



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council 1402 Vienna, 15 December 2022

EU Statement on the International Human Rights Day

1. On 10 December, we celebrated Human Rights Day, marking the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as the remarkable contribution of civil society and human rights defenders to the promotion and protection of human rights. This year's theme, *Dignity, Freedom and Justice for All*, is a recognition of the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable human rights for all members of the human family as a foundation for freedom, justice and peace in the world.
2. Sadly, this theme could not have been more salient. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine is a stark reminder that security *is* comprehensive. Lasting security and prosperity *among* states cannot be sustained without respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy, and the rule of law *within* states.
3. We have witnessed a particularly serious attack on human rights this year, not least due to Russia's unprovoked, unjustified and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine that has caused, and continues to cause, inconceivable human suffering. Three independent reports under the OSCE's Moscow Mechanism have documented this unprecedented decline in respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms resulting from Russia's actions in Ukraine, but also within the Russian Federation.
4. We remain concerned by increasing discrimination and repression of independent voices in the Russian Federation, including through new legislation on "foreign agents", independent media, and LGBTI persons. And we continue to be appalled by the reports of blatant human rights violations committed by Russia's Armed Forces in Ukraine, including, the use of torture, sexual and gender-based violence and other ill-treatment, as well as abductions and forced deportations of civilians, including children. We stand firm that those responsible must and will be held to account.

5. Next year, we will celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Yet, the undermining of democracy, grave systematic human rights violations, and violent repression of democratic forces, continue to take place in the OSCE area. Some participating States continue to adopt and implement legislation and policies obstructing the work of civil society, journalists and human rights defenders, or creating legislative obstacles to the formation and functioning of civil society.
6. The Łódź Parallel Civil Society Conference, as well as the Warsaw Human Dimension Conference, addressed many of these challenges, including the violent crackdown on civil society and the ever-growing number of political prisoners in Belarus and the Russian Federation. We highly value the individuals and organisations that seek to hold all participating States to account in the implementation of their OSCE commitments on human rights.
7. We commend – and stand in solidarity with – all human rights defenders, who bravely face pressure, intimidation, reprisals, and attacks in many countries, including in the OSCE area. The imprisonment of the 2022 Nobel Peace Prize Winner Ales Bialiatski, founder of Viasna, is but one example of such reprisals. There are now more than 1430 political prisoners in Belarus, and, like Yuri Dmitriev of the Nobel Peace Prize Winner Memorial, at least 500 in Russia, a number tragically growing each day.
8. The EU commends the work of the autonomous institutions in supporting participating States in upholding their human rights commitments. Their work, mandates and institutional independence are essential to the protection and advancement of fundamental freedoms and human rights.
9. We will continue to call on all OSCE participating States to live up to their international human rights obligations and OSCE commitments and to make full use of the ample capacities of the OSCE and its toolbox in this regard. We will continue to speak out against the shrinking civic space, intimidation and reprisals against civil society and human rights defenders across the region. Because human rights are inalienable and security is comprehensive.

The Candidate Countries NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, ALBANIA*, UKRAINE and the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, the Potential Candidate Country

BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA*, and the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as ANDORRA, MONACO and 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.