

# OSCE group of friends on safety of journalists: Joint statement to the OSCE

This statement is delivered on behalf of the Group of Friends on Safety of Journalists, which consists of the following member States: Austria, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States. We thank the Representative for her report and the Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM) for good cooperation in the past year.

We fully support the autonomous mandate of the Representative and Ms Ribeiro in her execution of that mandate. We appreciate her clear stance regarding Russia's unprovoked and unjustified aggression against Ukraine. We also support her attention to the rest of our region – no country is immune to shortcomings. This is clearly demonstrated by the interventions in a total of 53 OSCE participating States reported by the RFoM so far this year.

As participating States, we have reaffirmed that freedom of expression and media freedom are cornerstones of our common security. The RFoM is a vital instrument for the promotion of this fundamental principle, and we encourage all States to make good use of the toolbox created within the Representative's mandate.

Mr. Chair,

2022 truly has been a dark year for the safety of journalists in our region. Russia's aggression against Ukraine has put a spotlight on the importance of the protection of journalists and media actors in conflict and war. Despite enormous risks, they strive to provide unbiased, trustworthy, and fact-based information from zones of conflict. We urgently call on the Russian Federation to immediately end its attacks on independent media at home and abroad and to respect the rights of journalists and media actors in accordance with international human rights law, international humanitarian law and OSCE commitments.

The 2nd of November marks the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists. While killings are the most extreme form of media censorship, journalists are also subjected to countless other threats – ranging from kidnapping, torture, and other physical attacks to harassment, particularly in the digital sphere. Furthermore, journalists also face intimidation from public authorities and political leaders in their own and other countries, such as illegitimate state surveillance, the use of SLAPPS or the denial of visa to travel for work.

Threats of violence and attacks against journalists create a climate of fear for media actors, impeding the free circulation of information, opinions, and

ideas for all. The disproportionate targeting of women journalists and other women media actors through structural sexual and gender-based violence, harassment and abuse is of deep concern and runs the risk of silencing women's voices.

All OSCE participating States have committed to protect journalists. Proper investigation and prosecution of perpetrators should go hand in hand with the positive obligations for participating States to promote a safe and enabling environment for independent media.

Threats against media freedom, safety of journalists and freedom of expression is part of the backsliding of democracy that we are witnessing around the world. The right to freedom of expression and opinion, including the ability to access to reliable information are corner stones of a democratic society. There is indeed no security without media freedom.

Dear Representative Ribeiro,

We congratulate you, past Representatives and all your colleagues in the Office of the RFoM with the 25th anniversary. You can trust in the continued support of all participating States in the OSCE Group of Friends on Safety of Journalists.

I thank you.