



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe**  
**The Representative on Freedom of the Media**  
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**22 November 2018**

## **Regular Report to the Permanent Council** *for the period from 6 July 2018 to 22 November 2018*

### **Introduction**

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to present to you my latest Report to the Permanent Council. The period covered by this report is from July this year until today.

During this reporting period, I have been stunned, again, by the exceptionally high level of attacks and threats against journalists, in very different circumstances. One event in particular has become the very symbol of the violence and risks journalists face.

The murder of Jamal Khashoggi, a Washington Post columnist, on the second of October in Istanbul, shocked the world, and all of us here, by its premeditation and horrendous cruelty. The responsibility for this terrible crime lies outside of the OSCE region.

But, even had no such crimes been committed in OSCE participating States during this period, we cannot forget the journalists who were previously murdered in our region.

Journalists are attacked because of their investigations, their reports, their opinions.

They are attacked and targeted by many different groups: extremists, football hooligans, participants in public demonstrations, organised criminal groups, including those with political connection, and there are still cases of violence by the police—even if in many countries, the police protects journalists.

Female journalists continue to be specifically targeted, especially online, simply because they are women.

I am worried about a climate of denigration, de-legitimation, constant accusations and threats against the press.

This creates a dangerous environment and puts at risk not only the safety of journalists but also the fundamental role of the press in democracy. It is also a hindrance to the fulfilment of Commitments of participating States on freedom of expression and freedom of the media.

Of the more than 170 interventions I made during this reporting period, 53 are on issues relating to the safety of journalists, among which there were 14 cases of physical violence, 2 shootings, 1 arson attack, and many threats, including death threats, and cases of harassment.

But I want to highlight that 92 of my interventions were related to the protection of the rights of journalists and work of media outlets. This includes administrative or judicial decisions against the media, such as imposition of fines, closing of media outlets, blocking of websites, search and seizure of journalists' property, forced disclosure of confidential sources, and deportation of journalists and travel bans.

As there was an increased number of cases relating to the protection of sources of journalists, I would like to recall the importance of the principle for media freedom and journalism.

I also want to underline that, among my interventions on the protection of the rights of journalists, several concerned over 70 individual cases of detention and imprisonment of journalists and media workers.

This shows the long road still ahead of us.

Our Organization, with this Institution, the Representative on Freedom of the Media, exists to address these issues, to make progress where there are shortcomings, and to support the implementation of agreed principles and commitments. We must use it.

In this critical context, the OSCE and its participating States must mobilise to protect its journalists and to preserve media freedom in our region.

Today, I call for more efforts to ensure both physical and legal safety of journalists in the OSCE region, to free imprisoned journalists, and to create an environment conducive to media freedom.

I praise the work we have been doing with many participating States and your governments on legislation and policies to enhance media freedom.

I will continue to support and encourage the exchange of information and good practices to develop a more open, diverse and modern media landscape in all countries of the region.

During this period, we provided four new legal reviews to three participating States: France, Montenegro and Turkey.

We organised two regional conferences.

I want to thank the Government of Georgia for hosting our South Caucasus Media Conference in Tbilisi, which brought together participants from the three South Caucasus countries.

We also organised earlier this month our 20th Central Asia Media Conference in Astana, and I would like to thank the government of Kazakhstan for hosting this event and receiving me, and the OSCE Programme Office in Astana for their support.

Following these conferences, a set of recommendations, discussed with the participants, will be sent to all the states of the respective regions and I hope they will be closely examined.

I also wish to commend the fruitful cooperation between my Office, the OSCE Mission to Montenegro and the OSCE Mission to Skopje, who jointly organized an important conference on new business models of media with professionals from the whole Southeast Europe region, in Podgorica, and the Mission to Skopje for welcoming me once again.

In this reporting period, during my country visits to Armenia, Cyprus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Poland, I met with civil society and members of the governments as well as with Prime Ministers in several of these states, and I was honoured to receive this week, in my office here in Vienna, the Prime Minister of Albania, Edi Rama.

We had, in all these meetings, frank and open discussions on the most pressing media freedom issues in each country, especially on safety of journalists, on media legislation and pluralism, on public service broadcasting and independence, on online regulation, defamation and hate speech, as well as on individual cases of journalists and media that I have raised in my interventions.

It is clear that we have not solved all the cases and that we still have a lot to do on most of these topics.

But we have engaged in serious and constructive processes. I want to thank your Delegations for their support in the preparation of these visits. I look forward to continuing this important work with all participating States.

One of the most discussed issues is the regulation of the Internet and how to counter unlawful, violent and extremist content, while preserving freedom of expression.

Building a free and secure open Internet is one of the main challenges of our time and will obviously demand a lot of international cooperation.

It will depend on a combination of different levels of action:

- the legislation, which is a legitimate tool of action of the States but with the need to avoid inconsistencies, with international standards on freedom of expression and between countries. Because here, the risk is the fragmentation of the Internet;
- the responsibility of social platforms. But here, the risk is the privatisation of the regulation and more opacity; the opacity of algorithm if there is no public or civil society oversight;
- and self-regulation by media actors and intermediaries.

These three levels have to be combined as there will not be a solution only through legislation. We need to ensure once again that these legislations and systems of regulation will be consistent at the international level, so as to preserve this open space of information.

On self-regulation, I would like to underline the importance of diverse initiatives by journalists and civil society to promote quality of information, professional standards, respect for ethical codes and self-regulation.

There are a lot of local initiatives, with local press councils for instance. But there are also international initiatives.

In the age of fake news and manipulation of information we need, now more than ever, journalism based on ethical standards to provide reliable information. Independent, free and pluralistic journalism is a vital pillar of democracy in the new digital jungle of information. This is another reason for participating States to support journalists, and also to support and encourage them in developing their own self-regulation mechanisms.

That's also why I want to mention initiatives at the international level, like the one launched by Reporters Without Borders, on the occasion of the Paris Peace Forum and of the Internet Governance Forum, toward an international framework on Information and Democracy. It was launched with the support of several Heads of state and government including from OSCE participating States.

I would like, also, to mention the project by the freedom of expression NGO Article 19, on self-regulation of social media platforms, with my support and that of the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of expression, David Kaye.

Excellencies,

In two weeks, we will gather in Milan at the Ministerial Council, and I hope that you will adopt a strong decision on safety of journalists. It would send a clear and resounding message that the protection of journalists is a priority of the OSCE participating States at this critical time.

And this is a time where we need this Organisation, with its strong Commitments to resist the current negative tide and to protect media freedom as a cornerstone of democracy, of cooperation and of security.

I want here to thank my team for helping me perform my Mandate, and your Delegations for their cooperation with my Office.

Thank you very much.

## Issues raised with participating States

### Albania

On **30 August** I issued a public statement condemning a shooting at the family home of News 24 TV channel journalist Klodiana Lala in Albania. I said that this attack is an unacceptable intimidation against the journalist and contributes to a climate of fear and insecurity for press in the region. I also noted the public condemnation made by Albanian authorities and that an investigation had been launched.

On **4 September**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I strongly condemned an armed threat made against TV journalist Julian Shota in Laç. I called on the Albanian authorities to urgently bring the perpetrator to justice.

On **17 October** I wrote to Prime Minister Edi Rama and on **18 October** issued a public statement to convey my concerns regarding the publication, on 15 October by the Electronic and Postal Communications Authority, of a list of 44 websites required to register with the National Business Centre and to acquire a tax number within 72 hours. Failure to comply would result in the websites being closed down.

I offered my Office's assistance in providing a legal analysis of potential media law changes in Albania.

On **18 October**, in a telephone conversation with the Prime Minister we exchanged views on this initiative and agreed to work together on new online regulation to ensure media freedom. I reflected this in a statement on my official Twitter account.

On 18 October, in a reply from his official Twitter account, Prime Minister Edi Rama referred to our fruitful conversation on efforts for rule of law in online media and announced that the proposal for combatting defamation and fake news will soon be available for public discussion. He expressed his readiness to hear suggestions, adding that the Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media is a valuable partner.

On 2 November I received, on the request of the Prime Minister, a reply by the Chairperson of the Electronic and Postal Communications Authority (AKEP) Ilir Zela, related to concerns I previously raised with Prime Minister Edi Rama. I was informed that the measures taken by AKEP are in line with the primary and secondary legislation of *acquis communautaire* that similarly govern '.eu' domains and will not negatively impact freedom of the media.

On **12 November** I wrote to the Chairperson of the Electronic and Postal Communications Authority (AKEP) Ilir Zela to thank him for his letter. I noted that my Office will continue to engage in discussion on the potential impact of legislation on freedom of expression and freedom of the media online in Albania.

On **20 November**, I issued a public statement on my meeting with the Prime Minister of Albania, Edi Rama, in Vienna. We launched a new cooperation on the future anti-defamation package and rules for online media as it is very important to ensure that provisions in future legislation do not restrict freedom of expression, media freedom and access to the Internet.

## **Armenia**

On **19 September** I wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Zohrab Mnatsakanyan, conveying my concern about developments surrounding the news website Yerevan.Today.

On 17 September, law enforcement authorities searched the editorial office belonging to the website. Reportedly, the search was part of a criminal investigation into leaked illegal recordings of phone conversations between two high-ranking security officials. Several computer disks belonging to the editorial office and to the Editor of the website were seized. As a result, according to Yerevan.Today, the work of the website was disrupted for several hours.

On 26 October I learned that the appeal's court confirmed the lawfulness of the search of Yerevan.Today's office.

On **23 - 24 October** I conducted an official visit to Armenia, where I met with Acting Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, Acting Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan, and Acting Justice Minister Artak Zeynalyan to discuss challenges to and the promotion of media freedom as a cornerstone of democracy, and other areas where my Office could offer legal expertise and assistance. During our meetings I welcomed the commitment expressed by the authorities to strengthen media freedom and encouraged them to undertake additional initiatives to promote a safe and enabling environment for journalists, and to consider steps to strengthen media pluralism, independence of the public broadcaster, transparency of media ownership and access to information. I also met with Deputy Human rights Defender Artyom Sedrakyan and Director of Public TV of Armenia Margarita Grigoryan, as well as representatives from media and civil society organizations.

## **Austria**

On **25 September** I sent a letter to the authorities, and issued a public statement, in which I called on the Austrian Ministry of Interior to treat all media equally and to refrain from attacking them, in response to the Austrian Interior Ministry's instruction to boycott and restrict the flow of information to certain media outlets.

On 31 October Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs Karin Kneissl sent a response to my letter of 25 October concerning restrictions on the media's access to information as retaliation to critical coverage. The Minister referred to statements by Federal Chancellor Kurz and President van der Bellen and reiterated the Austrian government's commitment to freedom of expression and freedom of the media.

On **2 November**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I expressed my concern at a statement made by a Secretary General of a coalition party calling on ORF reporter Patricia Pawlicki to resign for an interview she conducted. I noted that the independence of the public service broadcaster must be respected.

## **Azerbaijan**

On **23 July** I wrote to the authorities requesting that they clarify the reasons and legal grounds for the arrest of at least 14 inhabitants of different residential areas in the country, for a period of 10 to 30 days. Reportedly, their detention was linked to their online posts related

to a power outage and an attack on the Head of Executive Power of Ganja city. I also expressed my concern about the blocking of the online platforms Bastainfo.com, Criminalaz.com, Topxeber.az and Fia.az.

On **30 July** I wrote to the authorities regarding the humanitarian situation involving the imprisoned blogger and chair of the media NGO Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety, Mehman Huseynov (see PC Report of 9 March 2017). I asked the authorities to consider Huseynov's request to visit his mother in hospital.

On 2 August I noted that the authorities declined Huseynov's request. On 6 August his mother passed away and Huseynov was allowed to attend her funeral.

On **6 August**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I expressed my concern about the fact that several online media outlets belonging to APA holding, one of the biggest media groups in Azerbaijan, went offline simultaneously.

On **10 August**, following the blocking of several news websites due to allegations of defamation, I issued a public statement urgently calling on the authorities to restore access to all blocked platforms, reform the laws and regulations affecting media, and encourage pluralistic debate on all issues of public importance, both online and offline.

