

Report by the Representative on Freedom of the Media to the OSCE Permanent Council: Joint Statement, April 2026

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UK and others call for action to uphold safety of journalists and media freedom against a deteriorating background within some OSCE countries.

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

Dear Ambassador Braathu,

We are pleased to see you again in the Permanent Council and to hear your latest progress report. The large number of topics contained in this report illustrates the remarkable work of your team, compact but very dedicated, knowledgeable and well connected with the relevant actors for the promotion and defence of Freedom of the media.

We fully share the conviction that underlies your mandate that freedom of the media is an inseparable component of democracy, crucial to the stability of our societies and our collective security. And because this freedom is challenged by profound technological and economic upheavals, and anti-democratic political trends, we remain committed to the independence of your mandate, in all its components, especially the early warning and public advocacy.

The Russian Federation's illegal and unjustifiable war of aggression against Ukraine is a major threat for the safety of journalists: a significant number of journalists have been killed or subjected to arbitrary detention, torture and enforced disappearance by Russia while exercising their profession. Media infrastructure and media workers have become direct targets of Russian attacks. We call on the Russian Federation to immediately and unconditionally release all media professionals imprisoned because of their professional activities, including in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine.

In Russia itself and in Belarus media actors have been harassed, attacked and imprisoned for their professional activities on politically motivated charges, on the basis of so called "anti-extremism" and "anti-terrorism" laws, the audience itself is often criminalized for searching for independent information.

We remain deeply concerned by the erosion of media freedom in other parts of the OSCE region, which take a variety of forms, well described and illustrated in your report. Journalists have been arrested, prosecuted, and convicted in a number of countries, including Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Türkiye, and Uzbekistan. In Turkmenistan the room for independent journalism is very limited.

Women journalists continue to suffer from gender-based violence, on and off-line and we commend your work to promote the safety of women journalists.

Dear Ambassador,

We count on your vigilance to raise these issues and to continue to provide assistance to the participating States in facing these and other challenges. In this context, it is crucial to remind all participating States their commitments, such as those subscribed by the 57 in Milan decision on the Safety of Journalists in 2018. They include, among others, bringing their laws, policies and practices fully in compliance with their international obligations and commitments so that they do not limit the ability of journalists to perform their work independently and without undue interference; condemning publicly and unequivocally all attacks and violence against journalists and urging political leaders, public officials and/or authorities to refrain from intimidating, threatening or condoning journalists.

Dear Ambassador Braathu,

We look forward to our further cooperation with you and your office. We will continue to support you in exercising your mandate, and denounce, together with you, all efforts to reduce the freedom of the media. We wish you all the best in your endeavours.

Thank you.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/report-by-the-representative-on-freedom-of-the-media-to-the-osce-permanent-council-joint-statement-april-2026>