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Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights

Work programme

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This document indicates forthcoming events relevant to the committee's work programme and is regularly updated. It is not restricted to events in which the committee itself necessarily takes part or is represented.

Members are invited to let the Committee Secretariat know of items of particular interest.

Please note that all details are subject to separate confirmation.

I. Timetable of meetings and proposed order for the presentation of reports in 2025

Standing Committee, 23 May 2025	Opinion on the draft Third Protocol to the European Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters
June part-session 2025	Legal and Human Rights aspects of the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine Opinion on the draft Protocol amending the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of terrorism
October part-session 2025	Proceeds of the crime denounced by Sergei Magnitsky found in Switzerland must not be returned to the presumed perpetrators Threats to life and safety of journalists and human rights defenders in Azerbaijan

Priorities for 2025:

- Implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights: shared responsibility
- Reinforcing European human rights standards and upholding the rule of law

II. Work programme

A. Reports/Opinions tabled but not yet debated

1. Legal and human rights aspects of the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine

Rapporteur: Mr Eerik-Niiles Kross, Estonia, ALDE (appointed on 02.10.2024)

- Origin: Bureau decision, Reference 4825 of 28.06.2024
[+ Doc. 16029, Reference 4834 of 04.10.2024 on "Protecting Civilians: urgent action to save civilians in Russian captivity" to be taken into account]
- Expiry date for adoption: 28.06.2026
- Presentation to the Assembly foreseen: 2025 - Third part-session
- State of work:
10.12.2024: the committee considered an introductory memorandum;
30.01.2025: the committee held a joint hearing with the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy, the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons and the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media with the participation of:
Mr Maksym Butkevych, Human rights defender, officer of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, ex-POW, journalist;
Ms Leniie Umerova - recently exchanged Crimean Tatar and civilian hostage (Ukrainian citizen);
Mr Yulian Pylypei, Ukrainian marine, Mariupol defender, 2.5 years in Russian captivity;
Ms Nataliia Yashchuk, Senior War Consequences Officer, Center for Civil Liberties, Kyiv;
02-03.04.2025: the rapporteur carried out a fact-finding visit to Kyiv;
13.05.2025: the committee considered a draft report and adopted a draft resolution.

2. Draft Third Additional Protocol to the European Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters

Rapporteur: Mr Vladimir Vardanyan, Armenia, EPP/CD (appointed on 07.04.2025)

- Origin: Doc.16139, Reference 4865 of 07.04.2025
- Expiry date for adoption: 07.04.2027
- Presentation to the Assembly foreseen: 2025 - May Standing Committee (Malta)
- State of work:
13.05.2025: the committee considered a draft report and adopted a draft opinion.

3. Draft Protocol amending the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism

Rapporteur: Mr Titus Corlăţean, Romania, SOC (appointed on 07.04.2025)

- Origin: Doc.16143, Reference 4867 of 07.04.2025
- Expiry date for adoption: 07.04.2027
- Presentation to the Assembly foreseen: 2025 – Third part-session
- State of work:
08.04.2025: the committee held an exchange of views with Mr Nicola Piacente, Chair of the Council of Europe Committee on Counter-Terrorism (CDCT);
13.05.2025: the committee considered a draft report and adopted a draft opinion.

B. Reports under preparation

i. Human rights

4. Threats to life and safety of journalists and human rights defenders in Azerbaijan

Rapporteur: Mr Christophe Lacroix, Belgium, SOC (appointed on 28.01.2025) (former rapporteur: Ms Hannah Bardell, United Kingdom, NR (appointed on 11.10.2022, resigned on 01.10.2024))

- Origin: Doc. 15521, Reference 4659 of 24.06.2022
- Expiry date for adoption: 31.12.2025 (original deadline: 24.06.2024)
- Presentation to the Assembly foreseen: 2025 - Fourth part-session
- State of work:

22.03.2023: the committee considered an introductory memorandum (in the absence of the rapporteur).

It agreed to the declassification of the introductory memorandum, an eventual fact-finding visit, and to hold a hearing (open to the public) to be held jointly with the Committee on Honouring Obligations and Commitments by member States of the Council of Europe and the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media during the April part-session 2023 (the visit and hearing subject to the availability of funds). It also agreed to take into account "Growth in number of political prisoners in Azerbaijan (Doc. 15646, [Reference 4702 of 23.01.2023](#));

27.04.2023: the committee held a joint hearing with the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media and the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee), with the participation of:

Ms Arzu Geybullayeva, Journalist;

Mr Ulvi Hasanli, Founder and Executive Director of AbzasMedia and

Ms Jeanne Cavelier, Head of Eastern Europe & Central Asia Desk, Reporters without borders;

20.06.2023: the committee agreed to declassify the minutes of the above-mentioned joint hearing;

04.03.2024: the committee took note of the Bureau's request to take the following reference into account in the framework of this report:

"The need to investigate politically motivated persecution in Azerbaijan" ([Doc. 15852](#));

18.04.2024: the committee agreed to request the Bureau to extend the reference until 31.12.2024;

01.10.2024: the committee heard a summary of the rapporteur's work on the report and took note of Ms Bardell's resignation from her mandate.