On 7-8 August, upon the request of the Ministry for Transportation, Communications and New Technologies, the district courts in Baku ruled in favour of blocking four news websites, namely az24saat.org, xural.com, arqument.az and monitortv.info. Reportedly, the authorities claimed that certain articles published and reproduced on these online platforms contained defamatory statements, including with regard to high-level officials.

On 17 September, I noted that the Baku Appeals Court upheld the decision to block az24saat.org and xural.com.

On 24 August I learned that the district court declined imprisoned blogger and chair of the media NGO Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety Mehman Huseynov's request to be granted parole (see PC Reports of 9 March 2017 and 5 July 2018). On 17 October this decision was upheld on appeal.

On 18 September, I learned that the Supreme Court upheld the sentencing of journalist Afgan Mukhtarli (see PC Report of 5 July 2018).

On 26 September, I learned that the Supreme Court reduced the prison sentence of Fikret Faramazoglu, Editor of the Jam.az news website, from 7 to 6 years. He was sentenced on charges of extortion in June 2017 (see PC Report of 1 December 2016).

On **9 October** I wrote to the authorities expressing my concern regarding reports of an incident involving the freelance journalist Aytac Ehmedova, who contributes to different media outlets. On 3 October Ehmedova was shortly detained by police while covering a protest in Zabrat, a settlement close to Baku. The journalist stated that, once at the police station, she was threatened and molested.

I called on the authorities to investigate all the circumstances surrounding this incident in a thorough, swift and transparent manner, and stressed that the right of the media to freely do their work must be respected at all times, including when covering public protests.

On 23 October I received a reply from the authorities regarding the case of Aytac Ehmedova. According to the authorities, Ehmedova hindered police officers in their efforts to carry out their official duty to restore public order and refused to present either her identification card or any documentation indicating that she is a journalist. She had reportedly disseminated allegations intended to mislead the public and to undermine the reputation of the police. I was informed that she was treated according to the relevant provisions of the law and was not subjected to any physical or verbal abuse.

On **31 October** I wrote to the authorities about the incidents involving journalists Ikram Rahimov and Ismail Islamoglu.

On 26 October Rahimov, the Editor of online news portal Realliq.info, was detained by the National Security Service on suspicion of blackmail in Baku. I noted several reports alleging that the journalist is being persecuted in retaliation for his critical reporting notably on corruption.

On the same day, 26 October, a journalist with the internet channel Kanal-13, Ismail Islamoglu, was reportedly taken by police officers to the Baku Police Headquarters, where he was held for 3 days. The journalist claims that he was tortured and threatened for his critical views against the authorities. I noted that the law enforcement authorities denied Islamoglu's allegations.

I urged the authorities to give due attention to both cases to ensure the protection of the right of media representatives to free expression. I also asked the authorities to conduct a thorough and transparent investigation of the disturbing reports on police violence by Islamoglu.

On 1 November I learned that the Baku Appeals Court upheld the decision to arrest Rahimov for two months.

On **14 November** I wrote to the authorities regarding the prison conditions of journalist Afgan Mukhtarli.

### **Belarus**

On 16 July I received a reply from the authorities regarding the violent attack on Syarhey Chaly, an online talk show presenter with the news website TUT.BY (see PC Report of 5 July 2018). I was informed that law enforcement authorities had concluded the investigation and detained the suspects. The case has since been forwarded to the court.

On **25 July**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I expressed my concern about the detention, search and seizure of equipment belonging to Belsat TV channel's journalists Alyaksandr Dzyanisau and Alyaksei Kairys. I reiterated my call on the authorities to lift excessive restrictions on accreditation.

On **8 August** I issued a public statement and wrote to the authorities expressing my concern over the detention of journalists with the Belarusian Tut.by and BelaPAN news agencies, as



well as the raids on newsrooms and journalists' homes by law enforcement agents, and the seizure of their equipment.

On 7 August, at least five journalists, Maryna Zolatava, Hanna Kaltyhina, Halina Ulasik, and Ganna Ermachonak of Tut.by, and Tatsiana Karavenkova of BelaPAN, were detained by the Investigative Committee of Belarus on suspicion of “unauthorized access to computer information” of the state-owned BelTA news agency. Reportedly, at least five other journalists were interrogated. Both the Tut.by and BelaPAN news agencies deny that their staff members were involved in any alleged criminal activity.

I said that the highly disproportionate measures taken by the law enforcement authorities against these two independent news agencies raises serious concerns about respect for independent media, and called on the authorities to immediately release all detained journalists and ensure that both media outlets may continue their work unhindered.

All journalists were later released, but I noted reports by the Belarusian Association of Journalists that the total number of detained people was eighteen.

Reportedly, in the beginning of November, the Investigative Committee of Belarus indicted at least 14 media workers on the case and requested they pay compensation in the amount ranging from 3 to 14 thousand Belarusian rubles (approximately 1,250 to 5,800 EUR). The affected people have also been placed on a travel ban.

On **10 August**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I welcomed the release of several detained journalists from the Tut.by news agency, and encouraged the authorities to immediately release all detained media workers and avoid any disproportionate restrictions.

On 10 August I received a reply from the authorities regarding the amendments to the law “On the mass media” (see PC Report of 5 July 2018), clarifying the rationale behind the adoption of the bill. The authorities disagreed with my assessment that many of the provisions are excessive and disproportionate and can lead to a restriction of freedom of opinion, arguing that this assessment does not reflect the objective situation in the information space of the country.

## **Belgium**

On **3 August**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I expressed my concern about the authorities' decision to charge Belgium-based journalists a fee for the security clearance necessary to be accredited at European Council summits. I recalled that accreditation should never be a hindrance to accessing information, and that journalists should be exempted from paying a security check fee to attend and cover EU Council summits. On 28 September, I learned that this measure was cancelled.

On **21 November**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I condemned the attacks against RTBF journalist Vinciane Votron and her crew while covering protests in Feluy the previous day, and stated that journalists must be able to work safely when reporting on public demonstrations.

## **Bosnia and Herzegovina**

On **27 July**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I condemned an assault against two reporters from klix.ba and Al Jazeera Balkans, respectively, in Sarajevo during a war veterans' protest. I welcomed the swift police action to identify the perpetrators.

On **23 August**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I condemned an attack on a BHRT crew after a sporting event in Konjic and welcomed the investigation initiated by the authorities.

On **27 August**, together with the Head of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina Ambassador Bruce G. Berton, I issued a public statement condemning the severe beating of journalist Vladimir Kovačević that took place in Banja Luka on 26 August. I emphasized that the negative rhetoric being used against the media must end in order to prevent further attacks against journalists.

On **10 September**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I welcomed the news that one of the perpetrators responsible for the beating of Vladimir Kovačević was arrested. I added that my Office will continue to closely follow the investigation.

On **19 October** I wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Igor Crnadak, asking for more information about the decision taken by the Public Prosecutor in Banja Luka to publicly summon Slobodan Vasković, a prominent journalist and blogger, to give a statement as a witness, related to the death of David Dragičević.

## **Bulgaria**

On **14 September** I wrote to the authorities requesting additional information on the detention of journalists Atilla Biro and Dimitar Stoyanov in Radomir on 13 September. I recalled that the OSCE's commitments on freedom of the media require that journalists enjoy unimpeded access, and that any restrictions on their freedom to report must be based on sound legal grounds.

On **17 September**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I raised my concerns over the detention of investigative journalists Atilla Biro and Dimitar Stoyanov.

On **27 September** I issued a public statement calling for an investigation into the attack on journalist Dimitar Vardarov, noting the reaction by the Prime Minister who commented on the case, calling for the "bullies [to be] punished with the full force of the law". Vardarov, a reporter with TV Nova, reportedly recorded illegal activities in a warehouse in Veliko Tarnavo and claimed to have been beaten up while filming.

On **2 October**, following reports that the attack was staged by Vardarov himself, I wrote to the authorities and issued a public statement from my official Twitter account calling for a full investigation into the attack on journalist Dimitar Varbanov amid allegations that the attack was staged. I emphasized that manipulating information, especially when safety of journalists is at stake, is dangerous and irresponsible.

On **7 October** I issued a public statement expressing my shock over and calling on the authorities to fully investigate the murder of journalist and TV presenter Viktoria Marinova in Ruse.

On **8 October** I wrote to the authorities to request a meeting with Prime Minister Boyko Borissov following the murder of journalist Viktoria Marinova. In the letter, I asked the authorities to share with me any relevant additional information on the investigation.

On **10 October** I wrote to the authorities to thank the Prime Minister for his willingness to urgently meet with me. I also informed him about the withdrawal of my request for a meeting as a suspect had been identified and arrested for the murder of Viktoria Marinova and the authorities indicated that the murder does not seem to be related to her professional activities.

On **12 October** I issued a public statement welcoming progress in the investigation of the killing of journalist Viktoria Marinova, international cooperation to extradite a suspect and reiterated the need for a full and thorough investigation to establish all the circumstances of this crime.

On 15 October I received replies from the authorities with information regarding the cases of journalists Dimitar Stoyanov, Atila Biro and Dimitar Varbanov, with an update on the actions taken by the law enforcement authorities to address the incident. The letters noted the situation of Varbanov's alleged manipulation of facts which led to his dismissal. The letters also provided context regarding the detention of Stoyanov and Biro, while confirming the government's commitment to upholding freedom of the media.

On **15 November**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I welcomed the court ruling that the police detention of investigative journalists Atila Biro and Dimitar Stoyanov was illegal (see intervention of 14 September).

## **Croatia**

On **25 July**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I welcomed the indictment of a perpetrator accused of beating journalist Hrvoje Bajlo. I reiterated that there can be no tolerance for violence against journalists.

On **20 August**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I condemned death threats directed at Domagoj Zovak, satirist and editor of a comedy show aired on TV N1 Zagreb. I urged the authorities to investigate these threats and to ensure Zovak's safety.

On **26 September**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I expressed my concern about the dismissal of Croatian Journalists' Association President Hrvoje Zovko from his job at Croatian Radiotelevision.

On **8 October** I wrote to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Marija Pejčinović Burić expressing my concern about the worsening health of Domagoj Margetić due to his continued hunger strike in response to threats and violence perpetrated against him as a journalist. I expressed my hope that all efforts by the law enforcement authorities of Croatia to investigate these incidents might also help end Margetić's hunger strike, which has led to a severe deterioration of his health.

On **22 October**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I expressed relief that Domagoj Margetić ended his 44 days hunger strike after meeting with Croatian Prime Minister Andrej Plenković. I welcomed that his concerns were conveyed to relevant institutions and expressed my hope that he will return to his journalistic work.

## Cyprus

On **9 – 11 July** I paid an official visit to Cyprus to meet with the Minister of Foreign Affairs Nikos Christodoulides to discuss the Cyprus Dialogue project, journalist exchange program, glossary, safety of journalists and media pluralism. I also met with a number of representatives from international organizations and the local media community, including participants of the Cyprus Dialogue project, managed by my Office. During the visit I officially launched a trilingual glossary of sensitive words, the production of which was supported by my Office with expertise from journalists from both communities, and the Ethical Journalism Network.

On **16 July**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I conveyed my concern following a series of threats that journalist Maria Siakalli received following her work as co-writer of the Glossary *Words That Matter* published by my Office.

On **27 July**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I called on the authorities to investigate the online death threat received by the Politis journalist, Costas Constantinou.

On **2 August** I wrote to the authorities to inform them of my intervention with Turkish authorities in the case of two journalists with the *Afrika* newspaper in the north of Cyprus, Şener Levent and Ali Osman, who were threatened with judicial action by the Prosecutor of Ankara, Turkey.

## Czech Republic

On **30 August** I wrote to the authorities and issued a statement from my official Twitter account expressing my concern over the comments made by the Czech President, Milos Zeman, vilifying the media. I emphasized that political leaders should promote media freedom and safety of journalists, rather than contribute to an atmosphere that can lead to violence.

