



**PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY
TO THE OSCE**

JOINT STATEMENT ON THE VIENNA MECHANISM FOLLOW-UP

As delivered by Ambassador Anne-Kirsti Karlsen at the Permanent Council,
Vienna, 18 April 2024

Thank you, Madame Chair,

I have the honour of delivering this statement on behalf of the Nordic and Baltic States: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Sweden, and my own country Norway.

As co-invokers of the Vienna Mechanism on the 22 March, we deeply regret that Russia has not responded in accordance with the procedures set forth in that Mechanism. We recall that all OSCE participating States have agreed that commitments undertaken in the field of the human dimension are matters of direct and legitimate concern to all participating States and do not belong exclusively to the internal affairs of the State concerned.

During the time that has passed since the invocation, the Russian Federation has not provided a concrete and substantial answer to the concerns raised. On the contrary, the repression has continued unabated. Let me mention at least some individuals that have become victims of politically motivated sentences or arrests:

- On 4 April, Oleg Orlov was forced to celebrate his 71st birthday in prison, for denouncing Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.
- The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media has raised several recent cases of arrests of and harassment against individual journalists, which show that Russia continues to undermine freedom of expression by targeting independent media.
- 9 April was the two-year anniversary of the politically motivated arrest and sentencing of Vladimir Kara-Murza, a human rights activist, politician, journalist, and historian who has survived two poisoning attempts and who serves 25-year

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politically motivated prison term in inhumane conditions and without access to urgent medical care.

- On 26 March, the Moscow City Court extended the detention of Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich, who was wrongfully detained over a year ago, for another three months. UN experts have stated that: “this fits a well-documented pattern of Russian authorities using politically-motivated administrative and criminal charges that allow for multiple renewals of pre-trial detention, targeting dissidents and independent voices opposed to Russia's war on Ukraine”.

These are just a few examples of the continued widespread and systematic crackdown and suppression of independent voices by the Russian authorities, from the last few weeks only.

Our countries remain seriously concerned about the continued systematic repression and crackdown on civil society in Russia. We call for the immediate and unconditional release of all those arbitrarily detained.

We will remain seized of this matter until the Russian Federation provides a concrete and substantive answer to our concerns.

I thank you.