



## Civic Solidarity Platform Statement

### U.S. racism and police violence and the human dimension heritage of the OSCE

The undersigned organizations, members of the Civic Solidarity Platform, express their concern regarding the United States government's response to widespread peaceful protests against police violence. The protests, begun in response to an extrajudicial killing of a citizen by a police officer, have been largely peaceful and law-abiding. In response, police officers have repeatedly escalated encounters with protesters and used unwarranted violence. Police departments have applied military gear more appropriate for war than for calming a civilian demonstration. And the President of the United States has urged state governors to increase violent responses, and expressed his intent to call in active duty military soldiers. The state response, which has threatened peaceful civilians and journalists, violates international standards on the use of force and policing of assemblies and OSCE commitments and guidance by OSCE bodies. A central document in this guidance are the [Guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly](#) issued by OSCE/ODIHR and the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe. Key provisions from this document form the core of the Civic Solidarity Platform's [Bratislava Declaration](#) of December 2019, which called on OSCE participating states to review their compliance with these standards, and to strengthen ODIHR's monitoring and advisory activities relating to the right to peaceful assembly.

The demonstrations began with the killing on 25 May of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer. The incident occurred while many civil society organizations and governments gathered for an OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on "Addressing All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination". Participants were unable to bring attention to the issue at the meeting, but the legitimate passion of these demonstrations should be addressed through all possible means by all OSCE interlocutors with the United States government. Endemic racism, inequality, and racially-motivated violence should be confronted by all those in positions of authority in the US.

As we noted in the Bratislava Declaration: "Assemblies contribute to conflict prevention and peace." It is well established that neither the use of violence by a small number of people nor damage to property suspend the right to protest of all those gathered and do not provide a license to escalate police responses or to use excessive or deadly force. In all circumstances, the police response must remain within the limits of the law and seek to de-escalate rather than inflame interactions with the public by resorting to life-threatening weapons.

The far-reaching militarization of the police, both in equipment and approach, should be questioned fundamentally. The [deployment of thousands of National Guard soldiers](#) in more than 30 states and Washington, D.C. in response to civil unrest, President Donald Trump's exhortations for greater use of violence on social media and in a phone conversation with state governors, and his threat to deploy federal armed forces against protestors only place more lives at risk.

The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media has already expressed his concern regarding "the wave of violence against journalists covering protests. (...) Many of these incidents involved arrests and use of force by police, including rubber bullets, pepper bullets, tear gas and pepper spray, as well as acts of violence by protesters," In many instances it appeared police knowingly used violence against journalists without

justification. The OSCE Representative called on the authorities “to exercise restraint and to ensure that journalists can work safely while reporting on public protests.”

We call on all those within the OSCE, its independent institutions and all participating states to urge relevant U.S. authorities to utilize the OSCE’s 30 years of experience in advising states on effective and community-oriented policing practices, in the management of assemblies, and in redressing fundamental and deep-rooted ethnic inequalities. This includes the ODIHR, the expertise of NGOs in member states, and the experience of fellow OSCE participating state governments. We also call on the government of the United States to observe OSCE standards and human rights norms it has agreed to uphold.

Demonstrations in solidarity with the U.S. protestors against systemic racism and violent and one-sided policing practices are being held in a range of OSCE countries. These protests have started to also call attention to the state of affairs on these issues in their own countries. We call on all OSCE participating states to engage in a profound debate about these demands, taking into consideration conclusions and recommendations from international review bodies such as the UN’s [Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination](#) and of the [European Commission against Racism and Intolerance](#).

June 8, 2020

**Signed by the following CSP members:**

1. Netherlands Helsinki Committee
2. Human Rights First, USA
3. Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, Poland
4. Association of Ukrainian Human Rights Monitors on Law Enforcement, Ukraine
5. Public Verdict Foundation, Russia
6. Human Rights Center of Azerbaijan
7. Macedonian Helsinki Committee
8. Helsinki Citizens' Assembly – Vanadzor, Armenia
9. DRA – German-Russian Exchange, Germany
10. Bulgarian Helsinki Committee
11. Albanian Helsinki Committee
12. Public Association Dignity, Kazakhstan
13. International Partnership for Human Rights, Belgium
14. Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, Serbia
15. Austrian Helsinki Association for Human Rights and International Dialogue
16. Center for Civil Liberties, Ukraine
17. ZARA - Zivilcourage und Anti-Rassismus-Arbeit, Austria
18. Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety, Switzerland
19. Belarusian Helsinki Committee
20. Center for the Development of Democracy and Human Rights, Russia
21. Armenian Helsinki Committee
22. Swedish OSCE-network
23. Hungarian Helsinki Committee
24. Truth Hounds, Ukraine
25. Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and the Rule of Law
26. Promo LEX, Moldova
27. Public Association “Human Rights Movement: Bir Duino-Kyrgyzstan”
28. Center for Participation and Development, Georgia
29. Freedom Now, USA

30. Human Rights NGO "Helsinki Association", Armenia
31. Women of the Don, Russia
32. OMCT – World Organization against Torture, Belgium
33. Human Rights Center ZMINA, Ukraine
34. Human Rights Monitoring Institute, Lithuania
35. SOVA Center for Information and Analysis, Russia
36. Norwegian Helsinki Committee
37. Crude Accountability, USA