On **27 September**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I welcomed a recent decision by the Czech Supreme Court to protect the confidential sources of journalist Janek Kroupa.

## Denmark

On **10 August**, in a public statement from my official Twitter account on the one year anniversary of the tragic death of journalist Kim Wall, I noted that women journalists still face daily harassment online and off.

## Finland

On **18 October**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I welcomed the conviction of, and prison sentence handed to, persons accused of serious harassment of Yle (Finland's public broadcaster) journalist Jessikka Aro and expressed my hope that this decision sets a standard for ending impunity for harassment and abuse of journalists.

## France

On **26 September**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I expressed my concern about the verdict in the case of charges of defamation against Loan Torondel, an activist for migrants in the region, in Boulogne-sur-Mer. Torondel posted a critical comment on his private Twitter account, along with a picture of French police officers standing near a migrant.

On **27 September** I wrote to the authorities about Loan Torondel, noting my concern about the case. I urged the authorities to fully respect freedom of expression as enshrined in the constitution of France.

On 9 November the authorities replied to my letter regarding Loan Torondel, stating that France fully guarantees and respects freedom of expression and that the journalist will file an appeal against the court decision.

On **16 October** I wrote to the authorities about a journalist from BFM-TV, Marie Peyraube, who, according to reports, was followed by police while preparing a story on an escaped inmate in France. In the same letter, I also mentioned the case of photographer Alexis Kraland, who was questioned by the police on 3 October about his presence at a demonstration in Paris on 1 May. Following the questioning, police seized his phone after Kraland refused to provide access to it. In both cases, I recalled the need to respect the confidentiality of journalistic sources.

On **21 November** I sent a legal review to the French authorities on the draft law on the fight against the manipulation of information. The review examined the law's conformity with France's commitments on freedom of expression and freedom of information. In its recommendations, the review explores the possibility of introducing a new legal statute for Internet platforms. The review also proposes enhancing media literacy, and supporting self-regulation efforts of the media community to enhance quality journalism through certification and fact-checking, for example. The law was adopted on 20 November.

(see Legal reviews)

## Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

On **17 - 18 September**, on the occasion of the EU-Western Balkans Media Days, I met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs Nikola Dimitrov, Minister of Information Society and Administration Damjan Mancevski, Minister without Portfolio in charge of Communications, Accountability and Transparency Robert Popovski and members of the media community to discuss media laws, amendments to the electoral code and safety of journalists in the country.

On **2 October**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I said that the threatening tweet posted by Cvetin Chilimanov against journalist Valerie Hopkins is shameful and unacceptable. I stressed that all threats against journalists, especially gender-based incitements to violence against female journalists are irresponsible and asked Cvetin to remove his tweet immediately. On 9 October, Cvetin Chilimanov informed me that he deleted his tweet.

## Georgia

On **18 July**, on the occasion of the 15th South Caucasus Media Conference, organized by my Office in Tbilisi, I met with Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia David Zalkaliani and with President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly George Tsereteli to discuss the latest media freedom developments in the country and throughout the region, as well as to enhance co-operation in support of freedom of expression and media freedom.

## Germany

On **20 August**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I called for an investigation into the temporary detention by the police of a camera team from German public-service television broadcaster (ZDF) filming an extreme-right demonstration in Dresden. I emphasized that journalists must be free to cover all public demonstrations as a matter of public interest.

On **4 September** I issued a public statement condemning the violence by extremists against journalists covering protests in Chemnitz. I called on police to take all necessary measures in the future to ensure the safety of journalists. I welcomed the fact that the police are investigating and have arrested a perpetrator of the assault on the camera team of the local public broadcaster, MDR.

On **20 September** I issued a public statement expressing my condolences following the tragic death of a journalist, who died while filming a police operation at a protest near Aachen in Germany.

## Greece

On **12 September**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I called on the authorities to fully investigate the case of journalist Anthi Pazianou, from the media outlets Kathimerini and Embros, who was harassed online and verbally attacked by extreme right-wing groups for her coverage of migration stories on the island of Lesbos.

On **17 September** I wrote to the authorities to convey my concern over a series of verbal attacks and online harassment faced by journalists covering migration stories on Lesbos, including Anthi Pazianou and Stratis Balaskas, who had both reported on a “fake news” story concerning migrants.

On 8 October I received a reply to my letter of 17 September informing me that Anthi Pazianou and Stratis Balaskas’s complaints led to the arrest of four and three individuals in each case, respectively.

On **24 September** I issued a public statement denouncing the arrest of three journalists from the daily newspaper *Fileleftheros*, after the Defence Minister filed a criminal defamation suit against them, and urged the authorities to decriminalize defamation.

## Ireland

On **28 October** I issued a public statement welcoming the Irish referendum result that removed blasphemy provisions from the national Constitution. I called on those remaining OSCE participating States where blasphemy remains a criminal offense to follow Ireland’s

example, as these laws are incompatible with international standards on freedom of expression.

### **Italy**

On **23 July**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I expressed my concern about a defamation suit filed against journalist Roberto Saviano by the Minister of Interior, Matteo Salvini.

On **24 July**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I expressed my concern about reports of online abuse, including death threats, against investigative journalist Marilù Mastrogiovanni.

On **3 August**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I expressed my consternation regarding an act of aggression by extremists against journalist and songwriter Enrico Nascimbeni in Milan, and called for a swift and effective investigation.

On **14 September** I wrote to the authorities and issued a public statement to convey my concern about the search of journalist Salvo Palazzolo's home in Palermo and seizure of his equipment by police. I enquired whether the seizure respected national and international standards on the protection of journalistic sources and recalled the necessity to respect those standards.

On **1 October**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I welcomed the prison sentence handed down by a tribunal in Ragusa to the perpetrator of death threats against Italian journalist Paolo Borrometi, who reports on organised crime and is currently under police protection.

On **15 October**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I condemned a death threat sent to and intimidation against journalist Filippo Mele from *Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno* who received a bullet in an envelope. I welcomed the investigation launched by the authorities.

On **15 November**, I issued a public statement condemning an attempted arson attack at the home of Rai 3 investigative journalist Federico Ruffo near Rome. I also expressed my concern regarding the multiple cases of intimidation and threats against journalists in Italy recently, and called on the authorities to do their utmost to ensure a safe work environment for media workers.

### **Kazakhstan**

On **28 September**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I expressed my concern regarding the court order to ban journalist Vincent Prado from filming in Mangistau.

On **7 November**, on the occasion of the Central Asian Media Conference, I met Minister of Foreign Affairs Kairat Abdrakhmanov and Minister of Information and Communication Dauren Abayev. During the meetings we discussed the negative impact of certain provision of the Criminal Code on the media and freedom of expression in the country, the need to have a more transparent system to distribute state subventions to the press, the benefits of greater

access to public information, as well as some ongoing media cases. I offered my assistance in reviewing existing and draft legislation pertaining to the media.

### **Latvia**

On **12 October** I wrote to the Latvian authorities requesting additional information regarding the deportation of Andrey Vypolzov, Editor of Russian news portal NewsBalt, from Latvia and recalled that OSCE participating States have committed themselves to facilitate the work and accreditation of journalists coming from other OSCE countries.

On 25 October I received a reply from the Latvian authorities to my letter on the deportation of Andrey Vypolzov, notifying me that the deportation was in line with national and EU legislation, and not related to his work as a journalist.

On **18 October 2018**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I welcomed a new law which will improve access to information of public interest by making available online documentation from the Latvian branch of Soviet-time KGB.

On **29 October**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I welcomed the entry into effect of a law protecting the rights of whistle blowers. I called on other participating States to follow suit as such protections are an important contribution to media freedom.

### **Lithuania**

On **1 October**, I wrote to the authorities, having received information from the Russian Federation related to the restriction of TV channel RTR-Planeta, introduced in February 2018, and the blocking of Internet portals in Lithuania that provide access to Russian TV channels. I requested any additional information on the motivation, objectives and legal basis for such restrictions.

On 21 November the Lithuanian authorities replied to my letter of 1 October to clarify the case. The reply refers to the relevant law and administrative decisions that allowed, in February 2018, the provisional suspension of the free transmission of RTR-Planeta in Lithuania for 12 months. Their basis for this suspension was the dissemination of propaganda for war and hatred from RTR-Planeta's programming. The reply also explains that the access to online dissemination of its programming was terminated due to the lack of required notifications by the web portals on their intentions to provide audiovisual services.

### **Malta**

On **16 October**, a year after the murder of journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia, I paid tribute to her in an op-ed for the daily *Times of Malta*, as well as from my official Twitter account, where I called for all perpetrators of violence against journalists, including those responsible for her assassination, to be brought to justice.

On **11 November** I issued a public statement calling on all authorities to drop a request to the Editor of the *Times of Malta* to disclose a source of information used in a report on a planned takeover of a building project. The statement came after the Malta Financial Services Authority (MFSA) made such a request to the newspaper.



On 12 November I was informed by the Delegation of Malta that the MFSA sent a letter to the *Times of Malta* withdrawing its request for information regarding the reporting source. The announcement was made public by the *Times of Malta* on **14 November**, and on the same day I welcomed the decision in a statement from my official Twitter account.

### **Moldova**

On **30 October** I wrote to the authorities expressing my concern about the obstruction of the activities of several journalists covering a public demonstration in Chisinau:

On 21 October Anastasia Antoceanu, a journalist with the portal Agora.md, Viorica Tataru and Ștefan Grigoriță, with the newspaper *Ziarul de Gardă* and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, respectively, were mistreated by law enforcement officers and prevented from doing their work.

I called on the authorities to swiftly investigate these incidents.

I also expressed concern regarding an incident on 15 October during which Ilan Shor, mayor of Orhei city and president of the political party “Shor”, verbally attacked and threatened journalists from Jurnal TV channel, after they published a report on his financial expenses.

### **Montenegro**

On **25 July**, together with the Head of the OSCE Mission to Montenegro Ambassador Maryse Daviet, I issued a public statement welcoming the latest efforts by the Montenegrin Technical Working Group on Self-Regulation in developing guidelines for moderating online comments in Montenegro. I emphasized that this is a good example of how different models of self-regulation can coexist and work together based on shared principles and stated that the document will be very useful for online media platforms, as well as to the wider media community.

On **17 September**, together with the Head of the OSCE Mission to Montenegro, Ambassador Maryse Daviet, I presented two legal reviews to the Minister of Culture of Montenegro, Aleksandar Bogdanović, including the legal analysis of the Draft of Media law and Draft Law on Amendments to the Law on National Public Broadcaster, commissioned jointly to my Office and the Mission.

(see Legal reviews)

On **8 - 10 October**, on the occasion of the conference, *Media Sustainability and Successful Media Business Models* organised jointly by the OSCE Missions to Montenegro and to Skopje, I met with the Prime Minister Duško Marković, Minister of Foreign Affairs Srdjan Darmanović, Minister of Culture Aleksandar Bogdanović to discuss topics including impunity, the safety of journalists, process of changing media laws, state of the public service broadcaster and financial situation of the Media Council for Self-Regulation. During the visit I also met with members of the local media community.

On **29 October** I wrote to the Minister of Public Administration, Suzana Pribilović, regarding the public administration draft law that was adopted by the Government of Montenegro on 20

September 2018, which might have a negative effect on the independence of the Agency for Electronic Media. According to the draft law, the government will be responsible for the appointment and dismissal of the Agency's Council members, a task previously carried out by the Montenegrin Parliament.

On 15 November, Minister of Public Administration Suzana Pribilović replied to my letter of 29 October, informing me that the goal of the proposed law is to simplify the functioning of the public administration system, without any kind of political or economic influence on the independence of the regulatory authorities. She noted that they drafted the Law on Public Administration, including sections concerning regulatory authorities, in close cooperation with the European Commission Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations and OECD/SIGMA.

On **21 November**, together with the Head of the OSCE Mission to Montenegro Ambassador Maryse Daviet, I issued a public statement related to the legal reviews on Montenegro's draft Law on media and draft Law on amendments to the Law on the national public broadcaster RTCH. The legal analyses were prepared by Davor Glavaš, an experienced media expert with extensive knowledge of Montenegrin legislative framework.

