in some participating States in our region continue to face killing, torture, enforced disappearance, arbitrary arrest, detention and expulsion, intimidation, harassment, and threats.

In her report, Ms Ribeiro stated that journalism is becoming an ever more dangerous profession. She highlighted her shock at two killings of journalists since she took office. In her first five months, she has addressed 22 cases of abuse, harassment and violence against media workers reporting on public gatherings. It is clear that our words of 2018 have not translated into reality. Far from it.

Madam Chair,

Independent media is a cornerstone of free and open societies, and helps safeguard human rights and fundamental freedoms. Journalists and other media actors play an important role in covering elections, informing the public about candidates and their political platforms, and helping to expose a wide audience to important political debates. As Ms Ribeiro said last week, on World Press Freedom Day: "our democracies depend on a thriving and pluralistic media landscape".

Ensuring the safety of journalists helps to strengthen our democracies. Unfortunately, as we have seen across the OSCE region including in Belarus, the reverse is also true. All forms of attacks on journalists, whether committed by the authorities or by others under a cloak of impunity, only serve to undermine democracy.

We therefore call on participating States to put into practice our shared human dimension commitments, including the Milan Decision of 2018. We call for the immediate release of journalists and other media actors who have been arbitrarily detained, and to hold accountable those responsible for attacks on journalists and other media actors.

Madam Chair,

The Group of Friends on Safety of Journalists remains committed to supporting the RFoM in her important work. We agree with the RFoM's assertion that silencing women journalists constitutes an attack on democracy itself and strongly support the RFoM's work on the Safety of Female Journalists Online, including the SOFJO resource guide.

Women journalists face additional and gender-specific pressures in their efforts to conduct investigative reporting, and gender-based violence and abuse and gendered disinformation are some of the tools used to silence them. The result is, unfortunately but understandably, often self-censorship.

Self-censorship is also increasing in a number of participating States where journalists, media workers and editors are subjected to pressure, threats and harassment online. Freedom of the media is suffering as a result. It is all part of the "bleak picture" described by the RFoM in her report.

Against such a sobering backdrop, the Group of Friends remains committed to continuing our work with other participating States, and the RFoM, to help us all achieve our common goals on the safety of journalists.

Thank you Madam Chair.