

STATEMENT OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE ON THE ESCALATION OF VIOLENCE IN THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP COUNTRIES

The Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum expresses its deep concern over the escalation of violence and hostilities in the territory of the Eastern Partnership countries, and, as a consequence of this violence, the numerous victims in the region.

We mourn the thousands of people, especially among the civilian population, who fall victim in the tragic war unfolding before our eyes, unleashed by Russia in the eastern Ukraine. We express our condolences to the families and friends of the dead and all the Ukrainian people. We also express our solidarity with the Ukrainian people, who are fighting for their independence and its European choice.

We also note with concern the mounting tension on the Karabakh conflict sides contact line, as a consequence of which there have been dozens of dead on conflict sides from mid- 2014 to the present. We express our condolences to the families of the victims of the escalation of the conflict.

The escalation on the line of conflict around Karabakh serves as a smokescreen for their initiators for disguising of persecutions and arrests of their political opponents and civil society activists.

It is also obvious that any military action on the space of the Eastern Partnership will sabotage the implementation of the systematic democratic and economic reforms, which are the core of the EP program.

We strongly condemn any act aimed at the further escalation of violence.

--We demand from the Government of the Russian Federation the immediate termination of its aggression towards Ukraine and encroachment on its independence, as well as the withdrawal of all its troops from the territory of Ukraine.

--We call upon the international community—especially the EU—to tighten the sanctions on Russia within the peace enforcing measures until the Russian Federation changes its expansionist policy in relation to the Ukraine, stops supporting terrorists and until full withdrawal of its troops from the territory of Ukraine, including Crimea.

--We call upon the international community and the EU to increase financial and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine for coping with the consequences of the humanitarian catastrophe in southeastern Ukraine, as well as effective aid to stop military aggression of Russia.

--We encourage the parties of the Karabakh conflict to withdraw all the snipers from the front line, respect the ceasefire and to resume negotiations for a peaceful settlement of the Karabakh conflict.

- We call upon the Co-Chairs of OSCE Minsk Group for Karabakh settlement to increase diplomatic efforts for peaceful resolving the Karabakh conflict, as well as to apply—in the framework of peace enforcement—new mechanisms for the purpose of identifying the offending side of the ceasefire and holding him accountable for such violations, which has led to casualties.
- We demand from Russia immediate stop of crawling annexation and borderisations of the occupied territories of Georgia; We call upon Russia to fully respect Medvedev-Sarkozy agreement and withdraw its armed forces from the occupied territories; So called treaties signed by Russian Federation with occupied territories is equivalent to annexation of another country´s territory and is in violation of international law.
- We demand from Russia to withdraw its army and weapons from the territory of Moldova. This is of vital importance in the current dangerous and complex regional security complex.
- We call upon the immediate termination of hate speech and propaganda of xenophobia, intolerance and war in Russia and the Eastern Partnership countries.

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