### **Netherlands**

On **26 June** I issued a public statement to express my strong condemnation of an arson attack on the offices of the daily newspaper *De Telegraaf*. The attack took place only five days after an anti-tank rocket was fired at the offices of weeklies *Panorama* and *Nieuwe Revu* in Amsterdam. In my statement, I welcomed the strong condemnation of these attacks by Prime Minister Mark Rutte.

On 28 June, in response to a public statement issued on 8 June (see PC Report of 5 July 2018), I received a letter from the authorities acknowledging that the seizure of a Dutch journalist's records as part of an ongoing investigation into the leaking of classified information was based on an "incorrect judgment" on the part of law enforcement.

On **24 July** I issued a public statement to welcome an agreement between the authorities and the media community in the Netherlands to counter threats and violence against journalists.

On **1 October** I issued a public statement to welcome the entry into force of a new law that provides enhanced protection for the confidentiality of journalists' sources.

### **Norway**

On **30 August**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I welcomed a court decision to sentence the perpetrator of rape threats against a Norwegian US correspondent to 55 days imprisonment. I expressed my hope that this would set a precedent that threats against women journalists will not be tolerated on or offline.

### **Poland**

On **24 July**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I expressed my concern about online death threats received by Belarusian journalist Natallia Radzina, Editor-in-chief of

Charter'97 news website, who now lives in Poland. I said that this journalist must be able to work freely and safely.

On **10 September**, on the occasion of the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, I met with Minister of Foreign Affairs Jacek Czaputowicz and the country Commissioner for Human Rights Adam Bodnar in Warsaw. During the meetings we discussed the media freedom situation in Poland, in particular the critical need for an independent public service broadcast system, my concern over several defamation cases against journalists, and the Holocaust law, which despite some positive amendments, may still have a negative effect on the right to freedom of expression.

### **Romania**

On **13 August** I wrote to the authorities and issued a statement from my official Twitter account expressing my concern about and requesting a full inquiry following the assault on journalist Robert Mihailescu and an Austrian cameraman by riot police during protests on 10 August in Bucharest.

On 3 September I received a reply from Minister of Foreign Affairs Teodor-Viorel Meleşcanu explaining that my concerns have been taken into consideration and the Romanian prosecutors are conducting an independent investigation regarding the 10 August events. The Minister also indicated that he will share with me any new updates on the investigation.

On **13 November** I wrote to Minister of Foreign Affairs Teodor-Viorel Meleşcanu to convey my concern regarding the RISE Project non-profit journalism organization being requested to reveal its confidential sources by the National Supervisory Authority for Personal Data Processing (ANSPDCP), in relation to an investigative report on a case of alleged fraud involving European funds. I also called for the withdrawal of this request.

On **13 November** I issued a public statement regarding a letter I sent to Minister of Foreign Affairs Teodor-Viorel Meleşcanu conveying my concern about the request made to the RISE Project non-profit journalism organization to reveal its confidential sources.

### **Russian Federation**

On **6 July** I issued a public statement denouncing the fine imposed on Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) for not complying with a Russian law regulating the activities of media outlets branded by the authorities as “foreign agents.” On 5 July, the Tverskoi district court in Moscow ordered RFE/RL to pay 100,000 rubles (nearly 1,600 dollars) for delaying the submission of its financial report to the Ministry of Justice.

I underlined that the court’s decision clearly shows that the “foreign agents” law unduly hinders the work of media outlets and narrows the space for freedom of the media in the country. I reiterated my call on the authorities to refrain from discriminating against the media (see PC Reports of 9 November 2017 and 5 July 2018).

On **17 July**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I noted the European Court of Human Rights’ judgment on *Novaya Gazeta* journalist Anna Politkovskaya’s murder, which ruled that Russia had “failed to take adequate investigatory steps to find the persons who had commissioned the murder.”

On **25 July** I issued a public statement and wrote to the authorities regarding the death of Denis Suvorov, a journalist with the Nizhny Novgorod State Television and Radio Company, who was found on 23 July in Nizhny Novgorod. I called on the authorities to swiftly investigate the crime.

On 31 August I received a reply from the authorities informing me that a criminal investigation was launched and one person was identified as a suspect and arrested and that the crime was not related to his professional activity.

On 30 July I received a reply from the authorities regarding the death of Maksim Borodin, a journalist with the Noviy Den news agency, and the attack on Dmitry Polyinin, Editor of the Oblastnaya Gazeta newspaper (see also PC Report of 5 July 2018). I was informed that, in Borodin's case, law enforcement authorities had carried out pre-investigation procedures and, in Polyinin's case, an investigation had been launched.

On **1 August**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I expressed my condolences to the families and colleagues of Russian journalists, cameraman Kirill Radchenko, documentary director Alexander Rastorguyev and war correspondent Orkhan Dzhemal, who were killed while reporting in the Central African Republic.

On **1 August**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I raised the case of Sergei Grachev, a journalist with Argumenti i Fakty newspaper, who was found dead in Nizhny Novgorod.

On 6 September I received a letter from the authorities informing me that preliminary results of the investigation into his case had found that Grachev's death was not violent.

On **9 August**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I expressed my alarm at the deteriorating health of Crimean writer and filmmaker Oleg Sentsov, who was on hunger strike in prison. I repeated my call on the Russian authorities to release him.

On **31 August**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I noted that Alexander Sokolov, an investigative journalist with the RBC media group, was set free from a penal colony after serving his sentence (see PC Reports of 9 November 2017 and 1 December 2016). I expressed my hope that he be allowed to resume working as a journalist, and reiterated that he should never have been convicted.

On **3 September** I wrote to the authorities, in reply to their letter of 8 August regarding the decision of the High Administrative Court of Poland to dismiss the appeal of Leonid Sviridov, former correspondent of Rossiya Segodnya news agency in Warsaw, as to the annulment of his residence permit in Poland (see PC Reports of 27 November 2014 and 18 June 2015). I informed them that my Office intervened on the case in October 2014, and that the issues related to residence rights do not fall under my Mandate.

On **10 September** I issued a statement from my official Twitter account and on **14 September** I wrote to the authorities expressing my concern and requesting information about several incidents involving journalists and media workers.

On 9 September, at least 20 media workers, who were covering public demonstrations on the national pension reform, were reportedly physically assaulted by police, detained or

otherwise penalized, in different regions of the country. I stressed that the right of the media to freely do their work must be respected at all times, and called on the authorities to swiftly investigate the related incidents.

In the letter, I also raised the following cases.

On 11 September, the publisher of Mediazona online news portal Pyotr Verzilov, which widely covers human rights issues in the country, was hospitalized in a critical condition to a toxicology department in Moscow. While medical personnel assume that Verzilov may have been affected by unidentified medication, his friends and family deny such a possibility and stated that he could have been poisoned. I asked the authorities to look thoroughly into the allegations of poisoning and the circumstances surrounding the incident.

On 7 June, Leonid Makhinya, a journalist and editor-in-chief of the independent news website Volgogradsky Reporter, went missing in the city of Volgograd. While noting that an investigation into the case has already been launched, I called on the authorities to conduct it in a swift manner and to identify the whereabouts of the journalist.

In a reply from the authorities on 3 October, I was informed that the criminal case on Makhinya's disappearance had been initiated.

**On 12 September** I issued a public statement and wrote to the authorities expressing my disappointment with the Supreme Court's decision to uphold the sentencing of Ukrainian journalist Roman Sushchenko (see PC Report of 5 July 2018). I reiterated my call to release Sushchenko.

In a reply from the authorities on 3 October, I was informed that Sushchenko's activities in the country could not be considered journalism, as he did not have adequate media accreditation and was on a private visit at the time of his detention.

**On 18 September** I wrote to Tatiana Moskalkova, High Commissioner for Human Rights in the Russian Federation, replying to her letter of 10 September regarding the case of the bureau chief of RIA Novosti Ukraine, Kirill Vyshinsky (see PC Report of 5 July 2018). I informed her that the matter remains in the focus of my work.

**On 20 September** I wrote a letter asking the relevant Russian authorities to grant Mykola Semena, a Ukrainian journalist with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, permission to leave Crimea and visit the medical facility in Kyiv. I was informed that he has serious health problems.

On 2 October I learned that Semena's request for lifting his travel ban was declined.

In a reply from the authorities on 3 October, I was informed that Semena's health condition was taken into account when the court handed him a suspended sentence. I was further informed that the restriction on his movement was an integral part of the court's decision and it cannot be reviewed by any executive body. Semena has a right to appeal the court's decision, including at the international level.

**On 20 September** I wrote to the authorities and on **21 September** I issued a public statement expressing my concern about the proposed amendments to the country's Code of

Administrative Offences and the Criminal Code, which were adopted on 20 September in the final reading by the lower house of parliament, the State Duma. The amendments, among other things, strengthen the penalties for the dissemination of ‘false’ information related to defamation and information that affects privacy protection.

I said that the introduction of criminal responsibility, punishable by up to one year of imprisonment, for non-compliance with court decisions ordering the takedown or retraction of content in the civil defamation domain, has a high potential to undermine the freedom of expression, including the free flow of information and access to information.

In a reply from the authorities on 3 October, I was informed that the amendments are aimed at protecting minors and blocking the distribution of information related to war propaganda, and fomentation of ethnic, racial or religious hate and enmity.

On 21 August I received a reply from the authorities to my letter of 1 June 2018 regarding the case of Oleg Sentsov, a Ukrainian writer and a film director from Crimea (see PC Report of 5 July 2018). The reply contained a detailed explanation of the circumstances of the investigation, and of Sentsov’s arrest, trial and conditions of imprisonment.

On **26 September** I issued a public statement noting the resolution, on 20 September, by the Supreme Court, which aims to improve judicial practices in cases of alleged online extremist content. The Supreme Court introduced amendments complementing its own Decree “On Judicial Practice in Criminal Cases on Crimes of an Extremist Nature” of June 2011. The amendments suggested that the courts carefully distinguish between crimes of extremist nature and publicly harmless offences. The Supreme Court also underlined that restrictions must be based on narrowly-defined evidence, while simple posting or re-posting of online content, including content that may contain signs of criminal activity but has no direct intent and/or purpose of inciting hatred or enmity, should not be qualified as extremism.

I said that the decision goes in the right direction and will, hopefully, prevent citizens of the Russian Federation from being unduly prosecuted. I also called on the authorities to reform the legislation on countering extremism and ensure that the need to protect public safety and order do not conflict with the fundamental human right of freedom of expression.

On **26 September** I wrote to the authorities expressing my concern and requesting more information about developments around the Moloko Plus magazine and the related short-term detention of its journalists.

On 16 September, Pavel Nikulin, Mikhail Shubin and Sofiko Arifdzhanova, journalists with the Moloko Plus magazine, were reportedly detained after the police disrupted a public event, over claims that they were distributing extremist material during a presentation of their almanac in Nizhny Novgorod. Shubin and Arifdzhanova were released on the same day, but Nikulin was imprisoned for two days on administrative charges for disobeying police officers. On 15 July, Nikulin and Arifdzhanova were attacked by two unknown men in Krasnodar. The attackers assaulted the journalists with pepper spray, resulting in both journalists suffering corneal burns. The police launched an investigation into the attack. However, on the same day, police officers also conducted a search of the venue of the presentation of the magazine on suspicion of possible dissemination of extremist material.

I also raised my concerns regarding the cases of Vladislav Askaridi, Editor-in-chief of news portal Properm.ru, and Maxim Novikov, a journalist who contributed to Radio Liberty and

the Kasparov.ru news portal. On 17 September Askaridi was detained in Perm and fined one thousand rubles for disobeying police officers. I noted reports indicating that Askaridi's imprisonment was linked to his coverage of a public demonstration on 9 September related to pension reform.

On 19 September Novikov was allegedly attacked by two unknown men in front of his house in Tver. According to Novikov, the attackers hit him on the head and sprayed pepper spray in his face.