5. Ensuring better protection of whistle-blowers in Europe

Rapporteur: Ms Anna-Kristiina Mikkonen, Finland, SOC (appointed on 21.05.2024)

- Origin: [Doc. 15919](#), Reference 4801 of 15.04.2024
- Expiry date for adoption: 15.04.2026
- Presentation to the Assembly foreseen: t.b.c.
- State of work:

10.09.2024: the committee considered an introductory memorandum. It agreed to the rapporteur's request to hold an exchange of views with former Assembly rapporteur on this subject, Mr Sylvain Waserman;

09.12.2024: the committee held a hearing with the participation of:

Ms Anna Myers, Executive Director, Whistleblowing International Network, United Kingdom;

Ms Vigjilence Abazi, Assistant Professor of European Law, University of Maastricht;

03-04.04.2025: the rapporteur carried out a fact-finding visit to Brussels.

6. Proceeds of the crime denounced by Sergei Magnitsky found in Switzerland must not be returned to the presumed perpetrators

Rapporteur: Ms Lesia Vasylenko, Ukraine, ALDE (appointed on 02.10.2024)

- Origin: Doc. 15981, Reference 4815 of 24.06.2024
- Expiry date for adoption: 24.06.2026
- Presentation to the Assembly foreseen: 2025 - Fourth part-session
- State of work:

09.12.2024: the committee considered an introductory memorandum and held an exchange of views with Mr Andreas Gross, former member of the Parliamentary Assembly and former rapporteur on "Refusing impunity for the killers of Sergei Magnitsky";

03.03.2025: the committee held a hearing with the participation of:

Sir William Browder, CEO Hermitage Capital Management, Head of the Global Magnitsky Justice Campaign;
Professor Mark Pieth, Founder of the Basel Institute on Governance, founding member of the Financial Action Task Force (online);
06.03.2025: the rapporteur carried out a fact-finding visit to Bern;
13.05.2025: the committee considered a draft report.

7. Fighting back against transnational repression

Rapporteur: Mr Constantinos Efstathiou, Cyprus, SOC (appointed on 28.01.2025)

- Origin: Doc.16017, Reference 4829 of 30.09.2024
- Expiry date for adoption: 30.09.2026
- Presentation to the Assembly foreseen: t.b.c.
- State of work:
09.04.2025: the committee considered an introductory memorandum and agreed to hold a hearing with experts during its next meeting, subject to the availability of funds.
13.05.2025: the committee held a hearing with the participation of:
Mr Stephen Reimer, Associate Fellow, Royal United Services Institute and Adjunct Professor with the Paris School of International Affairs within SciencesPo Paris;
Mr Alex Tinsley, Barrister at Doughty Street Chambers, member of Lawyers Against Transnational Repression;
Ms Saipira Furstenberg, Independent Research Consultant (online).

8. Improving the selection/election procedure of CPT members

Rapporteur: Ms Octavie Modert, Luxembourg, EPP/CD (appointed on 03.03.2025)

- Origin: Doc.16038, Reference 4838 of 29.11.2024
- Expiry date for adoption: 29.11.2026
- Presentation to the Assembly foreseen: t.b.c.
- State of work:

9. Regulating foreign influence: best practices and European standards

Rapporteur: Mr Emanuelis Zingeris, Lithuania, EPP/CD (appointed on 13.05.2025)

- Origin: Doc.16103, Reference 4855 of 07.04.2025
- Expiry date for adoption: 07.04.2027
- Presentation to the Assembly foreseen: t.b.c.
- State of work:

10. Safeguarding human rights in the artificial intelligence-driven public sector

Rapporteur: to be appointed

- Origin: Doc.16148, Reference 4874 of 11.04.2025
- Expiry date for adoption: 11.04.2027
- Presentation to the Assembly foreseen: t.b.c.
- State of work:

11. Implementation of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights – 13th report

Rapporteur: to be appointed

- Origin: Bureau decision, Reference 4878 of 11.04.2025
- Expiry date for adoption: 11.04.2027
- Presentation to the Assembly foreseen: t.b.c.
- State of work:

ii. Reinforcement of the Rule of Law

12. Updating the Venice Commission Rule of Law Checklist: a contribution by the Assembly

Rapporteur: Ms Klotilda Bushka, Albania, SOC (appointed on 28.01.2025)

- Origin: Doc.16059, Reference 4836 of 04.10.2024
- Expiry date for adoption: 04.10.2026
- Presentation to the Assembly foreseen: t.b.c.
- State of work:

03.03.2025: the committee considered an introductory memorandum and agreed to the rapporteur's request to declassify it and to hold a hearing with experts at a future meeting, subject to the availability of funds.

