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(Matteo Losito)

PRESS RELEASE

OSCE Media Freedom Representative opens Safety of Journalists event, discusses media challenges during visit to Italy

VIENNA, 22 March 2024 – Teresa Ribeiro, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM), concluded a two-day visit to Italy where she discussed with her interlocutors the importance of ensuring the safety of journalists, the independence of public service media, and the crucial nexus between media freedom and security.

Part of the dialogue was also centered around one of Italy's most pressing challenges concerning media freedom: the criminalization of defamation. The current legal framework in Italy, which treats defamation as a criminal offense and, hence, exerts a chilling effect on journalistic activities, was underscored as detrimental to the vibrancy of Italy's media landscape. The legal developments on defamation foreseen by the authorities should therefore be regarded as an important step towards aligning national law with

international standards. “I have, like the other Representatives before me, always advocated for the decriminalization of defamation, to end the chilling effect that even the potential of sanctions on the basis of such laws can have on media freedom. Defamation is a civil wrong that should be dealt with through private law.”

During the visit, Ribeiro met with the Undersecretary of State to the Ministry Justice Andrea Delmastro Delle Vedove and the Undersecretary of State to the Presidency of Council of Ministers Alberto Barachini Council of Ministers, as well as with Professor Francesco Vigano, a Judge at the Constitutional Court. She also met with Giacomo Lasorella, the President of the Italian Communication Regulatory Authority (AGCOM). “We agreed that it is imperative to continue to work together to uphold fundamental principles of media freedom and protect the invaluable role of journalists in society. In order to do so, we have to create an environment where journalists can carry out their work safely and without fear of reprisal,” Ribeiro stated.

The Office of the Representative, in collaboration with the Coordination Centre for Monitoring, Analysis, and Permanent Exchange of Information on Acts of Intimidation Against Journalists, organized an event on the Safety of Journalists. This event, held under the auspices of the Ministry of Interior, saw the participation of Ribeiro and Prefect Raffaele Grassi, who serves as the President of the Support Body of the Centre, and who inaugurated the proceedings. National Focal Points from OSCE Participating States actively participated in the meeting, offering insights into both challenges and best practices. They discussed topics like fostering closer collaboration between journalists' associations, judicial bodies, and law enforcement agencies, aiming to enhance journalistic safety.

“There can be no doubt about it: the situation for media freedom in the OSCE region is dire. But it is not beyond hope. I am fully convinced, and many experts and interlocutors I have encountered over the years in my work as a Representative on Freedom of the Media share the same conviction: the fight for media freedom must continue. It is a fight for freedom and for democracy,” Ribeiro concluded.

The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media observes media developments in all 57 OSCE participating States. She provides early warning on violations of freedom of expression and media freedom and promotes full compliance with OSCE media freedom commitments. Learn more at www.osce.org/fom, Twitter: [@OSCE_RFoM](https://twitter.com/OSCE_RFoM) and on www.facebook.com/osce.rfom.

For PDF attachments or links to sources of further information, please visit:

<https://www.osce.org/representative-on-freedom-of-media/565132>

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