**On 30 September**, on the second anniversary of the detention of Ukrainian National News Agency Ukrinform's journalist Roman Sushchenko, I issued a public statement reiterating my call on the authorities to release the journalist from prison (see PC Report of 5 July 2018).

**On 2 October** I wrote to the authorities in reply to their letter of 18 September regarding the transmission restrictions of TV channel RTR-Planeta and the blocking of internet portals that permit the watching of Russian TV channels in Lithuania. I recalled my letter of 21 February 2018 on the same subject (see PC Report of 5 July 2018).

**On 7 October**, on the 12th anniversary of the killing of *Novaya Gazeta* journalist Anna Politkovskaya, I issued a public statement recalling the need to guarantee journalists' safety, and insisted that the authorities intensify their efforts to end impunity for crimes committed against journalists.

**On 19 October** I issued a public statement on the intimidation and death threats directed at journalists from the newspaper *Novaya Gazeta*. I urged the authorities to swiftly and fully investigate these incidents and ensure journalists' safety. On 17 and 18 October, I learned that the editorial office of *Novaya Gazeta* received a funeral wreath, a severed lamb's head, and notes containing threatening and intimidating messages. According to *Novaya Gazeta*, there is also an ongoing online campaign accusing the newspaper of divulging data concerning Russian pilots in Syria, putting pilots' families in danger, and, therefore, calling for reprisals against *Novaya Gazeta* journalists. The newspaper rejects these accusations, stating that it has never published any such information.

**On 27 October**, following a court decision to impose an extremely high fine on *The New Times* online news outlet, I issued a public statement calling on the authorities to preserve pluralism of opinion in the country as an essential element of an open and democratic society.

On 26 October I was informed that a court in Moscow issued a fine of 22,250,000 rubles (nearly 297,000 euro) on *The New Times* and 30,000 rubles on its Chief Editor Yevgenia Albats (nearly 400 euro), based on a decision that the media outlet had failed to respect financial reporting obligations under the so-called 'foreign agents' law. The fine follows Albats' interview of an opposition politician for a local radio station. I also reiterated my call on the authorities to amend the existing legislation on 'foreign agents,' in order to avoid such situations."

On 8 November I received a reply from the authorities indicating that *The New Times* was fined in strict compliance with legislation and on 13 November I learned that the New Times was able to crowd-fund money to pay the fine.

On 20 November I learned that the decision to fine *The New Times* and its Chief Editor was upheld by an appeals court.

**On 1 November** I wrote to Maria Zakharova, Director of the Information and Press Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in reply to her letter of 22 October 2018 in which she expressed concerns over the situation of media and journalists in Ukraine.

**On 3 November** I wrote to Sergey Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs about his remarks on freedom of the media during his press conference with the OSCE Secretary General Thomas Greminger on 2 November in Moscow.

**On 6 November** I issued a public statement expressing my concern regarding the lengthy detention of journalist Igor Rudnikov in Kaliningrad and reiterated my call on the authorities to release him.

On 1 November 2017 Rudnikov, Editor and Founder of the *Noviye Kolyosa* newspaper, was forcefully detained by representatives of the Russian Federal Security Service on allegations of extorting money from a high-level law enforcement official in the Kaliningrad region. His detention has been extended several times with the current sentence scheduled to end March 2019 (see PC Report of 9 November 2017).

**On 9 November** I wrote to the authorities in reply to their letter of 19 October regarding the case of the bureau chief of RIA Novosti Ukraine, Kirill Vyshinsky.

**On 16 November** I wrote in reply to the authorities' letter of 17 October regarding Reporters Without Borders' (RSF) initiative to launch the Information and Democracy Commission.

## **Serbia**

**On 13 August** I wrote to Prime Minister Ana Brnabić to raise my concern regarding the case of Južne vesti. After several months of various tax inspections, it was decided that Južne vesti owes a million dinars (nearly 8,500 euro) of unpaid tax. I stressed the importance of determining whether the regulations have been interpreted correctly in the decision on the amount owed by Južne vesti and whether the, potentially grave, consequences for the media outlet have been taken into consideration.

**On 14 August** I wrote to the Serbian authorities to express my concern following the court decision against the "Peščanik" news portal and its journalists. The Court awarded 200,000 dinars (nearly 1,700 euro) to be paid as a compensation for violation of the Minister's honour and reputation. I was informed that the journalists will appeal this decision. I also underlined that public figures must endure a higher threshold of criticism and scrutiny as their work is of public interest.

On 12 September, I was informed by the OSCE Mission to Serbia that, together with the EU delegation, they facilitated meetings of the Working Group tasked to draft the Media Strategy in order to ensure that the drafting process is aligned with international standards and best practices on freedom of information and media freedom. They also provide additional expertise in relevant areas. My Office will continue supporting this process and providing all necessary assistance to the media community and Serbian authorities.

**On 12 October**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I strongly condemned a physical attack against Editor-in-chief of the news portal Žig Info Željko Matorčević. I



welcomed the investigation launched by the authorities and expressed my hope that the perpetrator would be brought to justice as soon as possible.

On **15 October** I wrote to the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ivica Dačić, to express my concern regarding two media related incidents, in particular the physical attack on 9 October against Editor-in-chief of the news portal Žig Info Željko Matorčević. I strongly condemned this attack and welcomed that Serbian law enforcement authorities have already started investigating the case.

Furthermore, I shared the concerns raised by the journalists' associations in Serbia (NUNS and NDNV), regarding public accusations by the head of the parliamentary group of the ruling Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) against President of NDNV Nedim Sejdinović. I highlighted that public officials must not create a hostile environment for media professionals through their statements, as this practice could be perceived as an open call for violence against unfavourable or critical media.

### **Slovakia**

On **28 September** I issued a public statement welcoming progress in the investigation into the murders of Ján Kuciak and Martina Kušnírová.

On **4 October** I issued a public statement commending the detention of several suspects as another key step in the investigation into the murders of Ján Kuciak and Martina Kušnírová and insisted that the investigation must persevere until all those involved, especially those who ordered this murder, face justice.

### **Slovenia**

On **10 August**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I condemned the attack against an RTV Slovenija crew by an unknown assailant who attempted to run the journalists over and destroyed their equipment.

### **Spain**

On **19 July**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I expressed my deep concern following an attack on Spanish photojournalist Jordi Borràs on 16 July, reportedly at the hands of police.

### **Sweden**

On **24 August**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I condemned a post by a Member of Parliament, depicting himself armed, threatening “to destroy” newspaper *Dagens Nyheter*. I stressed that threats against the media are irresponsible and unacceptable, especially from a member of parliament and called on the MP to recant his post immediately.

### **Switzerland**

On **19 October** I wrote to the authorities to ask for information about the status of Mustafa Mamay, a Kurdish journalist held at Zurich airport and allegedly denied the right to apply for asylum despite facing a threat of extradition to Turkey.

On 29 October I received a reply from the authorities indicating that Mustafa Mamay submitted an asylum application at the airport in Zurich, which was rejected, and that he has since appealed the decision to the Federal Administrative Court.

### **Tajikistan**

On **11 July** I issued a public statement expressing my concern about the sentencing of journalist Khayrullo Mirsaidov and reiterated my call for his release.

On **22 August** I issued a public statement welcoming the release of journalist Khayrullo Mirsaidov and called on the authorities to drop all charges against him.

On **30 August** I wrote to the authorities to share my concerns about difficulties in accessing online platforms, such as Facebook and YouTube, within the territory of Tajikistan. I emphasized that all citizens must have unhindered access to information, offline and online, and that any restrictions must be defined by law, be proportionate and transparent, and based on an independent judicial decision.

On **4 September**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I shared information about my letter to the authorities concerning access to online media within the territory of Tajikistan.

### **Turkey**

On **6 July** I issued a public statement condemning the severe prison sentences handed down to several Zaman journalists, and calling for their release. Istanbul 13<sup>th</sup> High Criminal Court sentenced former Zaman journalists, Şahin Alpay, Mustafa Ünal, İbrahim Karayeğen, Ahmet Turan Alkan, Mümtazer Türköne, Ali Bulaç, to prison sentences ranging from eight years and nine months to ten years and six months for “membership of a terrorist organization”. İhsan Dağı, Orhan Kemal Cengiz, Nuriye Akman, Mehmet Özdemir and Lale Sarıbrahimoğlu were acquitted.

On **9 July** I wrote to the authorities and issued a public statement expressing my concern over the closure of three newspapers and one TV station in Turkey. On 8 July, the Turkish government issued a 701 law decree which, among other things, envisaged the closure of the Özgürlükçü Demokrasi, Halkın Nabzı and Welat newspapers, as well as the Avantaj TV station, over their alleged ties and associations with terrorist organizations or structures, formations or groups that are operating against the national security of Turkey. All their assets have been transferred to the Treasury.

On **17 July**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I welcomed the Court decision in Turkey to acquit the Chief of the Ankara branch of newspaper Cumhuriyet, Erdem Gül, of “publishing state secrets”. I emphasized that it is extremely important that all charges against him and Can Dündar are dropped.

On **19 July**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I called on the authorities to free journalist Canan Coşkun from the newspaper Cumhuriyet, who was sentenced to two years and three months for her reporting. The journalist is not under arrest and the case is currently pending appeal.

On **27 July**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I said that the presidential decree 2018/2 placing control of the public broadcaster TRT under the President's office, and the regulator RTUK under the control of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, is problematic for media independence and media freedom. I emphasized that public broadcasters and regulators must be independent.

On **2 August** I wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, and issued a public statement expressing my concern over judicial action initiated by Turkey against the Turkish Cypriot journalists, Şener Levent and Ali Osman from the newspaper Afrika. I stated that threatening journalists with criminal lawsuits for their work weakens pluralistic debate in societies, can lead to self-censorship among journalists, and to the overall deterioration of media freedom. I urged the authorities to drop the charges against them.

On **20 August**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I expressed my relief over the lifting of a travel ban on journalist Meşale Tolu, and called for the charges to be dropped against her.

On **12 September** I issued a public statement condemning the arrest of the Austrian journalist Max Zirngast, and called on the Turkish authorities to immediately release him. Max Zirngast, a contributor to several Austrian magazines and a student of political science, was detained in Ankara along with several other people.

On **14 September** I wrote to the authorities regarding the case of Metin Duran, a former journalist of Radyo Rengin, who was imprisoned in March this year on terrorism-related charges. Duran suffered a stroke following a heart attack in October 2015, leaving him paralyzed, and without the ability to speak, eat or recognize anyone. He is serving his three years and three months sentence in the Sincan prison hospital. I emphasized that it is inhumane to keep Duran imprisoned in such deplorable conditions.

On **18 September**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I welcomed the release of journalist Metin Duran from prison due to his health condition.

On **19 September**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I welcomed the release of eight employees of Gün Printing House, and emphasized the importance that the remaining 13 journalists be released and that all charges against them be dropped.

On **20 September** I issued a public statement denouncing the prison sentences handed out to the executives of the Hayatın Sesi TV channel in Turkey. Istanbul's 13th High Criminal Court sentenced the owners of the Hayatın Sesi TV channel, Mustafa Kara and İsmail Gökhan Bayram, and the channel's general director, Gökhan Çetin, to three years and nine months in prison each. They were convicted of spreading terrorist propaganda for different terrorist groups in Turkey, reportedly related to several broadcasts by the channel in 2015 and 2016 on bombing attacks and military operations in the country's south-east. I emphasized that journalists should not be imprisoned for their work, even for reporting on conflict or expressing dissenting views.

On **27 September**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I said that the new regulation by the RTV Council RTUK can further restrict Internet access, online information and freedom of expression. I reiterated my call for legislative reform.

**On 2 October**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I noted the request for extradition of Can Dündar was issued on the same day as the perpetrator of his attempted murder was acquitted except for "carrying unlicensed gun" and "willful injury" with a sentence of 10 months and a fine. I emphasized that journalists should not be prosecuted for investigating and their attackers should not benefit from impunity.

**On 3 October**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I conveyed my sadness at the appeals court decision confirming the aggravated life sentences for six defendants, including journalists Nazlı Ilıcak, Ahmet Altan and Mehmet Altan. I reiterated my call to release all journalists.