13. The need to modernise the international Humanitarian Law

Rapporteur: to be appointed

- Origin: Doc.16122, Reference 4862 of 07.04.2025
[+ Doc. 16125, Reference 4872 of 11.04.2025 on "Ensuring lawful and ethical use of artificial intelligence warfare" to be taken into account]
- Expiry date for adoption: 07.04.2027
- Presentation to the Assembly foreseen: t.b.c.
- State of work:

iii. Other matters

14. Use of artificial intelligence by parliaments: risks and opportunities

Rapporteur: to be appointed

- Origin: Doc.16123, Reference 4863 of 07.04.2025
- Expiry date for adoption: 07.04.2027
- Presentation to the Assembly foreseen: t.b.c
- State of work:

15. Threats to the International Criminal Court

Rapporteur: to be appointed

- Origin: Doc.16124, Reference 4864 of 07.04.2025
- Expiry date for adoption: 07.04.2027
- Presentation to the Assembly foreseen: t.b.c
- State of work:

iv. Follow-up of resolutions and recommendations after adoption by the Assembly

16. Transnational repression as a growing threat to the rule of law and human rights ([Resolution 2509 \(2023\)](#))

Rapporteur for follow-up: Sir Christopher Chope, United Kingdom, ECPA

21.05.2024: the committee held a hearing with the participation of:

Ms Lily Sparks, Advocacy Research Associate, Human Rights Watch, Paris;
Ms Kanae Kanki, Senior Counsel, Notices and Diffusions Task Force (NDTF), INTERPOL;
Ms Slavica Cubric, Legal officer, Notices and Diffusions Task Force (NDTF), INTERPOL;
Mr Pouria Zeraati, television journalist, Iran International, London;

24.06.2024: the committee heard a statement by the rapporteur for follow-up presented by the Vice-Chairperson in Sir Christopher Chope's absence. It adopted a draft motion for a resolution and agreed to table it on behalf of the committee.

17. Examining the legitimacy and legality of the ad hominem term-limit waiver for the incumbent President of the Russian Federation” ([Resolution 2519 \(2023\)](#))

Rapporteur for follow-up: Mr Pieter Omtzigt, Netherlands, EPP/CD

21.05.2024: the committee agreed to hold a joint hearing with the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy on the subject at the forthcoming part-session in June 2024, as follow-up to Resolution 2519 (2023).

27.06.2024: the committee held a joint hearing with the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy with the participation of:

Mr Mikhail Kasyanov, former Prime Minister of the Russian Federation;

Dr. Gleb Bogush, Expert in public international law / Research Fellow, Cologne University, Germany;

Ms Veronika Bílková, Vice-President of the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), Co-Rapporteur of the interim opinion on constitutional amendments and the procedure for their adoption in the Russian Federation, adopted by the Venice Commission.

18. Legal and human rights aspects of the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine ([Resolution 2556 \(2024\)](#), [Recommendation 2279 \(2024\)](#))

Former Rapporteur for follow-up: Mr. Davor Ivo Stier, Croatia, EPP/CD

10.09.2024: the committee held a hearing with the participation of:

Mr Markiyan Kliuchkovskiy, Executive Director, Register of Damage for Ukraine, The Hague, Netherlands (online);

Mr Jörg Polakiewicz, Director, Directorate of Legal Advice and Public International Law, Council of Europe;

Ms Jessica H. Kim, Special Prosecutor for the Crime of Aggression, U.S. Department of Justice, ICPA, EUROJUST, The Hague, the Netherlands.

19. The arbitrary detention of Vladimir Kara-Murza and the systematic persecution of anti-war protesters in the Russian Federation and Belarus ([Resolution 2541 \(2024\)](#))

Former Rapporteur for follow-up: Ms Thorhildur Sunna Ævarsdóttir, Iceland, SOC

10.09.2024: in the presence of Ms Evgenia Kara-Murza and Mr Vadim Prokhorov, the committee held an exchange of views with Mr Vladimir Kara-Murza, Founding Chairman of the Boris Nemtsov Foundation for Freedom, Vice-president of the Free Russia Foundation and Václav Havel Human Rights Prize Winner 2022.

