
Human rights: Council of Europe, “worrying picture but also many sources of hope”

The Council of Europe’s Annual Report that Commissioner for Human Rights Dunja Mijatović presented to the members of the CoE Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) today paints a “worrying picture across Europe”. Indeed, it shows “the intensification of challenges to the protection of human rights” which has “lost ground”. Conflict zones are of particular concern: Ukraine, particularly the issue of children transferred to Russia or Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine, and the issue of Crimean Tatars in Russian-occupied Crimea. There is also concern for the dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Karabakh region. The Commissioner, however, also pointed to “many sources of hope and examples of resilience” such as the Heads of State and Government pledging to reaffirm their commitment to the norms and principles of the Council of Europe at the Summit in Reykjavik; the “collective response to the war in Ukraine”; and “the unwavering commitment of NGOs, journalists, human rights defenders, national human rights institutions and activists to stand up for human rights”. Commissioner Mijatović, however, also said in her speech that “we must address the situation with determination and collective effort”; we need “a renewed commitment to the principles and standards for which our Organisation stands”. This was the last report presented by Commissioner Mijatović, who is coming to the end of her six-year, non-renewable mandate.

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