**On 7 October**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I expressed my shock about claims that Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi was murdered in the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul. I emphasized that this is an unprecedented crime and that those responsible for the crime must face justice.

**On 11 October** I wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, to welcome the efforts of the authorities in the investigation of the case of prominent Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi who was reported missing in Istanbul, and asked for additional information to be shared with my Office.

**On 11 October** I wrote to the authorities to express my concern about a series of detentions of journalists following raids of media offices and journalists' homes in several provinces, including Istanbul and Diyarbakir.

Among them was Mezopotamya News Agency (MNA) journalist Abdurrahman Gök whose home was raided by police. Two other reporters from the same news agency were also detained, namely Lezgin Akdeniz and Esra Solin Dal. The house of the Editor-in-chief of MNA Ömer Çelik was raided. Semiha Alankuş from the newspaper Yeni Yaşam, had her home raided and was detained by the police. Her colleagues Savaş Asian and Hayat Özmez, from the same media outlet, were also taken into custody. Diyarbakir office of the Yeni Yaşam newspaper was raided and their equipment confiscated. Other detained journalists include Kibiriye Evren from Jin News, and Cihan Ölmez.

According to a statement by the Diyarbakir Chief Prosecutor's Office, the journalists were detained on "terrorism" charges. I emphasized that journalists should not be criminally prosecuted for their work, reporting or for expressing their opinion, even on sensitive issues or conflicts.

**On 11 October**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I welcomed the lifting of a travel ban on the human rights lawyer and editor Eren Keskin, and called for all charges against her and other Özgür Gündem co-editor-in-chiefs, editors and journalists to be dropped immediately.

**On 11 October**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I said I was appalled at the Court decision sentencing the reporter Seda Taşkın from the news agency Mezopotamya to 7.5 years in prison for "aiding and abetting terrorist organization as non-member". I emphasized that journalists should not be labelled as terrorists.

On **11 October**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I expressed my concern at the decision to place journalist Faruk Arhan under surveillance for 5 years for tweets on the curfew and military operations in Cizre, after his six months prison sentence was suspended. I emphasized that reporters should not be persecuted for their views or their work.

On **25 October**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I expressed my disappointment that the Istanbul Regional Court of Appeals confirmed sentences handed down to 25 media workers, including Murat Aksoy and Atilla Taş. I repeated my call that all journalists be released and the charges against them dropped.

On **29 October** I wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, to present a review of certain provisions of Turkish Laws, amended since the general election of 24 June 2018, affecting freedom of expression and freedom of the media. I alerted the authorities about the negative impact these provisions might have on the fundamental human rights of freedom of expression and freedom of the media, and offered my assistance in resolving these concerns.

(see Legal reviews)

On **30 October**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I expressed my grave concern about the prison sentence of four years nine months handed down to former Özgür Gündem journalists Hüseyin Aykol, İnan Kızılkaya and writer İhsan Çaralan for insulting the Turkish President. I also noted that Hüseyin Aykol's sentence has not been suspended and that he faces prison if the decision is upheld by an appeals court.

On **31 October**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I welcomed the court decision to release ETHA reporter Ali Sönmez Kayar, who has been in prison since February, accused of being a member of a terrorist organization.

On **14 November**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I expressed my satisfaction at the fact that the verdict against journalist Ayla Albayrak was annulled by an appeals court in Turkey. Albayrak was previously convicted for an article she wrote for the Wall Street Journal in 2015.

## **Turkmenistan**

On 23 July I received a reply from the authorities, in reference to my letters of 14 May 2018 and 13 June 2018, regarding RFE/RL correspondent Soltan Achilova and the incident during the 9 May 2018 celebrations in Ashgabat (See PC Report of 5 July 2018). The letter quoted a violation of public order and deliberate provocation of police on the part of Achilova.

## **Ukraine**

On **6 July**, I issued a public statement raising my concerns regarding the draft law “On changes to some legislative acts of Ukraine on countering threats to national security in the information sphere”. I called on lawmakers to reconsider the text of the draft law and ensure that measures related to security concerns fully respect citizens’ right to free expression and free media as, if adopted, the law may endanger free access to information online.

Earlier in the year, I presented an expert legal review of the draft law to the authorities (see PC Report of 9 November 2017).

On 4 September I learned that the Parliamentary Committee on Informatization and Communications sent the draft law for revision.

On **19 July** I issued a public statement and wrote to the authorities expressing my concern about the detention and extradition of the journalist, Yusuf Inan, Editor-in-chief of online news outlet News2023.com and former Editor-in-chief of the Yerel Gündem newspaper and its website, from Ukraine to Turkey. I asked the authorities to clarify whether his freedom of expression and right to appeal were taken into consideration.

On **19 July**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I expressed my disappointment that the President of the Russian Union of Journalists, Vladimir Solovyev, was banned from entering Ukraine for three years. I recalled that OSCE participating States are committed to facilitating unhindered travel for journalists, as travel restrictions affect the free flow of information.

On **20 July**, on the second anniversary of the murder of journalist Pavel Sheremet, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I called on the authorities to renew their efforts to bring the killers and the masterminds of this murder to justice.

On **24 July** I wrote to Viktoria Siumar, Chair of the Verkhovna Rada's Committee on Freedom of Expression and Information Policy, following the adoption of a statement by the Committee, dated 6 July 2018, about the expert conference "Strengthening media freedom and pluralism in Ukraine during times of conflict in and around the country", which my Office organized on 26 June in Kyiv (see PC Report of 5 July 2018). I provided some additional information on the event, as some of the remarks made in the Committee's statement were based on factually incorrect information.

On **6 August**, on the 4th anniversary of death of Russian photojournalist Andrei Stenin, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I urged all State and non-state actors to protect journalists at all times (see PC Report of 27 November 2014).

On **6 August** I wrote to the authorities regarding two incidents involving journalists:

A car belonging to Grigory Kozma, an investigative journalist and the head of the Hromadske Slidstvo investigative project, was rammed by a truck on 2 August while he was in the vehicle in Odesa. He believes that it was an intentional act in response to his investigative reporting.

In a separate incident, on 28 July, a police officer sprayed tear gas in Efrem Lukatsky's face, a photographer with the Associated Press news agency, while the journalist was covering a protest in Kyiv. Reportedly, the incident took place despite the fact that Lukatsky clearly identified himself as a media worker.

I called on the authorities to fully investigate both incidents.

On **23 August** I issued a public statement calling for the immediate release of journalist, writer and blogger Stanislav Aseev (Vasin), who was interviewed on Russia-24 TV channel on 17 August. I said that any attempt to force or manipulate a 'confession' constitutes a violation of international law (see PC Reports of 5 July 2018 and 9 November 2017).

On 1 September I learned about the imprisonment of Borys German, who was sentenced to 4.5 years imprisonment for plotting an assassination attempt against Russian journalist Arkady Babchenko (see PC Report of 5 July 2018).

On **5 September** I issued a public statement expressing my concern about a court decision in Kyiv ordering the disclosure of mobile-phone data of a Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) investigative reporter and the host of its Schemes programme, Natalia Sedletska. I called on the authorities to ensure that all steps in line with international standards and OSCE commitments are taken to respect Sedletska's privilege to keep her sources confidential.

On **6 September**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I reiterated my call on the authorities to respect journalists' rights on protection of sources, following a court order requesting the disclosure of Kristina Berdynskykh's data, a journalist with the Novoe Vremya media outlet.

On **17 September**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I said that the attack against the journalist Daryna Bilera and her crew with NewsOne TV channel by protesters in Kyiv was unacceptable. I called on the police in Ukraine to do their utmost to protect media workers.

On **19 September** I issued a public statement welcoming a decision by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) on an interim measure which indicated that the Ukrainian authorities abstain from accessing the mobile telephone data of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) investigative reporter Natalya Sedletska.

On **19 September**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I condemned the appalling wave of online bullying and threats against Oksana Romaniuk, Executive Director of the NGO Institute of Mass Information, an important and long-standing partner of my Office. I said that these outrageous attacks and threats must stop and that I expected the authorities to investigate and do their utmost to ensure her safety.

On **25 September** I issued a public statement and on **27 September** I wrote to the authorities expressing my concern about the termination of the analogue distribution of public service broadcaster UA:PBC in certain areas, and repeated my call on the authorities to urgently resolve any difficulties regarding funding of the broadcaster's activities (see PC Report of 5 July 2018).

On 25 September, UA:PBC announced that the Broadcasting, Telecommunications and Television Company of Ukraine had terminated its analogue distribution throughout the country, with the exception of six border regions, because of the broadcaster's debts. The broadcaster cited significant budget cuts by the state as the main reason for its continuous financial difficulties. UA:PBC also expressed concern regarding the future of its digital broadcasting due to similar arrears in payment to a digital network operator.

On **4 October** I issued a public statement and on **5 October** I wrote to the authorities expressing my deep concern about a decision by the Verkhovna Rada that called on the National Security Council of Ukraine to impose sanctions against two Ukrainian television channels, in particular channels 112 and NewsOne, which would eventually terminate their activities.

I called on the authorities to refrain from taking disproportionately restrictive measures toward the media without following the proper judicial procedures, which would adversely impact the free flow and access to information, and impede the expression of a diversity of opinions (see also PC Report of 5 July 2018).

**On 15 October** I replied to the letter from Liudmyla Denisova, Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, regarding the case of Ukrainian journalist Mykola Semena, who is serving a 2.5-year suspended sentence in Crimea. I informed her that I have contacted the Russian authorities asking them to allow the journalist to leave the peninsula to visit a hospital in Kyiv, but the travel ban has not been lifted.

**On 15 October** I wrote to Andriy Parubiy, Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada, regarding the draft law “On ensuring the functioning of the Ukrainian as a state language” (#5670-D), which passed the first reading by the Verkhovna Rada on 4 October 2018. The draft law introduces amendments to a wide range of laws, including to the law on the print mass media and the law on television and radio broadcasting.

In particular, the law allows print media to only be published in languages other than Ukrainian when they have an identical publication in Ukrainian, including the same name, corresponding content, volume and printing method. It also introduces stricter language quotas for broadcasters, requiring them to air 80% to 90% of the content in Ukrainian.

As the draft law might endanger media pluralism in the media market, impose important additional expenses to the media, and negatively affect the reflection of a diversity of ideas and opinions, I asked the authorities to carefully scrutinize the bill in the next readings and undertake thorough consultations.

**On 15 October** I wrote to the authorities expressing my concern over a number of incidents involving journalists:

On 11 September the journalist Cristina Krishykha and her film crew of “Stop Corruption”, an independent investigation project, were obstructed and detained for several hours by a group of people, who demanded they hand over their video material, in Mykolaiv Oblast. The journalists’ equipment was confiscated until the arrival of the police.

On 17 September Darina Bileru, a reporter of NewsOne TV channel, was verbally assaulted, attacked and hit by a protestor during the live broadcast of a public demonstration in Kyiv.

On 29 September Arthur Zhurbenko, journalist and head of the Pravovy Kontrol Ukrainy social media project, reported that his house was burned down by unidentified men in the Zhytomyr region. He claims that this incident was linked to his profession, as the alleged arson took place after the journalist published an article on corruption involving representatives of the judiciary.

On 29 September Yuliya Gunko, a journalist from ICTV channel, was attacked while filming in Kyiv. Reportedly, a number of unidentified men tried to obstruct the filming process, while one of them damaged the camera and hit the journalist.

I encouraged the authorities to ensure the swift completion of the investigations into these incidents and provide information on their outcomes.



I once again raised the case of Vyacheslav Seleznev, a journalist of the online newspaper Strana.ua, who was allegedly forced to cooperate with the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU). Strana.ua published an investigation on this case, in which they documented communications and text messages (including threats) between the alleged SBU officer and the journalist.

I also expressed my concern about the decision of the Lviv Regional Council, adopted on 19 September, to introduce a moratorium on the public use of “Russian-language cultural product” on its territory invoking national security, as it might negatively affect the free flow of information and reflection of the cultural diversity of ideas and opinions, especially among the non-Ukrainian speaking population. I asked for additional information, including with regard to the implementation methods of the moratorium.