20. Sanctions against persons on the "Kara-Murza list" ([Resolution 2542 \(2024\)](#))

Rapporteur for follow-up: Mr Eerik-Niiles Kross, Estonia, ALDE

10.09.2024: in the presence of Ms Evgenia Kara-Murza and Mr Vadim Prokhorov, the committee held an exchange of views with Mr Vladimir Kara-Murza, Founding Chairman of the Boris Nemtsov Foundation for Freedom, Vice-president of the Free Russia Foundation, and Václav Havel Human Rights Prize Winner 2022.

21. Pegasus and similar spyware and secret State surveillance (Resolution 2513(2023), Recommendation 2258 (2023))

Rapporteur for follow-up: Mr Pieter Omtzigt, Netherlands, EPP/CD

03.03.2025 the committee held a hearing with the participation of:

Mr Iain Cameron, Member of the Venice Commission (Sweden), rapporteur for “Report on a rule of law and human rights compliant regulation of spyware”, adopted by the Venice Commission at its 141st plenary session (Venice, 6-7 December 2024) (online);

Mr Andreu Van den Eynde, lawyer, Spain;

Mr Dušan Pokuševski, Program Director at the Belgrade Center for Human Rights, Serbia;

Ms Milena Berić, Executive Director of the Association KROKODIL, Serbia.

C. Reports on which the committee is seized for opinion

Committee on Political affairs and Democracy

22. Review of the partnership for democracy in respect of the Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic

Rapporteur for opinion: Mr Serhii Kalchenko, Ukraine, ECPA (appointed on 25.01.2024)

Rapporteur: Ms Marietta Karamanli, France, SOC

- Origin: Bureau decision, Reference 4768 of 09.10.2023
- Expiry date for adoption: 09.10.2025
- Presentation to the Assembly foreseen: t.b.c.
- State of work:

23. The Situation in Belarus

Rapporteur for opinion: Mr Pieter Omtzigt, Netherlands, EPP/CD (appointed on 03.03.2025)

Rapporteur: Mr Emanuelis Zingeris, Lithuania, EPP/CD (former rapporteur: Mr Kimmo Kiljunen, Finland, SOC)

- Origin: Bureau decision, Reference 4789 of 26.01.2024
- Expiry date for adoption: 26.01.2026
- Presentation to the Assembly foreseen: t.b.c.
- State of work:

24. Bürgenstock summit on peace in Ukraine: paving the way

Rapporteur for opinion: Ms Olena Khomenko, Ukraine, ECPA (appointed on 09.12.2024)

Rapporteur: Mr Damien Cottier, Switzerland, ALDE (appointed on 09.10.2024)

- Origin: Doc. 16015, Reference 4821 of 28.06.2024
- Expiry date for adoption: 28.06.2026
- Presentation to the Assembly foreseen: t.b.c.
- State of work:

25. Support for political negotiations to enforce exchange and release of prisoners of war

Rapporteur for opinion: Ms Rian Vogels, Netherlands, ALDE (appointed on 09.12.2024)

Rapporteur: Ms Yelyzaveta Yasko, Ukraine, EPP/CD (appointed on 09.10.2024)

- Origin: Doc. 16021, Reference 4823 of 28.06.2024
- Expiry date for adoption: 28.06.2026
- Presentation to the Assembly foreseen: 2025 – Third part-session
- State of work:

Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media:

26. Media concentration and threats to media pluralism and independence

Rapporteur for opinion: Ms Gala Veldhoen, Netherlands, SOC (appointed on 24.06.2024)

Rapporteur: Ms Valentina Grippo, Italy, ALDE (appointed on 27.05.2024)

- Origin: Doc. 15916 Reference 4798 of 15.04.2024
- Expiry date for adoption: 15.04.2026
- presentation to the Assembly foreseen: t.b.c
- State of work:

27. Journalists matter: the need to step up efforts to liberate Ukrainian journalists held in captivity by the Russian Federation

Rapporteur for opinion: Ms Nadejda Iordanova, Bulgaria, NR (appointed on 28.01.2025)

Rapporteur: Ms Yevheniia Kravchuk, Ukraine, ALDE (appointed on 03.10.2024)

- Origin: Doc. 16020, Reference 4822 of 28.06.2024
- Expiry date for adoption: 28.06.2026
- Presentation to the Assembly foreseen: 2025 – Fourth part-session
- State of work:

III. General Rapporteurships

1. General Rapporteur on the abolition of the death penalty: Ms Gala Veldhoen, Netherlands, SOC (first term: appointed on 02.10.2024)

- **Term of office:** one year renewable, subject to a maximum of two years.

The General Rapporteur on abolition of the death penalty is mandated to intervene in matters relating to the abolition of the death penalty in different contexts (member and observer states, partners for democracy, states applying for such a status). He or she shall report periodically to the committee on the information collected and the action taken.

