

**JOINT-STATEMENT DELIVERED BY THE DELEGATION OF SWITZERLAND TO THE OSCE, ON BEHALF OF 46 PARTICIPATING STATES**

**1323rd MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL 8 July 2021**

Current Issue: Marking the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture 2021

Madam Chair,

I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of 46 participating States: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, the European Union and its Member States, Georgia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Mongolia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, San Marino, Serbia, Switzerland, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

The International Day in Support of Victims of Torture is an occasion to reaffirm our strong commitment to prevent and eradicate torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (other ill-treatment). This day is also an opportunity to express solidarity with the suffering of torture victims and survivors, as well as their families and communities affected, many of whom remain unacknowledged and unsupported.

Torture and other ill-treatment are grave and abhorrent violations of human rights and human dignity. We would like to recall that the prohibition of torture is absolute, under all circumstances, at any time and in any place whatsoever. Regrettably, torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, as well as enforced disappearances, are far from being eradicated and are still practiced in all parts of the world, also in the OSCE area. More action is needed to prevent such acts, including prosecuting the perpetrators, establishing safeguards, identifying the victims and ensuring effective redress, which can include also compensation, rehabilitation and guarantees of non-repetition. A holistic, victim-centred and gender-sensitive approach should be at the basis of those efforts.

In this regard, we are particularly pleased that we were able to reaffirm and strengthen our shared commitments by adopting the 2020 Tirana Ministerial Council Decision on the Prevention and Eradication of Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. This decision provides new impetus for ending torture in our region. Now it is high time to honor our commitments through effective implementation.

We call on participating States to make good use of ODIHR's assistance and its internationally recognized expertise in this field. We continue to strongly support ODIHR's endeavors. Among the many activities, we would like to highlight ODIHR and Fair Trials' recent publication on *Eliminating Incentives for Torture in Criminal Justice Systems*, as well as the practical guidance in collaboration with the Association for the Prevention of Torture on *Monitoring Places of Detention During the Pandemic*.

Madam Chair,

While we as States bear the primary responsibility to eradicate torture, civil society organisations, human rights defenders, international, regional and national preventive mechanisms play similarly important roles. In particular, we would like to express our strong support to the tireless and important work of human rights defenders and NGOs in all areas of anti-torture efforts. Civil society should have the space to speak out and fight all forms of torture and other ill-treatment without risk of reprisals.

In addition, we advocate for the participating States to consider signing and ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which obligates States to establish or maintain effective National Preventive Mechanisms to monitor places of detention. We believe such mechanisms play a crucial role in the prevention of torture.

In closing, we jointly reaffirm our clear commitment to uphold the absolute prohibition of torture and step up our efforts to end the use of torture and other ill-treatment in the OSCE area. We will ensure that the topic remains high on the OSCE agenda and we are looking forward to discussing the state of implementation of our commitments at the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting this year.

Thank you for your attention.