**On 29 October** I issued a public statement expressing my serious concern about the duration of the pre-trial detention for the bureau chief of RIA Novosti Ukraine, Kirill Vyshinsky, which has been extended twice since July 2018. I also expressed my hope that the upcoming court proceeding will lead to his release on 4 November 2018, when his current detention is scheduled to end (see PC Report of 5 July 2018).

**On 1 November** I issued a public statement expressing my disappointment after a court extended for the third time the pre-trial detention Kirill Vyshinsky until 28 December 2018. I insisted that journalists have the right to express dissenting views and report on issues that could be controversial, sensitive or offensive without any fear of retaliation. I reiterated my call on the authorities to expedite the investigation on Vyshinsky, and to release the journalist.

**On 4 November**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I expressed shock and sadness over the news of the death of journalist Kateryna Handziuk, who I met in Kyiv last June. I said that the perpetrators of this terrible crime must be brought to justice.

**On 21 November** I wrote to the authorities conveying my concern regarding the case of journalist and blogger Vasiliy Muravitskiy who was arrested by the Security Service of Ukraine in Zhitomir on 2 August 2017 on various charges including high treason (see PC reports of 9 November 2017 and 5 July 2018). I called on authorities to expedite the investigation into the charges brought against Muravitskiy.

### **United Kingdom**

**On 1 September** I issued a public statement expressing my serious concern over the arrest of two journalists and the search of their property, in connection with an investigation into the alleged theft of documents from the office of the Police Ombudsman of Northern Ireland. In my statement, I reminded the authorities that it is essential that journalists' privilege to confidential sources be protected and journalists are free to do their work.

On 8 November I noted that the Police Ombudsman of Northern Ireland declared that his office had not made a complaint about stolen documents. As the premise of the investigation was based on the alleged theft of documents, lawyers acting for the journalists are now seeking to have their arrests declared illegal. According to reports, the journalists were not charged but are still subject to bail conditions and are to report for further questioning at the end of this month. I will continue to closely follow this case.

On **14 September** I issued a public statement welcoming the landmark decision by the European Court of Human Rights which found that the United Kingdom's Investigatory Powers Act threatened the confidentiality of journalists' sources.

On **28 September** I wrote to the authorities and made a public statement referencing the letter in which I conveyed my concern regarding the draft Counter-Terrorism and Border Security Bill. While the draft law sets out additional powers to help tackle terrorism, it may also have a worrying impact on media freedom by potentially criminalizing an excessively broad range of behavior, and thereby creating a chilling effect on journalistic freedom to report.

On 7 November I received a reply from Rt Hon Ben Wallace MP, Minister of State for Security and Economic Crime, regarding the amendments to the Counter-Terrorism and Border Security Bill, which I had raised concern with in my letter of 27 September. In his letter, the Minister emphasised the critical need for counter-terrorism measures and to avert hostile state activity toward the United Kingdom. Nevertheless, he also assured me that important safeguards are in place for journalists and that the government attaches great importance to ensuring their legislation is consistent with their commitment to freedom of expression and freedom of the media.

### **United States**

On **7 August**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I condemned the shooting at the WORT News station that left one person injured. I welcomed the investigation initiated by police and stressed that attacks against local media are worrying and that perpetrators must be brought to justice.

On **31 August**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I welcomed the arrest of the perpetrator of death threats against Boston Globe staff. I stated that this case highlights the alarming and dangerous level of threats against the press and called on leaders to respect and protect the free media as a pillar of democracy.

On **6 September**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I stated my concern regarding the previous day's incident in which a truck was intentionally driven into Fox 4 news offices in Dallas, Texas. I welcomed the swift response by police and stated that this attack shows the importance of creating a safe environment for journalists.

On **1 October**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I noted recent developments in favour of net neutrality in California.

On **22 October** I wrote to the authorities requesting additional information on the possible legal basis for a decision made by Comcast and Spectrum to discontinue cable broadcasts by Russia Today, following reports that the decision was based on the National Defense Authorization Act.

On 19 November I received a reply to my letter of 22 October informing me of content of the National Defense Authorization Act and continued support of the United States for the work of my Office.

On **25 October** I issued a public statement expressing my alarm after a series of explosive devices were sent to CNN's offices and senior political leaders in the USA. I welcomed the swift investigation launched by the authorities and emphasized the importance of protecting journalists by providing them with a safe environment.

On **27 October**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I welcomed the swift arrest by the FBI and the bringing of charges against the man accused of sending parcel bombs to CNN and senior political leaders in the USA.

On **30 October**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I expressed my concern over a subpoena issued by the US Department of Homeland Security against Editor Daniel Kowalski, calling on him to reveal the source of a leaked memo on asylum claims. I urged the USA to safeguard the protection of journalists' sources.

On **8 November**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I stated that the decision by the White House to revoke the press pass of CNN reporter Jim Acosta was regrettable. I noted that journalists must be allowed to ask probing questions, hold leaders to account, and not be called enemy of the people. I called for the decision to be reversed.

On **14 November** I wrote to the authorities requesting additional information on the case of Russian journalist Alexander Malkevich who was allegedly detained at a Washington airport and interrogated before being allowed to leave the country.

On 21 November I received a reply informing me that Alexander Malkevich was not compelled to register under that Foreign Agents Registration Act before being able to leave the country and assuring me of the United States' continued support for the work of my Office.

On **17 November**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I welcomed the decision to restore press access for CNN reporter Jim Acosta and noted that the final judgement in the case could be an important precedent for press freedom.

On **20 November**, in a statement from my official Twitter account, I stated that it was good that the White House had restored the press pass of CNN's Jim Acosta and that he is able to return to his work.

## **Uzbekistan**

On **5 September** I wrote to the authorities to convey my serious concern and to request information about the recent administrative detention of bloggers Adham Olimov and Ziyavuddin Kabirov and arrests of social media activists Otabek Usmonov, Miraziz Akhmedov, Khurshidbek Mukhammad Rozikov, Dilshodbek Khalilov, Tulkin Astanov and Sulaimon Erkin whose whereabouts were unclear.

On 23 October the Permanent Mission of Uzbekistan forwarded a memo in response to my letter of 5 September. The document provided information on the above-mentioned cases, detailing the nature of charges and the sentence. In particular, the document specified that cases against Olimov, Akhmedov, Marazykov were dismissed upon appeal, and that the sentences for Usmanov and Khalilov were commuted. The cases of Kabirov and Askanov were not appealed.

## Projects and activities since the last report

### Legal reviews

#### France

On **21 November** I sent a legal review to the French authorities on the draft law on the fight against the manipulation of information. The review examined the law's conformity with France's commitments on freedom of expression and freedom of information. In its recommendations, the review explores the possibility of introducing a new legal statute for Internet platforms. The review also proposes enhancing media literacy, and supporting self-regulation efforts of the media community to enhance quality journalism through certification and fact-checking, for example. The law was adopted on 20 November.

#### Montenegro

On **17 September**, together with the Head of Mission of the OSCE to Montenegro Ambassador Maryse Daviet, I presented two legal reviews to the Minister of Culture of Montenegro, Aleksandar Bogdanović. My Office, together with the Mission, commissioned the legal analysis of the Draft Media law and Draft Law on Amendments to the Law on National Public Broadcaster. We expressed our readiness to continue assisting Montenegrin authorities in this process as certain parts - the establishment of Fund for Support to Media pluralism and the process of selecting the members of the RTCG Council and the General Director - are of crucial importance for pluralistic, financially sustainable and independent media in the country.

#### Turkey

On **29 October** I sent an analysis of the provisions of various Turkish Laws, amended since the general election of 24 June 2018, affecting freedom of expression and freedom of the media to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu. I alerted the authorities about the negative impact these provisions might have on the fundamental human rights of freedom of expression and freedom of the media, and offered my assistance in addressing these concerns.

I noted the following:

- On 7 July 2018, regarding Decree No 700 on the Amendment of Certain Laws and Decree Laws for compliance with the amendments to the Constitution, several amendments were made to laws granting power and authority to the President of Turkey. The power to request blocking decisions in cases of emergency in relation to protection of life and property, national security and public order, prevention of crime or for the protection of public health was granted to the President of Turkey (article 181 of Decree No. 700).
- Regarding the State of Emergency Decree No 701, published on the Official Gazette on 8 July 2018, three newspapers and one TV station were closed as they were deemed to have connections to terrorist organizations, including through operational activities to finance these organizations.

- With regards to Article 35 of this Decree published on 9 July 2018 in the Official Gazette, amendments were made to the Law on the Right to Information No. 4982 and to the principles regarding the tasking and work of the Right to Information Council (“BEDK”). From now on, the work of the Council will be established by a regulation to be prepared by the Presidency.
- The National Intelligence Agency (“MIT”), as a public authority, has been removed from the scope of the Turkish Right to Information Law No. 4982, enacted on 9 October 2003. For approximately 15 years MIT, as a public authority, was subject to “freedom of information requests” and its decisions were subject to judicial review. With article 10 of Law No. 7145 (amending article 30 of the State Intelligence Services and National Intelligence Organization Law No. 2937), freedom of information applications can no longer be made to MIT.
- With Presidential Decree Number 14, published in the Official Gazette on 24 July 2018, a new Communication Presidency was established under command of the President of Turkey.
- With the Presidency Circular No. 2018/2 on Institutions and Organizations Associated with Ministries, published in the Official Gazette on 24 July 2018, new arrangements have been made with regards to the Radio and Television Supreme Council (“RTÜK”) and Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (“TRT”). RTÜK is now under the umbrella of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and TRT has been relegated to the newly formed Communications Presidency within the Turkish Presidency.
- There have also been a huge number of criminal investigations as well as prosecutions that have had a significant impact on freedom of expression and freedom of the media in Turkey.

## Visits and participation in events

On **9 July** my Office spoke at the 14th International Media Law School in **Kyiv** for participants from Eastern Europe, South Caucasus and Central Asia. My Office gave a presentation on the issue of disinformation in the context of freedom of the media.

On **9 - 10 July** my Office chaired a panel discussion, “Media Freedom in the Western Balkans”, during the Western Balkans Summit in **London**.

On **9 - 11 July** I paid an official visit to Cyprus. During the visit I met with Minister of Foreign Affairs Nikos Christodoulides in **Nicosia** to discuss the Cyprus Dialogue Project, journalist exchange program, glossary, safety of journalists and media pluralism. I also met with Elizabeth Spehar, Head of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus, and Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations.

On 10 July I opened an exhibition of work produced by young Cypriot journalists as part of an exchange programme under the auspices of the Cyprus Dialogue project, supported by my Office. On the same day, I officially launched a trilingual glossary of sensitive words, the production of which was supported by my Office with expertise from journalists from both communities, and the Ethical Journalism Network.

During the visit to Cyprus, I also met with media representatives as part of a meeting on the dialogue between journalists from the two communities on the island including authors Esra

Aygin, Maria Siakalli, Bekir Azgin, Christos Christophides, and Giorgos Frangos, Head of the Union of Cyprus Journalists, Sami Ozuslu, Head of the Turkish Cypriot Journalists' Association, Ali Kismir, Head of Basin Sen/Press Workers Union, Cagdas Oguc from the Basin Sen/Press Workers Union, Mete Hatay, Editor of the glossary, and representative of the PRIO Centre Cyprus, Marilena Mardapitta and Aidan White, President of the Ethical Journalism Network.

While in the country, I also visited the premises of *Afrika* newspaper and met with Editor-in-chief Sener Levent.

On **16 - 17 July** my Office spoke at the Boris Nemtsov Summer School hosted by the Charles University in **Prague** for young journalists from Armenia, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Russia, Turkey, UK, Ukraine, and USA. My Office gave presentations on the international vision of media freedom and its legal indicators.

On **5 September** my Office attended a conference, *Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists: From a Chilling to an Enabling Environment*, to speak on a panel about the safety of female journalists. The conference was hosted by the Institute for Information Law at the University of **Amsterdam**.