Responsibilities:

The role of the general rapporteur is to:

- follow activities and maintain working relations with different Council of Europe bodies dealing with issues relating to the abolition of the death penalty (including the Committee of Ministers, the Commissioner for Human Rights, the Committee for the Prevention of Torture and relevant departments of the Council of Europe Secretariat);
- follow activities and maintain working relations with Council of Europe observer states, partners for democracy and other states applying for such status, seeking advice as necessary from international organisations working in the field;
- represent the committee on behalf of the Assembly when relevant and appropriate;
- in appropriate cases make statements and launch appeals on behalf of the committee;
- follow up previous resolutions and recommendations of the Assembly on death penalty issues, including [Resolution 1807](#) (2011) on “The death penalty in Council of Europe member and observer states: a violation of human rights”, [Resolution 1560](#) (2007) on “Promotion by Council of Europe member states of an international moratorium on the death penalty”, [Recommendation 1760](#) (2006) on “Position of the Parliamentary Assembly as regards the Council of Europe member and observer states which have not abolished the death penalty”; [Recommendation 1627](#) (2003) and [Resolution 1349](#) (2003) on “Abolition of the death penalty in Council of Europe observer states”, and continue to promote the Assembly's decisions which appear in these texts.

Activities to date:

- 14.10.2020: the committee considered a revised introductory memorandum and agreed to declassify it.
- 07.12.2021: the committee considered a revised information note, agreed to declassify it and held a hearing with the participation of:
 Ms Chiara Sangiorgio, Policy Adviser/Death Penalty, Amnesty International, London, and
 Mr Gilberto Jeronimo, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Portugal to the Council of Europe, Strasbourg.
- 30.11.2023: the committee considered a revised information note and agreed to its declassification.
- 01.12.2023: the committee agreed to hold a hearing on the abolition of the death penalty in observer and “partner for democracy” States, during the January part-session (open to the public if the experts agree), subject to the availability of funds and subject to time constraints in meeting slots allocated to the committee.
- 25.01.2024: the committee held a hearing with the participation of:
 Mr Raphaël Chenuil-Hazan, Director General, Ensemble contre la peine de mort (ECPM), Paris;
 Ms Robin Maher, Executive Director of the Death Penalty Information Center (DPIC), Washington (online);
 Ms Bronwyn Dudley, Program Manager, World Coalition Against the Death Penalty, Paris.

2. General Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders and whistleblowers:

Mr Emanuelis Zingeris, Lithuania, EPP/CD (re-appointed for a second term on 27.06.2024; first term: appointed on 20.06.2023)

- **Term of office:** one year renewable, subject to a maximum of two years

The General Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders is mandated to intervene in matters relating to cases of intimidation of, and reprisals against, human rights defenders as well as of serious impediments to their work in Council of Europe member States and other European States (such as, for example, killings, attacks on their physical and psychological integrity, arbitrary arrests, judicial and administrative harassment, public defamation or restrictions to freedom of movement). A ‘human rights defender’ is a person or a group of persons (non-governmental organisation/entity) who, individually or together with others, acts peacefully to promote and protect human rights. This term may refer to lawyers, journalists, NGO activists or other individuals and groups (see, in this connection, the 1999 UN [Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms](#)). It may also include whistleblowers, namely persons reporting illegal activities or abuses of rights that may harm the public interest.

The general rapporteur shall report periodically, at least annually, to the committee on information collected and any action taken.

Responsibilities:

The role of the general rapporteur is to:

- follow activities and maintain working relations, when need arises, with different Council of Europe institutions and bodies which deal with (issues relating to) human rights defenders, including the Committee of Ministers, the Commissioner for Human Rights, the Secretary General and the Conference of INGOs;
- follow activities and maintain, when appropriate, working relations with bodies and agencies of the United Nations (including its Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders), the European Union, with the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), other international governmental and non-governmental organisations;
- represent the committee on behalf of the Assembly *vis-à-vis* any of the above mentioned bodies and groups, when relevant and appropriate;
- in specific cases, make statements and launch appeals on his/her own behalf or propose to do so to the committee;
- follow up previous resolutions and recommendations of the Assembly on issues related to human rights defenders and the protection of whistleblowers.

Activities to date:

- 12.10.2023: the committee examined an information note, agreed to declassify it and held an exchange of views with the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms Dunja Mijatović;
- 01.12.2023: the committee held a hearing with the participation of:
 Mr Sergei Cristo, Whistleblower;
 Ms Anna Myers, Executive Director of the Whistleblowing International Network (WIN), United Kingdom;
 Mr Jean-Philippe Foegle, Expert on whistleblowers and researcher and doctoral student in public and European law;
- 28.01.2025: the committee considered an information note prepared by the General Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders and whistleblowers in Europe and agreed to declassify it.
- 10.04.2025: the committee held a hearing with the participation of:
 Ms Iva Marković, Co-founder of The Right to Water Initiative and Program Director at Polekol (Serbia);
 Ms Kersty McCourt, Human Rights lawyer and Senior Advocacy Advisor at Civil Liberties Union for Europe (Belgium);
 Ms Luca Dudits, Executive Board member and Communications Officer at Háttér Society (Hungary).

