



**Statement by Ambassador of Iceland, Kristín A. Árnadóttir,
at the 1409 OSCE Permanent Council,
Vienna, 2 February 2023**

Thank you, Mr. Chair,

While Iceland aligns with the statement delivered by the European Union, in my national capacity I would like to make the following remarks.

Iceland shares deep concern of the sharply deteriorating human rights situation in the Russian Federation. Russia's brutal, unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine, has intensified internal repression and intimidation against ordinary citizens that are exercising their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Ever more restrictive laws, persecution of human rights defenders, silencing of journalists, the ban against peaceful protests, mass arbitrary arrest and detention, growing number of political prisoners, and the attack against civil society is extremely alarming.

Media freedom is always an integral part of a functioning democracy. During times of war and conflict, the role of the media is even more important, to provide accurate information to the public and to bring to light violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. We are gravely concerned about the serious censorship and closure of independent media and civil society organisations in the Russian Federation, including the Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Memorial.

We are witnessing a serious crackdown on the rights to freedom of expression, freedom of association, freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of religion and belief.

We firmly maintain and uphold the principle that human rights are universal. To truly safeguard human rights and the rule of law, there must be accountability and justice for all violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

We call on the Russian Federation, as an OSCE participating state to abide by and respect its international commitments, protect, and respect human rights and fundamental freedoms for everyone in Russia.

We further call on the Russian Federation to cease its brutal war of aggression against Ukraine, in blatant violation of international law. We strongly condemn the continued systematic violations and abuses of international humanitarian law and human rights law by Russia in Ukraine. Russia's complete disregard for human lives and dignity is appalling.

It is our duty and our commitment to respect uphold human rights and fundamental freedoms. Dissent must always be respected as an integral part of public discourse and democracy.

We stand in full solidarity with the people of Russia who often at great personal risk fight for the human rights and fundamental freedoms that all human beings should be able to enjoy. We must stand together and never give up on our most fundamental values of democracy, freedom, and human rights. These values are too urgent and important to ever be compromised.

I thank you.