

**JOINT STATEMENT DELIVERED BY AMBASSADOR VÉRONIQUE PEPIN-HALLÉ
ON BEHALF OF THE MEMBERS OF THE INFORMAL GROUP OF FRIENDS ON
SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS**

UNDER CURRENT ISSUE:

The International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists

1541st MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL

6 November 2025

Chair,

I am delivering this statement on behalf of the following participating States that are members of the Informal Group of Friends on Safety of Journalists: Austria, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and my own country, Canada.

On 2 November, we marked the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists. This day is an opportunity for us all to honour the courage and commitment of journalists around the world who risk—and too often lose—their lives in pursuit of truth. Their work is essential to the protection of democracy, human rights, and the public's right to know.

Regrettably, and despite participating States' commitments, journalists face an increasingly hostile environment across the OSCE region. Russia's ongoing unprovoked and unjustifiable war of aggression against Ukraine, with the complicity of Belarus, has accelerated the deterioration of journalist safety, while authoritarian trends in the OSCE region have transformed journalism itself into a high-risk profession. Instead of protection and justice, journalists encounter harassment, censorship, and violence. These threats are often reinforced by impunity and state capture of institutions that should guarantee accountability.

Ending impunity for crimes against journalists requires States to take action to ensure accountability by investigating allegations of violence against journalists in a timely, impartial, and effective manner; by bringing perpetrators to justice and by ensuring that victims have access to appropriate remedies. However, far too often, we see that instead of protecting journalists and investigating the crimes committed against them, States have instead criminalised journalism itself.

In the context of Russia's unprovoked and unjustifiable war of aggression against Ukraine, the reality is stark. Dozens of Ukrainian and foreign journalists have been killed, or subjected to arbitrary detention, torture and enforced disappearance by the occupying Russian forces. The latest victims - Ukrainian journalist Olena Hramova, camera operator Yevhen Karmazin and French photojournalist Antoni Lallican, who were killed in Russian drone strikes while reporting in Kramatorsk and the town of Druzhkivka, in the Donetsk Oblast, while their colleagues, correspondent Oleksandr Kolychiev and a freelance photographer, Georgiy Ivanchenko, were injured in the same attacks. We remember all those who were kidnapped, tortured and died in Russian captivity for reporting on life in the temporarily occupied territories.

At the same time, in Russia, the pattern is clear and chilling. Independent journalists reporting on war, corruption, and dissent have been criminalised under vague charges of extremism, “foreign agent” affiliation or dissemination of “false information” about the armed forces.

In Belarus, reporters and media actors face a similarly repressive environment, where criminal defamation, “extremism,” and state security offences loom large, as protections for press freedom are stripped away. Numerous journalists have been imprisoned for their profession on politically motivated charges.

We remain deeply concerned by the erosion of media freedom in Georgia. Once a regional leader in press liberty, the Georgian authorities are now pursuing legislation and judicial actions that undermine independent journalism. The conviction and imprisonment of journalist Mzia Amaghlobeli in August 2025 exemplifies this troubling trend. Her case reflects a broader climate of intimidation and legal pressure against the media, marking a shift away from accountability and towards state-led repression.

These are, regrettably, only a few examples of state campaigns to intimidate journalists and stifle media freedom across the OSCE region. Taken together, these cases also reflect a grave distortion of the participating States' commitment to end impunity. Rather than investigating and prosecuting those who assault, threaten, or kill journalists, we are witnessing the judicial and penal systems turned against the journalists themselves, while attacks on them remain unpunished.

In this context, the implementation of the OSCE commitments in the field of media freedom, including Ministerial Council Decision No. 3/18 on the Safety of Journalists and the work of the Representative on Freedom of the Media in this regard are crucial.

Ending impunity is not only about protecting journalists—it is about defending democracy. On this occasion, we reaffirm our collective commitment to uphold media freedom, protect those who speak truth to power, and ensure that justice is never silenced.