- 3. General Rapporteur for Political Prisoners:** Ms Azadeh Rojhan, Sweden, SOC (first term: appointed on 28 January 2025)

Term of office: one year, renewable once, subject to a maximum of two years

The General Rapporteur for Political Prisoners is mandated to intervene in matters relating to alleged cases of politically motivated arrests and criminal prosecutions in Europe and in other countries having an observer or cooperative status with the Council of Europe or the Parliamentary Assembly.

Definition:

A “political prisoner” is a person who is deprived of his or her liberty in circumstances fulfilling one or more of the criteria reaffirmed in Assembly Resolution 1900 (2012), namely:

- a. if the detention has been imposed in violation of one of the fundamental guarantees set out in the European Convention on Human Rights and its Protocols (ECHR), in particular freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom of expression and information, freedom of assembly and association;
- b. if the detention has been imposed for purely political reasons without connection to any offence;
- c. if, for political motives, the length of the detention or its conditions are clearly out of proportion to the offence the person has been found guilty of or is suspected of;
- d. if, for political motives, he or she is detained in a discriminatory manner as compared to other persons; or,
- e. if the detention is the result of proceedings which were clearly unfair and this appears to be connected with political motives of the authorities.” (SG/Inf(2001)34, paragraph 10).

The finding by the European Court of Human Rights, in favour of a person deprived of his or her liberty, of a violation of Articles 5 in conjunction with Article 18 of the European Convention of Human Rights is a strong indication that such a person is a “political prisoner”.

Responsibilities:

The role of the general rapporteur is to:

- follow activities and maintain working relations, when need arises, with different Council of Europe institutions and bodies which deal with issues relating to political prisoners, including the Committee of Ministers, the Commissioner for Human Rights, the Secretary General and the Conference of INGOs;

- follow activities and maintain, when appropriate, working relations with bodies and agencies of the United Nations (including its Working Group on Arbitrary Detentions), the European Union, with the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), in particular the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's Special Representative on Political Prisoners, and with other international governmental and non-governmental organisations;
- represent the committee on behalf of the Assembly *vis-à-vis* any of the above mentioned bodies and groups, when relevant and appropriate;
- in appropriate cases, make statements and launch appeals on his/her own behalf or propose to do so to the committee;
- in appropriate cases, engage in communication with alleged political prisoners or their families and their lawyers;
- follow up previous resolutions and recommendations of the Assembly on issues related to alleged cases of political prisoners.

The general rapporteur shall report periodically, at least annually, to the committee on information collected and any action taken.

Activities to date:

07.04.2025: the committee considered an information note on the situation of political prisoners in Russia and Belarus and agreed to the general rapporteur's request to declassify it, and to hold a hearing with experts during the fourth part-session, subject to the availability of funds.

IV. Bureaux of the Committee and of the Sub-Committees

Plenary Committee

Chairperson:	Lord Richard Keen (United Kingdom, ECPA)
1 st Vice-Chairperson:	Ms Lesia Vasylenko (Ukraine, ALDE)
2 nd Vice-Chairperson:	Mr Pablo Hispán (Spain, EPP/CD)
3 rd Vice-Chairperson:	Ms Klotilda Bushka (Albania, SOC)

Sub-Committee on Human Rights

Chairperson:	Ms Octavie Modert (Luxembourg, EPP/CD)
Vice-Chairperson:	Ms Wanda Nowicka (Poland, SOC)

Sub-Committee on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights

Chairperson:	Mr Damien Cottier (Switzerland, ADLE)
Vice-Chairperson:	Mr Vladimir Vardanyan (Armenia, EPP/CD)

Sub-Committee on the Implementation of Judgments of the European Court of Human Rights

Chairperson:	Mr Constantinos Efstathiou (Cyprus, SOC)
Vice-Chairperson:	Mr Titus Corlăţean (Romania, SOC)

V. Representation of the Committee at various events in 2025

Representatives appointed by the Bureau for 2025

- i European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission):
Mr Antonio Gutiérrez Limones (Spain, SOC) – Member
Mr Sergiy Vlasenko (Ukraine, EPP/CD) – Substitute
- ii. Council for Democratic Elections (of the Venice Commission):
Mr Pablo Hispán (Spain, EPP/CD) – Member
Ms Octavie Modert (Luxembourg, EPP/CD) – Substitute
- iii. Group of States against Corruption (GRECO):
Ms Agnes Sirkka Prammer (Austria, SOC) – Member

