

Joint Statement of the International Community in BiH on the Occasion of the World Press Freedom Day



On the occasion of the World Press Freedom Day, the OSCE Mission to BiH, Council of Europe, Delegation of the European Union and European Union Special Representative in BiH, Office of the High Representative, United Nations in Bosnia and Herzegovina and embassies of France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom and the United States of America, issue the following statement:

Dear colleagues and friends in the media community,

World Press Freedom Day is a time to reflect on the vital role you have in a democratic society, and especially in an age when technological advances have made it so easy to spread both deliberate disinformation and accidental misinformation.

In this rapidly changing reality, transparency and access to reliable information is key. Enjoyment of the right to health does not only depend on accessible healthcare, but also on the ability of individuals to stay informed via timely and reliable information. Freedom of expression and a robust independent media are key to this, as is the need to counter disinformation. Your pursuit for the truth through accurate

and impartial reporting has never been more important than during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Respect for the highest ethical standards is essential to provide the public with information they can trust. We encourage you to keep adhering to these standards.

Allow us to thank you for the important work you do during the current crisis keeping the public informed despite the serious health risks to which you are exposed. We recognize that these are uncertain times that have led to a drop in advertising revenues for many media outlets and have cost some journalists their jobs. This could present a serious threat to media pluralism.

Today, we are also mindful of the other daily safety risks you are exposed to while simply doing your job. Journalists across the country, and in particular female journalists, are often targeted. Many of you receive online threats or are attacked for reporting on corruption, the work of the authorities, and violations of human rights.

This is unacceptable and must not be tolerated.

Threats and attacks against journalists must be subject to effective investigation. Undoubtedly, more needs to be done so you can enjoy a safe and secure working environment, free from risk and political and economic pressures.

We call all authorities in the country to uphold the right to freedom of expression enshrined in Article 10 of the European Convention on human rights and Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, ensure free access to information, and take no measures aimed at barring journalists from the legitimate exercise of their profession. The Covid-19 pandemic cannot be used as an excuse to suppress or to silence critical voices.