On **10 - 12 September** I attended the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM) in **Warsaw**, together with a team from my Office. In addition to addressing the plenary session during the opening and Working Session I, my Office chaired Working Session II on Freedom of the Media.

During the HDIM I also spoke at several side events, including “Professional journalism: survival in the age of globalized information (Ukraine)”, “Safety of Female Journalists Online (#SOFJO)”, “The Public Launch Event of the Group of Friends on Safety of Journalists”, hosted by the informal OSCE Group of Friends on Safety of Journalists and “Protecting Freedom of Expression and other Human Rights while Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism on the Internet”, co-sponsored with the Transnational Threats Department of the OSCE.

On **10 September** I met with Minister of Foreign Affairs Jacek Czaputowicz and the country Commissioner for Human Rights Adam Bodnar in **Warsaw**.

During the meetings we discussed the media freedom situation in Poland, in particular the critical need for an independent public service broadcast system, my concern over several defamation cases against journalists, and the Holocaust law, which despite some positive amendments, may still have a negative effect on the right to freedom of expression.

On **17 September**, also as part of the HDIM in **Warsaw**, my Office chaired Working Session II on fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly and association, national human rights institutions and the role of civil society in the protection of human rights, and freedom of movement.

On **17 - 18 September**, together with Prime Minister Zoran Zaev and EU Commissioner Johannes Hahn, I delivered a keynote speech at the opening of the EU-Western Balkans Media Days, organized by the European Commission in **Skopje**.

I also met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs Nikola Dimitrov, Minister of Information Society and Administration Damjan Mancevski, Minister without Portfolio in charge of Communications, Accountability and Transparency Robert Popovski and members of the media community to discuss media laws, amendments to the electoral code and safety of journalists in the country.

On **19 - 20 September** my Office took part in the conference, “Constructing Ukrainian Narratives in Turbulent Times” organized by Södertörn University in **Stockholm**. The Office presented a report on legal aspects of “cultural security” in the context of the conflict in and around Ukraine.

On **24 - 25 September** my Office took part in the Council of Europe’s Meeting of the Committee of Experts on quality journalism in the digital age in **Strasbourg**, contributing to the discussion on the future recommendation of the Council of Europe on the essential role that journalism plays in providing timely, accurate and relevant information, free from undue interference. During the meeting the study of media and information literacy in the digital environment was also addressed.

On **25 - 27 September** my Office participated in the annual Fundamental Rights Forum in **Vienna**, and spoke at the session titled "The rule of law is too slow - the human rights impacts of privatized enforcement".

On **26 September** my Office participated in a panel discussion following the screening of the documentary film *The Cleaners* in **Vienna**, hosted by the Fundamental Rights Agency and *This Human World* film festival. The documentary focuses on online content moderation and its impact on freedom of expression, hate speech, censorship and the control of public spheres.

On **1 October** my Office participated at the UNESCO informational meeting on the situation in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine), at the invitation of Director General Audrey Azoulay, in **Paris**.

On **8 - 10 October** I paid an official visit to Montenegro where I spoke at a regional conference, *Media Sustainability and Successful Media Business Models*, in **Podgorica**. The event was organized by the OSCE Mission to Montenegro and OSCE Mission to Skopje, in cooperation with the Media Association of South East Europe.

I met with the Prime Minister Duško Marković, Minister of Foreign Affairs Srdjan Darmanović, Minister of Culture Aleksandar Bogdanović to discuss topics including impunity, the safety of journalists, process of changing media laws, state of the public service broadcaster and financial situation of the Media Council for Self-Regulation. During the visit I also met with members of the local media community.

On **9 October** my Office chaired a session at the European Commission’s annual Fundamental Rights Network meeting in **Brussels** which brings together staff working on human and fundamental rights issues.

On **9 - 10 October** my Office participated in the high level international conference on preventing and countering terrorism in the digital age, organized by the OSCE and Foreign

Ministry of Belarus in **Minsk** and spoke on the panel, “Implementing the OSCE Framework Against Terrorism in the Digital Age”.

On **11 October** my Office participated in the 48th meeting of the European Platform of Regulatory Authorities, in **Bratislava** and provided an overview on the Office’s interventions and other activities on the position of media regulatory authorities in OSCE participating States.

On **16 October** I spoke at a side event organized by the delegation of Austria, and co-sponsored by the delegations of France, Italy, and the Global Initiative against Organized Crime, at the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (COP UNTOC) in **Vienna**. The title of the event was “Safety of journalists in Combating Organized Crime.”

On **22 October** my Office participated in an event to commemorate the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists, organised by Italian NGO "Ossigeno per l'informazione" at the Senate in **Rome**. I also delivered a video address to participants during this event.

On **23 - 24 October** I conducted an official visit to Armenia, where I met with Acting Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, Acting Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan, and Acting Justice Minister Artak Zeynalyan in **Yerevan** to discuss challenges to and the promotion of media freedom as a cornerstone of democracy, and other areas where my Office could offer legal expertise and assistance.

I welcomed the commitment expressed by the authorities to strengthen media freedom and encouraged them to vigorously promote a safe and enabling environment for journalists, and to consider steps to strengthen media pluralism, independence of the public broadcaster, transparency of media ownership and access to information. I also met with Deputy Human rights Defender Artyom Sedrakyan and Director of Public TV of Armenia Margarita Grigoryan, as well as representatives from media and civil society organizations.

On **7 November**, on the occasion of the Central Asian Media Conference, I met the Minister of Foreign Affairs Kairat Abdrakhmanov and Minister of Information and Communication Dauren Abayev in **Astana**. During the meetings we discussed the negative impact of certain provision of the Criminal Code on the media and freedom of expression in the country, the need to have a more transparent system to distribute state subventions to the press, the benefits of greater access to public information, as well as some ongoing media cases. I offered my assistance in reviewing existing and draft legislation pertaining to the media

On **7 November** my Office spoke on a panel, “Challenges to media pluralism in Europe in the digital age: violence against women online”, as part of the XXII Congress of the Worldwide Association of Women Journalists and Writers in **London**.

On **9 November** my Office spoke at an event organized by Index on Censorship in **London** on media freedom as concerns the EU and candidate countries.

On **11 November**, I attended the opening session of the first **Paris** Peace Forum that gathered over 70 Heads of State, Governments and international organizations. I attended the presentation by Reporters Without Borders of the new Commission on Information and



Democracy, in the presence of several Heads of State and Governments, including French President Emmanuel Macron, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, and Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg.

On **12 November**, I attended the 13<sup>th</sup> Internet Governance Forum opening session in **Paris**, in the presence of French President Emmanuel Macron, UN Secretary-General António Guterres and UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay. I met with a number of partners, including UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression David Kaye, as well as representatives of Access Now, Article 19 and Reporters Without Borders.

## Conferences and Projects

### Cyprus Media Dialogue

On **10 July** my Office organized, in **Nicosia**, an exhibition of work produced by young Cypriot journalists as part of an exchange programme supported by my Office from November-December of 2017. On the same day, I officially launched a trilingual glossary of sensitive words used by the media, the production of which was supported by my Office with expertise from journalists from both communities, and the Ethical Journalism Network.

### 15<sup>th</sup> South Caucasus Media Conference

On **18-19 July** my Office organized the 15<sup>th</sup> South Caucasus Media Conference, opened with Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia David Zalkaliani and with President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly George Tsereteli, in **Tbilisi** for more than 75 participants representing media, government, civil society and academia from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. The main topic of the conference was quality journalism for trustworthy and credible information. 14 renowned experts – five international and nine national - shared their knowledge and experiences.

At the end of the event, participants and experts discussed and adopted a list of recommendations, sent to authorities of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, on the challenges to free media and freedom of expression in the region and the best practices OSCE-wide for improving professionalism and media freedom in the context of quality journalism for trustworthy and credible information. The document is available in Armenian, Azerbaijani, English and Georgian at: <https://www.osce.org/representative-on-freedom-of-media/389780>

### Side events at the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

On **12 September** my Office sponsored a side event, together with Oksana Romaniuk, Director of the Institute of Mass Information, titled “Professional journalism: survival in the age of globalized information” at the OSCE 2018 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM) in **Warsaw**. Journalists and media experts discussed how to address challenges in the media sphere ahead of the presidential and parliamentary elections in Ukraine.

On **12 September** my Office sponsored a side event on the safety of female journalists online, as part of the #SOFJO project, during the 2018 OSCE HDIM in **Warsaw**. Experts

from international and civil society organizations, along with several women journalists, shared their experiences and account of online harassment and the results this type of abuse has when it comes to their work online and offline.

On **12 September** my Office co-sponsored a side event, together with the Transnational Threats Department, “Protecting Freedom of Expression and Other Human Rights While Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism” in **Warsaw**.

### **20<sup>th</sup> Central Asia Media Conference**

On **7-8 November** my Office organized the 20<sup>th</sup> Central Asia Media Conference in **Astana**, opened with Minister of Information and Communication Dauren Abayev and Head of the OSCE Programme Office in Astana Gyorgy Szabó, for more than 120 participants representing media, government, civil society and academia from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, along with experts from Mongolia and Europe. The main topic of the conference was media freedom and the future of journalism, with sessions on quality of information, disinformation, hate speech, media regulation and media freedom developments in the region.

I prepared a set of recommendations on issues directly related to the conference’s agenda and based on the discussions. The list will be sent to the governments of the region and published in English and Russian on the OSCE website.

## **Planned activities for the next reporting period**

### **Visits and participation in events**

On **27 - 28 November** my Office will take part in a workshop, “Global Platforms, Local Concerns” in **Berlin**, on the involvement of local actors in the development and enforcement of social media content policies and processes, organized by the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of opinion and expression.

On **28 - 30 November** I will pay an official visit to Moldova. I will meet with high-level authorities, journalists and representatives of civil society in **Chisinau** to discuss the media freedom situation in the country, as well as areas where my Office can provide assistance. I will also attend and speak at the award ceremony of the 2018 ADAMI Media Prize for Cultural Diversity in Eastern Europe and the Media Forum.

On **29 - 30 November** my Office will take part in the Freedom Online Conference in **Berlin**. The Freedom Online Coalition is a partnership of 30 governments, working to advance Internet freedom. Coalition members work closely together to coordinate their diplomatic efforts and engage with civil society and the private sector to support Internet freedom – free expression, association, assembly, and privacy online – worldwide.

On **18 - 19 December**, at the invitation of the Foreign Ministry, I will pay an official visit to Kyrgyzstan. The country visit will include my participation in the workshop, ‘Judicial

Dialogue in Central Asia’, aimed at raising awareness of and harmonizing efforts made to deal with illegal content while safeguarding the freedom of the media.

## **Conferences**

### **#SOFJO**

On **December 10**, together with the International Press Institute and the *This Human World Film Festival*, my Office will host a roundtable discussion and screening of our original documentary, *A Dark Place*. The documentary, the first of its kind developed by my Office, uses first-person narratives from women journalists and experts on gender and media to show how the online safety of women journalists goes beyond gender equality, directly impacting the quality of our democracies and right of society to access a plurality of information.

On **February 12** my Office will host a high-level conference on the safety of female journalists. The event will provide a platform to showcase and consolidate the work being done on this issue by international stakeholders, including research commissioned by my Office, together with the International Press Institute.

## **Publications**

### ***Guidebook on Safety of Journalists***

In the coming months, my Office will publish the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the OSCE *Guidebook on Safety of Journalists* to better assist participating States in their efforts to ensure safe working conditions for journalists in the OSCE region. The *Guidebook*, to be published in English and Russian, will provide a framework of the current situation of safety of journalists and any developments since publication of the previous edition in 2014, including gender-based violence, and harassment and intimidation of journalists online.

## **Extra-budgetary donors**

My thanks go to the governments of Finland, Germany, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States for their generous contribution to the work of my Office during this reporting period.

I encourage all participating States to consider supporting my Office’s efforts to provide expertise, support and the most up-to-date resources for the promotion and protection of freedom of the media and freedom of expression throughout the OSCE region.