Ms Arusyak Julhakyan (Armenia, PPE/DC) – Substitute

- iv. Moneyval:
Ms Klotilda Bushka (Albania, SOC) – Member
Zz... – Substitute

VI. Secretariat of the Committee

Head of the Committee Secretariat:

Deputy to the Head of the Secretariat: Mr Guillem CANO PALOMARES
☎: +33 (0)3 90 21 49 41
mail: guillem.cano-palomares@coe.int

Secretary: Mr George STAFFORD
☎: +33 (0)3 90 21 54 56
e-mail: george.stafford@coe.int

Co-Secretary: Mr Rafal SOKOL
☎: +33 (0)3 88 41 22 03
e-mail: rafal.sokol@coe.int

Adviser: Ms Maria RODRIGUEZ POLO
☎: +33 (0)3 90 21 54 56
e-mail: maria.rodriguez-polo@coe.int

Administrative Assistant: Ms Sarah BLANCHET
☎: +33 (0)3 88 41 31 67
e-mail: sarah.blanchet@coe.int

Assistant: Ms Léa DE BARROS
☎: +33 (0)3 88 41 20 99
e-mail: lea.de-barros@coe.int

Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights

Secretariat of the Parliamentary Assembly
Council of Europe
F – 67075 STRASBOURG Cedex
Tel: +33 (0)3 88 41 31 67
<http://assembly.coe.int>

Appendix: Terms of reference of the Committee and its Sub-Committees

A. General terms of reference applicable to all Assembly committees

(Extract from Appendix to Resolution 1842 (2011), The terms of reference of Parliamentary Assembly committees – Implementation of Resolution 1822 (2011) on the reform of the Parliamentary Assembly, adopted on 7 October 2011)

The Assembly decides to revise the general terms of reference applicable to all its committees as follow:

1. Committees may examine any matter within their specific terms of reference (Rule 43.1 of the Rules of Procedure) and, possibly, table information reports on these matters (Rule 48.6).
2. Committees shall only prepare reports for debate in the Assembly:
 - 2.1. on matters referred to them (Rule 25);
 - 2.2. when so instructed by texts adopted by the Assembly (taking account of Rule 24.1.b);
 - 2.3. when stipulated by the Assembly's Rules of Procedure;
 - 2.4. when mandated to do so by their specific terms of reference;
3. The committees ensure the appropriate follow-up to resolutions and recommendations adopted by the Assembly in the fields covered by their specific terms of reference.
4. Committees may organise conferences and other events on matters within their specific terms of reference and which are linked to their work programme, subject to availability of funds.
5. Committees shall establish and maintain working relations with:
 - 5.1. the competent bodies (committees, etc.) of national parliaments of member States;
 - 5.2. the competent bodies (committees, etc.) of European parliamentary assemblies (European Parliament, Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Interparliamentary Assembly of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CEI) and others) and of the Interparliamentary Union (IPU);
 - 5.3. subject to decision by the Bureau of the Assembly, the competent bodies (committees, etc.) of national parliaments holding special guest, observer or partner for democracy status;
 - 5.4. subject to decision by the Bureau of the Assembly, the competent bodies (committees, etc.) of national parliaments of non-member States.
6. Committees shall follow the activities of the Committee of Ministers in the fields covered by their specific terms of reference.
7. Committees shall follow the activities of, and maintain working relations with:
 - 7.1. the relevant rapporteur groups, working groups and liaison committees of the Ministers' Deputies and rapporteurs of the Ministers' Deputies;
 - 7.2. the relevant Council of Europe structures and bodies such as the European Court of Human Rights, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, the Commissioner for Human Rights, the Council of Europe partial agreements, the Council of Europe monitoring bodies and the relevant Council of Europe expert committees.
8. Committees are entitled to be represented in the Assembly's delegations to the relevant European conferences of specialised ministers and to follow their activities.

9. Committees shall follow the activities of, and maintain working relations with, the European and international organisations and bodies which carry out activities in the fields covered by their specific terms of reference, in particular the European Union, the OSCE, the United Nations and their agencies and institutions.

10. Committees are entitled to develop and maintain working relations with the European and international non-governmental organisations which carry out activities in the fields covered by their specific terms of reference.

11. Committees shall promote the ratification and the implementation by Council of Europe member States of relevant conventions covered by their specific terms of reference.

B. Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights (AS/Jur)

i. Background information

Number of seats: 84

The Committee was established in 1949 with the title “Legal and Administrative Questions” and known from 1956 until the end of 1989 as the “Legal Affairs Committee”, when the title was changed to the “Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights”.

ii. Specific terms of reference

(Extract from Appendix to Resolution 1842 (2011), The terms of reference of Parliamentary Assembly committees – Implementation of Resolution 1822 (2011) on the reform of the Parliamentary Assembly, as amended by Resolution 2002 (2014), § 9.10)¹

[...]

2. Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights (AS/Jur)

2.1. The Committee shall consider all legal and human rights matters (including proposals for and the preparation of statutory opinions on draft Council of Europe conventions) which fall within the competence of the Council of Europe.

2.2. The Committee shall in particular consider:

2.2.1. all matters concerning the human rights treaties and mechanisms of the Council of Europe, notably the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5) and its protocols, the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (ETS No. 126), and other international instruments;

2.2.2. other issues concerning the state of human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law in Europe, as well as in the observer States and in the States whose parliaments enjoy observer or partner for democracy status, including allegations of serious human rights violations of a systemic or otherwise widespread nature;

2.2.3. the functioning of national and international judicial institutions (as well as ombudspersons and national human rights institutions), the police, detention centres and prisons in the member States of the Council of Europe;

2.2.4. national and international criminal law and criminology; the treatment of offenders and conditions of detention (including pre-trial detention); alternatives to imprisonment;

2.2.5. legal and human rights issues relating to the fight against terrorism.

¹ On 26 January 2015 the AS/Jur's Sub-Committee on the election of judges was replaced by a new general Committee on the Election of Judges to the European Court of Human Rights (AS/Cdh): see <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/Committees/as-cdh/as-cdh-main-EN.asp>.

2.3. The Committee shall give an opinion on the law, legal practice and the observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms of applicant States for membership of the Council of Europe, and of States whose parliaments seek to acquire partner for democracy status with the Parliamentary Assembly, to assess compliance with Council of Europe standards.

2.4. The Committee shall promote Council of Europe standard-setting legal instruments in the field of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law in non-member States.

2.5. The Committee shall be in charge of interviewing all candidates for the post of Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, before his or her election by the Assembly. It shall also examine the curricula vitae of candidates to the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT).

2.6. The Committee shall follow the activities of the European Ombudsmen Conference.

2.7. The Committee shall share the Assembly representation in the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) and in its Council for Democratic Elections.

2.8. The Committee shall represent the Assembly in the Council of Europe Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) and shall participate in the work of the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ).

2.9. The Committee shall represent the Assembly in, and follow the work of, the relevant expert committees of the Council of Europe.

[...]

C. Terms of reference of the Sub-Committee on Human Rights (AS/Jur/DH)

(Approved by the Committee on 29 January 2015)

1. The Sub-Committee shall consider any matter falling within the terms of reference of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights relating specifically to the state of human rights and fundamental freedoms. In particular, the Sub-Committee shall monitor relevant human rights developments in Council of Europe member, observer and applicant States, as well as States whose parliaments enjoy Partner for Democracy status with the Assembly. It shall also follow activities of and maintain working relations with relevant Council of Europe bodies.

2. Moreover, the Sub-Committee shall review and make recommendations to the Committee on lists of candidates for membership of the European Committee on the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment of Punishment (CPT) submitted by States Parties to the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture.

D. Terms of reference of the Sub-Committee on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights (AS/Jur/AI)

(Approved by the Committee on 13 December 2018)

1. Having regard to paragraph 2.2.2. of the terms of reference of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, the Sub-Committee shall consider issues relating to the maintenance of Council of Europe standards on human rights and the rule of law – notably those deriving from the European Convention on Human Rights – in connection with the implementation of new technologies, in particular machine learning and other forms of artificial intelligence, including in the fields of privacy, criminal justice and legal liability for actions taken by systems involving artificial intelligence.

2. The Sub-committee shall seek to identify areas in which greater regulation and co-operation at European and international level are required, including by taking account of work undertaken by the national parliaments of member and observer states and those with partnership for democracy status. It shall follow, with a view to contributing where appropriate, Council of Europe work in this area being undertaken at inter-governmental area.

E. Terms of reference of the Sub-Committee on the Implementation of Judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (AS/Jur/CourDH)

(Approved by the Committee on 29 January 2015)

1. Having regard to the terms of reference of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, the Sub-Committee shall consider issues relating to the implementation, at the domestic level, of the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) finding a violation of the European Convention on Human Rights and/or its protocols.
2. The Sub-Committee shall, in particular, address the most pertinent cases of non-implementation of judgments, especially those pointing to the existence of systemic shortcomings or requiring urgent individual measures, especially in cases concerning serious human rights violations. It shall seek to identify, together with Committee's Rapporteur on the Implementation of Judgments of the ECHR, the reasons for failure to execute judgments in co-operation with, in particular, the parliamentary national delegation of the State concerned in order to find solutions to outstanding problems.